

Cheshire West and Chester Open Space Study



**Cheshire West
and Chester**

2016 – 2030

Part 1 of 2

(Final Version March 2017)

ethos
Environmental Planning

Cheshire West and Chester Open Space Study

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Glossary of Terms

Term	Meaning
AGP	Artificial grass pitch
ANGSt	Accessible Natural Green Space Standard
CIL	Community Infrastructure Levy
CWAC	Cheshire West and Chester
DPD	Development Plan Document
FIT	Fields In Trust (originally known as the 'National Playing Fields Association')
GI	Green Infrastructure
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
LAP	Local Area for Play
LEAP	Local Equipped Area for Play
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
MUGA	Multi Use Games Area
NEAP	Neighbourhood Equipped Play Area
NEWP	Natural Environment White Paper
NGB	National Governing Body
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NSALG	National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners
PPG17	Planning Policy Guidance Note 17
PPS	Planning Policy Statement
PROW	Public Rights of Way
ROWIP	Rights of Way Improvement Plan
SCS	Sustainable Community Strategy
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document
SUDS	Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aims of the study are to provide a robust assessment of needs and deficiencies (in terms of quantity, quality and access) in open spaces in Cheshire West and Chester in order to establish local provision standards and ensure that an up to date and robust evidence base is available to support the emerging policies within the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan, up to 2030.

The study has been carried out in-line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (*Para 73 and 74*), in particular ensuring that '*the assessments should identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities in the local area. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sports and recreational provision is required*'.

This report is the main report (part 1 of 2) of the Cheshire West and Chester Open Space Study and includes six key stages: Strategic overview; identifying local needs; an audit of local open space provision; setting provision standards; applying the provision standards; and draft policies/recommendations. Part 2 of the study consists of 5 open space area profiles, based on groupings of parishes or wards. These area profiles provide a more detailed analysis of quantity, quality and access within each area, and also consider the future need for open space and priorities for each area.

The strategic review section provides a review of the most relevant national and local policies related to the study, which have been considered in developing the methodology and findings of the study.

The report has examined local need for a wide range of different types of recreational open space. Questionnaire surveys were undertaken as below:

- An online survey utilising the Council's Citizen's Panel (supplemented by a postal general household survey)
- Surveys of town and parish councils and neighbouring local authorities
- Local groups and organisations' survey (including play and youth organisations)
- Surveys of sports national governing bodies and local sports/recreation clubs.

In addition to the above a series of one to one stakeholder interviews was undertaken; and existing consultation findings, strategy documents and other relevant material were reviewed. The community and stakeholder consultation (appendix 1) has informed the content of the recommended local standards, and has helped the study to understand stakeholder and local people's appreciation of open space and the wider green infrastructure; and the values attached by the community to the various forms of open spaces.

The audit of local provision has included a comprehensive mapping and audit process to collate data on the current provision and quality of open space across Cheshire West and Chester. Open spaces were mapped onto a GIS system (ArcView), and broken down into individual open space typologies. Quality audits were also undertaken at key open spaces and all play spaces across the borough.

The information from the assessment of local needs and the audit of provision has been used to develop standards of provision for open space. The standards have three aspects – quantity, access and quality – and are summarised below:

Typology	Quantity standards (ha/1000 population)	Access standard
Allotments	0.15	720 metres or 15 minutes' walk time
Amenity Green Space	0.60 for analysing existing provision of sites > 0.15 ha 1.0 for new provision (in combination with natural green space).	480 metres or 10 minutes' walk time
Parks and Recreation Grounds (excluding pitches and fixed sports space)	0.5	720 metres or 15 minutes' walk time
Play Space (Children)	0.05	480 metres or 10 minutes' walk time
Play Space (Youth)	0.03	600 metres or 12-13 minutes' walk time
Natural Green Space	1.0 to include natural and amenity green space for new provision ANGSt and Woodland Trust for analysing existing provision	ANGSt and Woodland Trust for analysing existing provision

The quality audit was based on the Green Flag assessment criteria and was undertaken at 490 open spaces and 301 play areas across the borough. The details on the sites audited are provided in a quality audit database (appendix 2). The key findings and sites with most potential for improvements are highlighted in the open space area profiles.

The standards outlined above have been used to identify existing deficiencies or surpluses in the quantity, access and quality of open space across Cheshire West and Chester. Detailed maps and analysis are provided within part 2 of this report (the area profiles). There are deficiencies in provision of at least two open space typologies within each area profile, with deficiencies in youth play space across all area profiles (see summary table below).

Study Area	Allotments	Amenity Green Space	Park and Recreation Ground	Play Space (Children)	Play Space (Youth)
Chester	4.77	-23.04	-1.67	-0.41	-0.91
Ellesmere Port	-0.85	-6.52	5.06	-1.00	-0.90
Rural	-10.86	-13.87	-12.89	0.5	-2.28

Study Area	Allotments	Amenity Green Space	Park and Recreation Ground	Play Space (Children)	Play Space (Youth)
Northwich	-5.28	2.18	6.85	0.29	-1.16
Winsford	-2.81	11.97	3.65	0.77	-0.17

The policies recommended in Section 8 aim to provide specific guidance on implementing adopted Local Plan policy SOC 6 within the Council's Local Plan (Part 1). The policy recommendations within this study are required to inform the development of the Local Plan Part 2. The strategic options address five key areas:

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

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This report is **part 1 of 2** of the Cheshire West and Chester Open Space Strategy. The study has been undertaken by Ethos Environmental Planning to update the existing Open Space Assessment and Assessment of Need undertaken in 2011. This document is intended to better inform the development of the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan (Part Two), and to ensure that a robust evidence base is available to support the emerging policies within it, up to 2030.

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

The study has been carried out in-line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (*Para 73 and 74*), in particular ensuring that '*the assessments should identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities in the local area. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sports and recreational provision is required*'.

Whist no additional guidance has been provided in relation to these policies, it does signpost the Sport England guidance for sports facilities assessments¹. Within this, there is however, still a clear reference made in the new guidance to the principles and ideology established within '*Planning Policy Guidance Note 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation*', and its Companion Guide '*Assessing Needs and Opportunities*', which is a tried and tested methodology and takes a consistent approach with many other local authorities. As such the underlying principles of this study have been informed by the former guidance provided in PPG17.

1.2 Scope of Study and Objectives

1.2.1 Overall Aim of the Study

The aims of the study are to provide a robust assessment of needs and deficiencies in open spaces in order to establish local provision standards and create an up to date evidence base which can be maintained to aid implementation of the policies and the provision of open spaces during the Local Plan period.

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

The brief for the study highlighted that the overall aims are:

- Provide background evidence to support Local Plan policies in relation to open space and formal recreation, ensuring that this evidence is sound, robust, capable of being scrutinised through examination, and meets the requirements of the NPPF paragraphs 73 and 74;
- Examine the need for new open space and existing space, and ensure that it is aligned with all of the open space policy across the Council;
- Supply information that will enable the Council to develop an open spaces strategy and inform related strategies and plans, identify deficiencies (or surpluses) in the extent, type, quality, accessibility and connectivity of open space;
- Review open spaces usage and the facilities within them;
- Evaluate the needs and aspirations of local communities with regards to these spaces;
- Assess open spaces as a community and environmental resource and the potential to improve people's quality of life, health and well-being, and create more sustainable communities;
- Review open space maintenance requirements and costs to inform Council budget setting and corporate decision making;
- Review the information to enable the Council to justify collecting developer contributions and inform the Council on the distribution of developer contributions to open space in line with Community Infrastructure Levy regulations.

1.2.2 Scope of Study and Objectives

This study covers all forms of public open space as referred to in Annex A of the PPG17 Companion Guide.

A separate Playing Pitch Strategy (Oct 2015) and Play Strategy (2016) was also commissioned by the Council.

In order to deliver the aims of the open space study, the following objectives will be met:

- Assessment of the current provision and quality of existing open space; including the collation of existing Council databases, e.g. grounds maintenance, play areas;
- Identification of Cheshire West and Chester's existing and future needs for open space and its current ability to meet those needs in terms of quality and quantity, by typology and spatial area, to 2030;
- Identification of spatial areas with deficiencies or surpluses of open space, by typology;
- Measurement of accessibility of open spaces in terms of distance in space and/or time from user communities, to enable the development of target standards for different types of open space;
- Review of existing standards for provision of open space and formal recreation, and recommend revisions to these standards by typology and spatial area (see section 1.4).

1.3 Structure of the report

The open space study is presented in two key parts.

Part 1: Main report follows the five key stages as summarised below:

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

Part 2: Open Space Area Profiles have been developed for 5 areas as outlined in figure 3. These draw on parish and ward boundaries.

Within each of these area profiles, there will be the following information:

- A description of the area;
- Maps showing the provision of open space;
- Quantitative analysis of current provision of open space;
- Analysis of access to open space;
- Summary of quality issues and opportunities;
- Analysis of future need for open space;
- Priorities for the area.

The area profiles are intended to be a starting point to inform other strategies and plans, including neighbourhood plans; planning policies; development control policies; parks and open spaces service and action plans.

The area profiles will be presented as part 2 of the overall open space study. Part 1 will form and overview of open space at a more strategic level, and set out details of the wider open space study. However, it is intended that parts 1 and 2 of the report would be considered together in decision making.

1.4 The Study Area

1.4.1 Overview of Cheshire West and Chester.

Cheshire West and Chester is a highly desirable place to live, work and visit and is one of the most affluent areas in the North West. It covers a large geographic and demographically diverse area and is the fourth largest authority in the North West. The north western part of the borough has particularly strong links with north east Wales and Merseyside which is reflected in levels of cross-commuting. To the east the borough borders Cheshire East and has particularly strong links with the town of Middlewich that is surrounded on three sides by

Cheshire West and Chester. There are also links to Warrington, Greater Manchester and Shropshire.

Over 329,000 people live in Cheshire West with over 160,000 people working in the borough. The area is characterised by attractive countryside, varied landscapes and diverse settlements ranging from the historic city of Chester to small rural hamlets. Chester, Ellesmere Port and Northwich dominate the northern part of the borough and sit within or adjoining the North Cheshire Green Belt which covers 42 percent of the borough's land area. Three of the larger rural settlements, Neston, Frodsham and Helsby, are also located in the Green Belt in the more urbanised north of the borough.

The borough benefits from a high quality natural environment with a number of internationally and nationally important sites for wildlife, including the Dee and Mersey estuaries, as well as having a rich architectural heritage with a high number of conservation areas, listed buildings and scheduled monuments. Ease of access to the countryside provides a significant recreational resource as does the access to the borough's waterways and leisure facilities. A key priority is to deliver development to meet future housing and employment needs whilst protecting the quality of the natural environment that gives Cheshire West and Chester its special and valued character.

The Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies identifies an urban/rural split as follows:

Urban areas:

Chester - The city of Chester is the borough's largest settlement with over 81,000 residents and is a key centre for employment, retail, education and tourism as well as being a main transport interchange and gateway, with direct routes to London, Manchester, Merseyside and North Wales. The city is internationally renowned as a historic city with unique heritage assets particularly Roman remains, the City Walls and medieval Rows.

Ellesmere Port - Ellesmere Port is the second largest settlement with over 60,000 residents and the most industrialised part of the borough and was a major centre for manufacturing. The town has suffered a sharp decline in employment and there has been a 50 percent reduction in manufacturing employment leaving a legacy of derelict brownfield sites and some contamination issues. The industrial legacy and the presence of the M53 motorway cutting through the town has led to image and perception problems. However, the area provides a major employment land resource for the borough and has become increasingly successful in attracting new employment opportunities.

Northwich - The town of Northwich and adjoining settlements of Anderton, Barnton, Davenham, Hartford, Lostock Gralam, Lower Marston, Lower Wincham, Rudheath and Weaverham combine to form the third biggest urban area in Cheshire West and Chester. The area has benefited from the stabilisation of former salt mines that had prevented large areas of the town coming forward for redevelopment. In particular, land stabilisation has enabled proposals to come forward that will significantly improve the town centre of Northwich and help enhance the town's role as a major retail and leisure destination.

Winsford - The smallest of the four key urban areas with a population of 30,000, Winsford is nationally renowned for the mining of rock salt. Winsford was expanded as an 'overspill' town

in the 1960s, with new residents arriving from Manchester and Liverpool. More recently, Winsford and the surrounding area has seen new housing development and dedicated employment sites being created in the town, including Winsford Industrial Estate and Woodford Park, which have attracted new industry and business to the area.

Rural area:

A third of the borough's residents live in the rural area that runs from Neston in the north, which borders Wirral, to the boundary with Shropshire in the south. The rural area in the south is more sparsely populated and many of the settlements, especially in the north, are effectively dormitory settlements that are dependent on larger towns for employment opportunities. Car use is generally very high and isolation and access to services is an issue for some rural residents. The rural area is generally affluent.

Although agriculture employs few people, it makes a very significant contribution to the character of the borough, habitats and the environment. The character of the rural area is also defined by the network of settlements that provide rural residents with services and facilities.

Within the rural area there are ten Key Service Centres which provide a good range of facilities and services for surrounding areas:

- Cuddington and Sandiway;
- Farndon;
- Frodsham;
- Helsby;
- Kelsall;
- Malpas;
- Neston and Parkgate;
- Tarvin;
- Tattenhall;
- Tarporley.

1.4.2 Administrative Boundaries

Cheshire West and Chester is split into wards and parishes as shown in figures 1 and 2. These boundaries are the basis for collating census data across the council area. Of particular relevance to this study are population statistics (Census, 2011), which have been used as the basis for much of the current and future assessment of need for open space.

The parish boundaries were changed in 2015 reducing the number of parishes from 168 to 116. However, at the time of writing, population statistics were not available for the revised parish boundaries, as such it has not been possible to use these for the analysis within this study. When the new parish boundaries are attributed accurate population figures, the report and assessment will be updated accordingly.

Figure 1 Parish Boundaries used for analysis in study

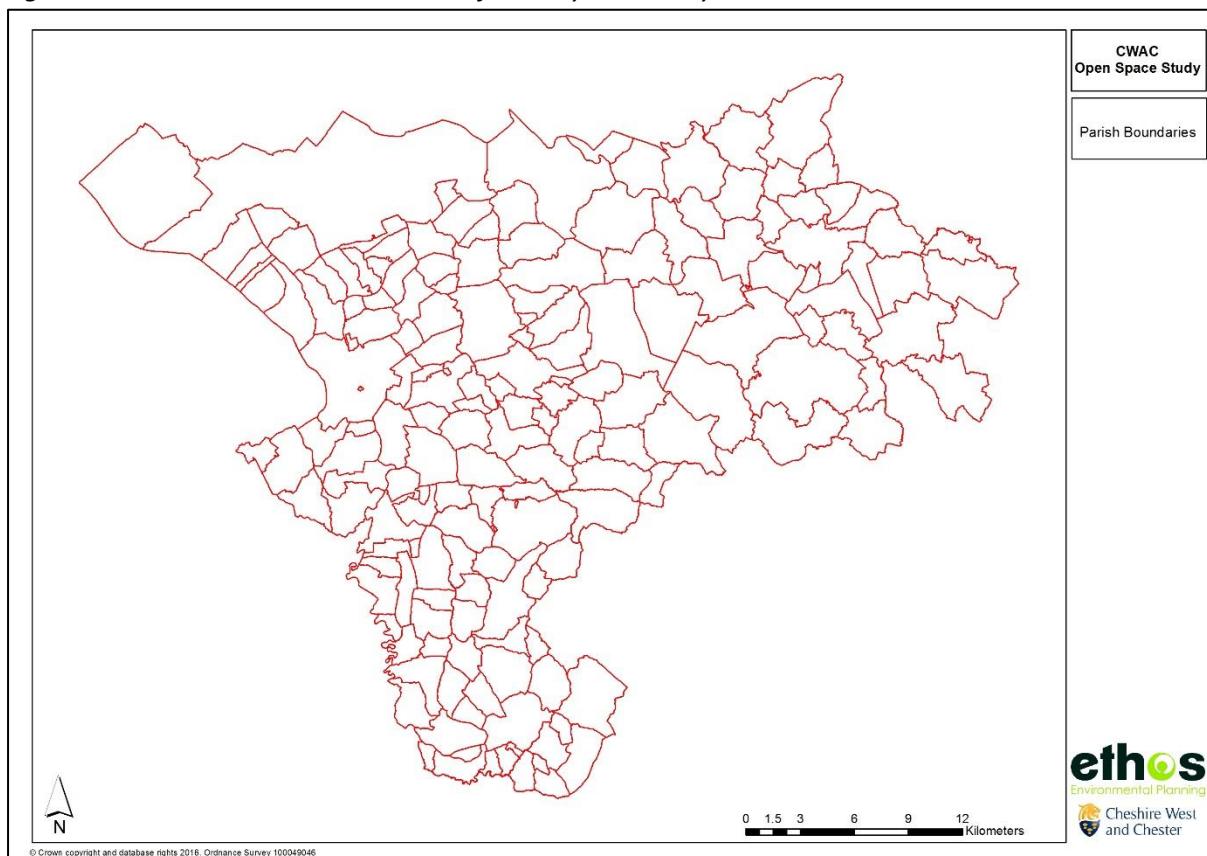
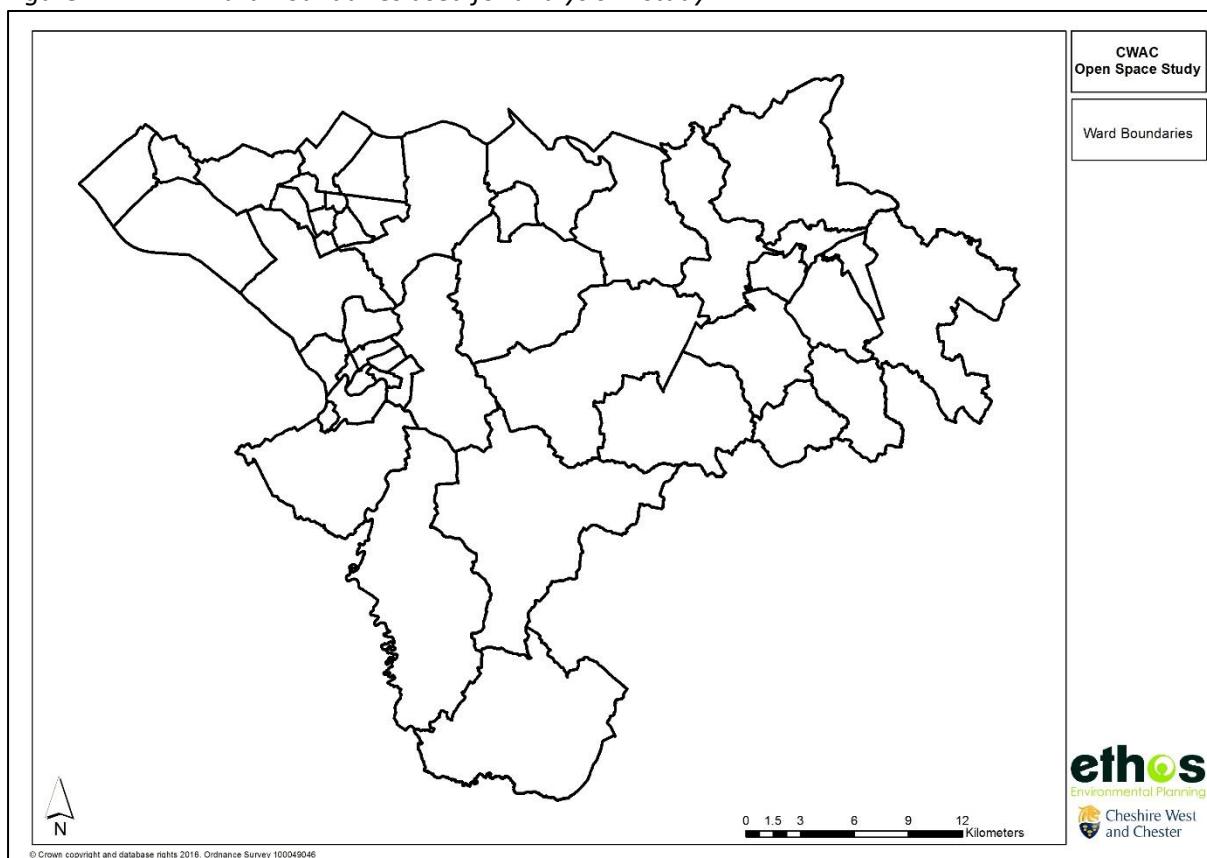


Figure 2 Ward Boundaries used for analysis in study



1.4.3 Population Statistics

1.4.3.1 Wards

Table 1 Ward population statistics (Census 2011)

Ward	Population	Ward	Population
Blacon	13,626	Marbury	12,069
Boughton	5,444	Neston	4,329
Chester City	3,853	Netherpool	3,287
Chester Villages	8,548	Newton	9,556
Davenham and Moulton	13,569	Parkgate	3,591
Dodleston and Huntington	3,958	Rossmore	3,808
Ellesmere Port Town	9,103	Saughall and Mollington	4,463
Elton	4,557	Shakerley	4,214
Farndon	4,011	St Paul's	9,256
Frodsham	9,077	Strawberry	5,086
Garden Quarter	5,318	Sutton	9,176
Gowy	3,924	Tarporley	4,398
Grange	4,649	Tarvin and Kelsall	8,217
Great Boughton	8,984	Tattenhall	4,374
Handbridge Park	8,840	Upton	8,905
Hartford and Greenbank	8,360	Weaver and Cuddington	12,779
Helsby	4,972	Whitby	8,102
Hoole	9,359	Willaston and Thornton	3,825
Kingsley	4,222	Winnington and Castle	9,271
Lache	5,760	Winsford Over and Verdin	13,414
Ledsham and Manor	7,796	Winsford Swanlow and Dene	9,012
Little Neston and Burton	8,485	Winsford Wharton	9,765
Malpas	3,975	Witton and Rudheath	8,321

1.4.3.2 Parishes

Table 2 Parish population statistics (Census 2011)²

Parish	Population	Parish	Population
Acton Bridge	631	Horton-by-Malpas	No data
Agden	No data	Horton-cum-Peel	No data
Aldersey	132	Huntington	2,115
Aldford	272	Huxley	251
Allostock	816	Iddinshall	No data
Alvanley	472	Ince	203
Anderton and Marbury	571	Kelsall	2,609
Antrobus	791	Kings Marsh	No data
Ashton Hayes	936	Kingsley	1,987
Aston	106	Kingsmead	4,892

² Where a Parish population is below 100 or if there are less than 40 households, ONS are not publishing results (this is displayed as 'No data' in Table 2). In order to run the data analysis in ArcGIS, for the Parishes where there is 'No data' a figure of 99 has been used. This will not impact the results, as such low population figures will not produce significant results.

Parish	Population	Parish	Population
Bache	307	Lach Dennis	232
Backford	117	Larkton	No data
Barnton	5,614	Lea-by-Backford	207
Barrow	941	Lea Newbold	No data
Barton	123	Ledsham	No data
Beeston	188	Little Budworth	594
Bickley	481	Little Leigh	567
Bostock	225	Little Stanney	198
Bradley	No data	Littleton	647
Bridge Trafford	No data	Lostock Gralam	2,298
Broxton	461	Lower Kinnerton	136
Bruen Stapleford	186	Macefen	154
Buerton	No data	Malpas	1,673
Burton	No data	Manley	614
Burwardsley	184	Marston-cum-Lache	166
Byley	235	Marston	538
Caldecott	No data	Mickle Trafford	1,822
Capenhurst	380	Mollington	626
Carden	No data	Moston	642
Caughall	No data	Mouldsworth	327
Chester Castle	No data	Moulton	2,370
Chidlow	No data	Neston	15,221
Chorlton	124	Nether Peover	415
Chorlton-by-Backford	124	Newton-by-Tattenhall	131
Chowley	No data	Newton By Malpas	No data
Christleton	2,053	Norley	1,169
Church Shocklach	290	Northwich	19,924
Churton By Aldford	212	Oakmere	589
Churton By Farndon	153	Oldcastle	No data
Churton Heath	No data	Overton	No data
Claverton	No data	Picton	No data
Clotton Hoofield	425	Poulton	No data
Clutton	371	Prior's Heys	No data
Coddington	No data	Puddington	381
Comberbach	954	Pulford	580
Cotton Abbotts	No data	Rowton	441
Cotton Edmunds	No data	Rudheath	3,807
Crewe-by-Farndon	No data	Rushton	484
Croughton	No data	Saighton	202
Crowton	465	Saughall	3,009
Cuddington (Malpas)	171	Shocklach Oviatt	No data
Cuddington (Weaver and Cuddington)	5,333	Shotwick	No data
Darnhall	232	Shotwick Park	No data
Davenham	2,745	Sproston	218
Delamere	1,025	Stanhorne	153
Dodleston	715	Stockton	No data
Duckington	No data	Stoke	171

Parish	Population	Parish	Population
Duddon	655	Stretton	No data
Dunham-on-the-Hill	501	Sutton	495
Dutton	424	Tarporley	2,614
Eaton	No data	Tarvin	2,728
Eccleston	246	Tattenhall	2,079
Edge	247	Thornton-le-Moors	253
Edgerley	No data	Threapwood	351
Elton	3,586	Tilston	603
Farndon	1,653	Tilston Fearnall	150
Foulk Stapleford	161	Tiverton	318
Frodsham	9,077	Tushingham cum Grindley	187
Golborne Bellow	No data	Upton-by Chester	7,956
Golborne David	No data	Utkinson	706
Grafton	No data	Waverton	1,587
Great Boughton	8,582	Weaverham	6,391
Great Budworth	339	Wervin	146
Guilden Sutton	1,467	Whitegate and Marton	1,172
Hampton	405	Whitely	533
Handley	253	Wigland	182
Hapsford	133	Willington	No data
Hartford	5,558	Wimbolds Trafford	212
Harthill	No data	Wimboldsley	153
Hatton	198	Wincham	2,162
Helsby	4,972	Winsford	30,481
Hockenhull	No data	Woodbank	109
Hoole Village	319	Wychough	No data

1.4.4 Defining geographical areas

1.4.4.1 Approach to study areas

In order to analyse the current provision and future requirements for open space across Cheshire West and Chester, the borough has been split into different study areas (area profiles are presented in part 2 of this report). This was agreed by the project steering group as the most effective way to analyse provision and for use in the local plan and housing allocations assessment. The study areas for Ellesmere Port, Chester and Rural Areas use ward boundaries for the analysis (see figure 3). Whereas the study areas for Winsford and Northwich use parish boundaries for the analysis (see figure 4). More detailed maps of each study area are shown at figures 7-12, and within the area profiles (part 2).

Due to the alignment of parish and ward boundaries, there is some overlap between the Rural area profile and the Northwich area profile. The parishes that form part of the Northwich area profile, but overlap with the Rural area profile are highlighted orange in Figure 5 below. Any open space analysis/development that falls within these parishes (highlighted orange in figure 5) should use the Northwich area profile, and not the Rural wards area profile.

There are also a number of rural parishes that do not fall within any area profile. These are highlighted blue in figure 5 below, and the open spaces (the majority being accessible natural greenspace and private outdoor sports space) that fall within these parishes are shown in figure 6. The individual parish data provided in appendix 3 should be used for analysing provision in this area that does not fall within any area profile.

Figure 3 Ward Study Areas (Ellesmere Port, Chester and Rural)

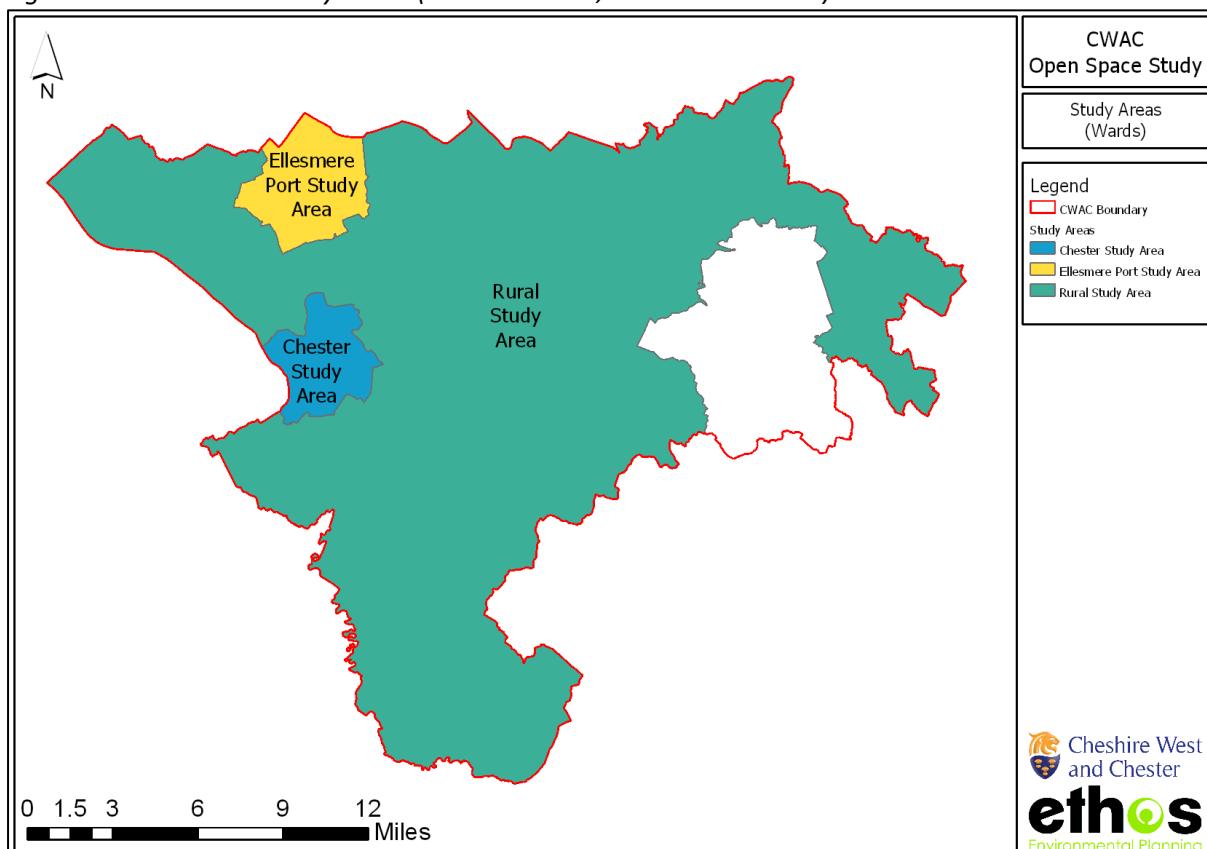


Figure 4 Parish Study Areas (Winsford and Northwich)

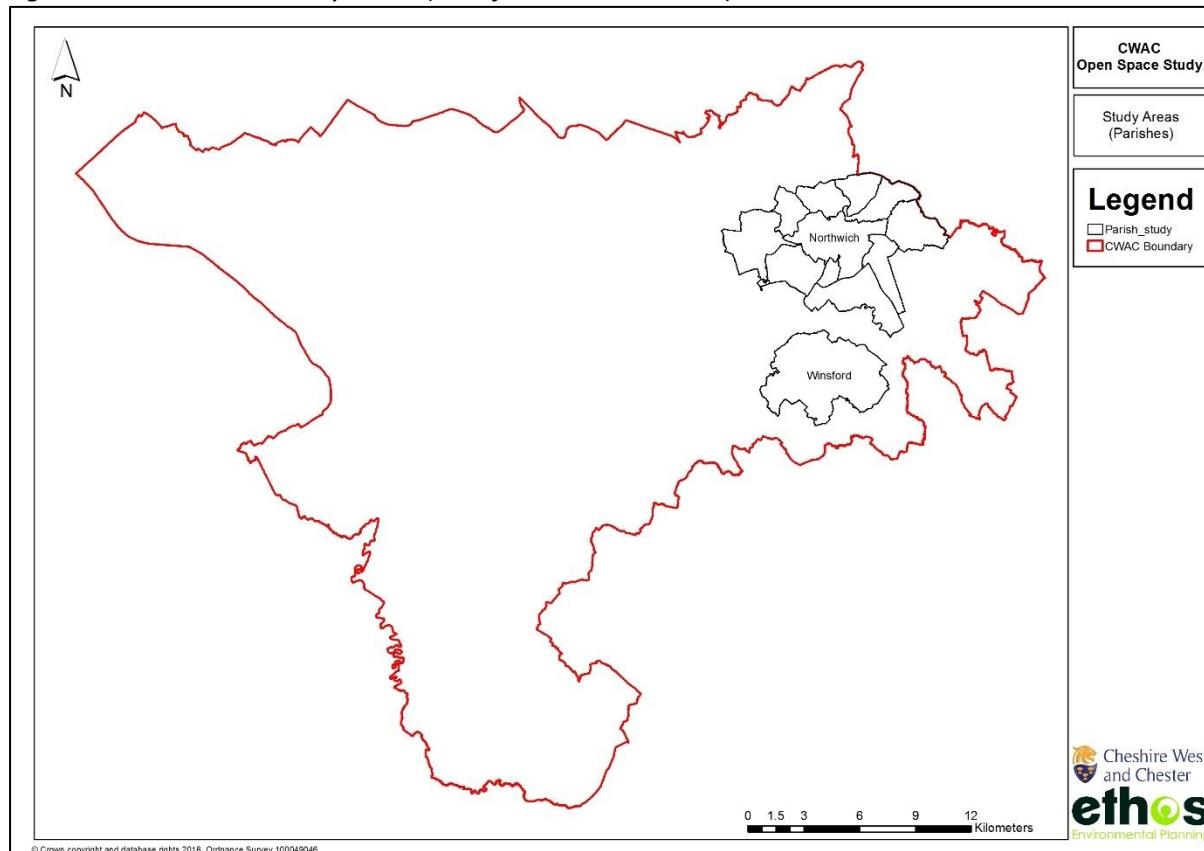


Figure 5 Parishes that fall outside of study areas (highlighted blue), and parishes within the Northwich area profile which overlap with the Rural wards area profile (highlighted orange).

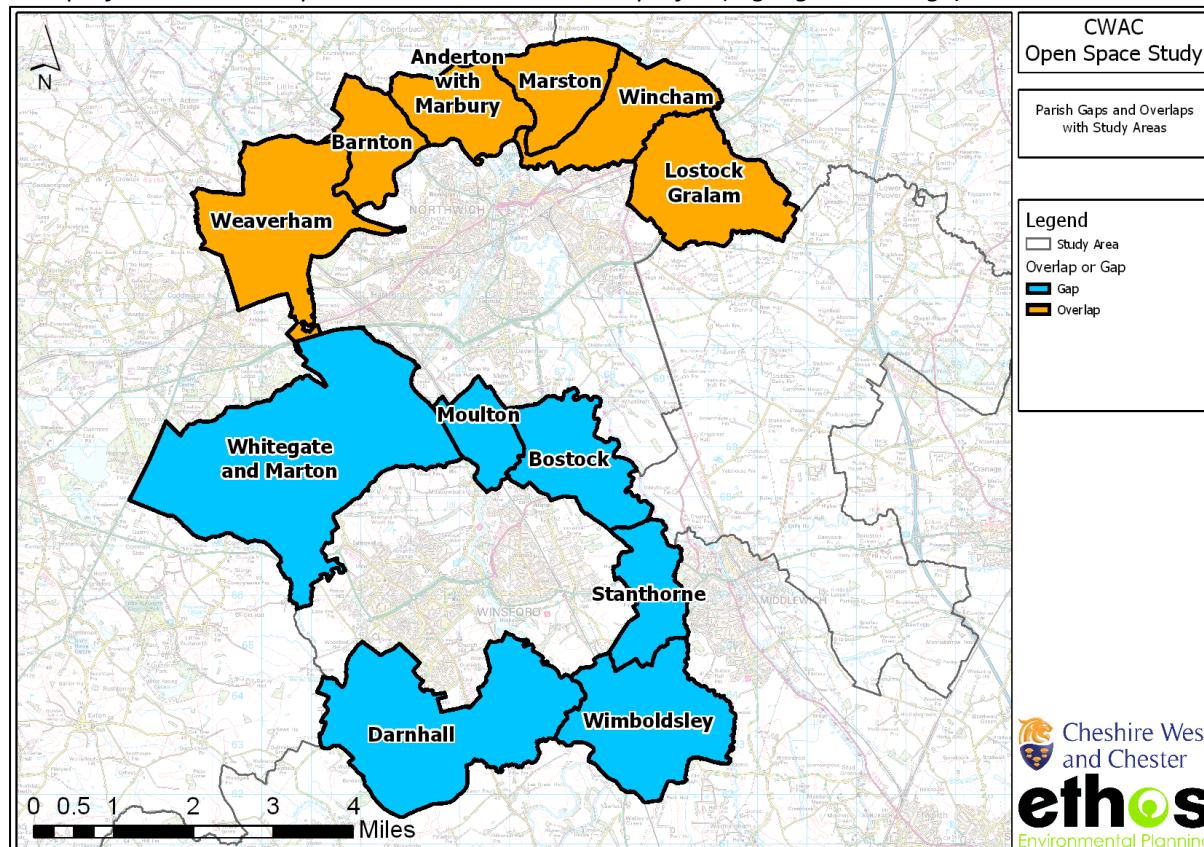
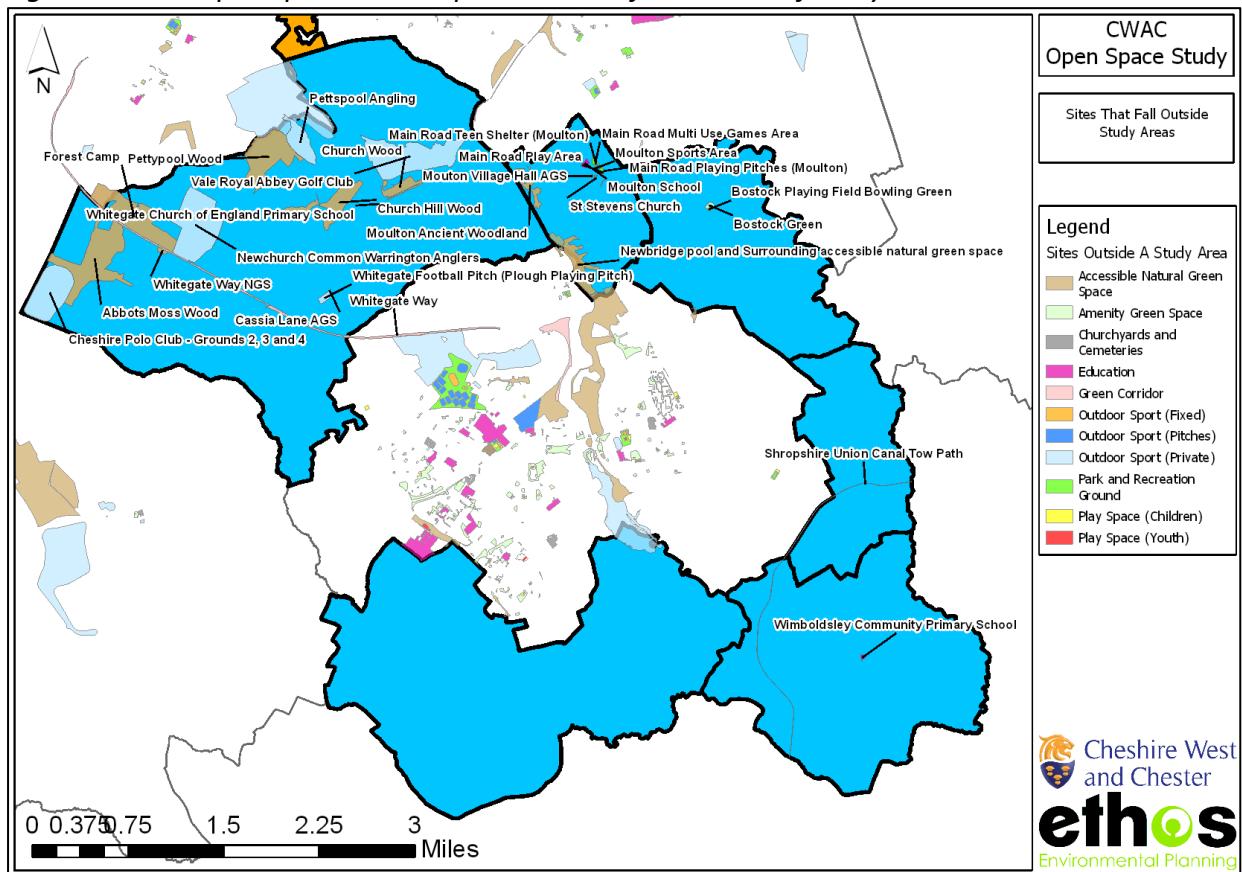


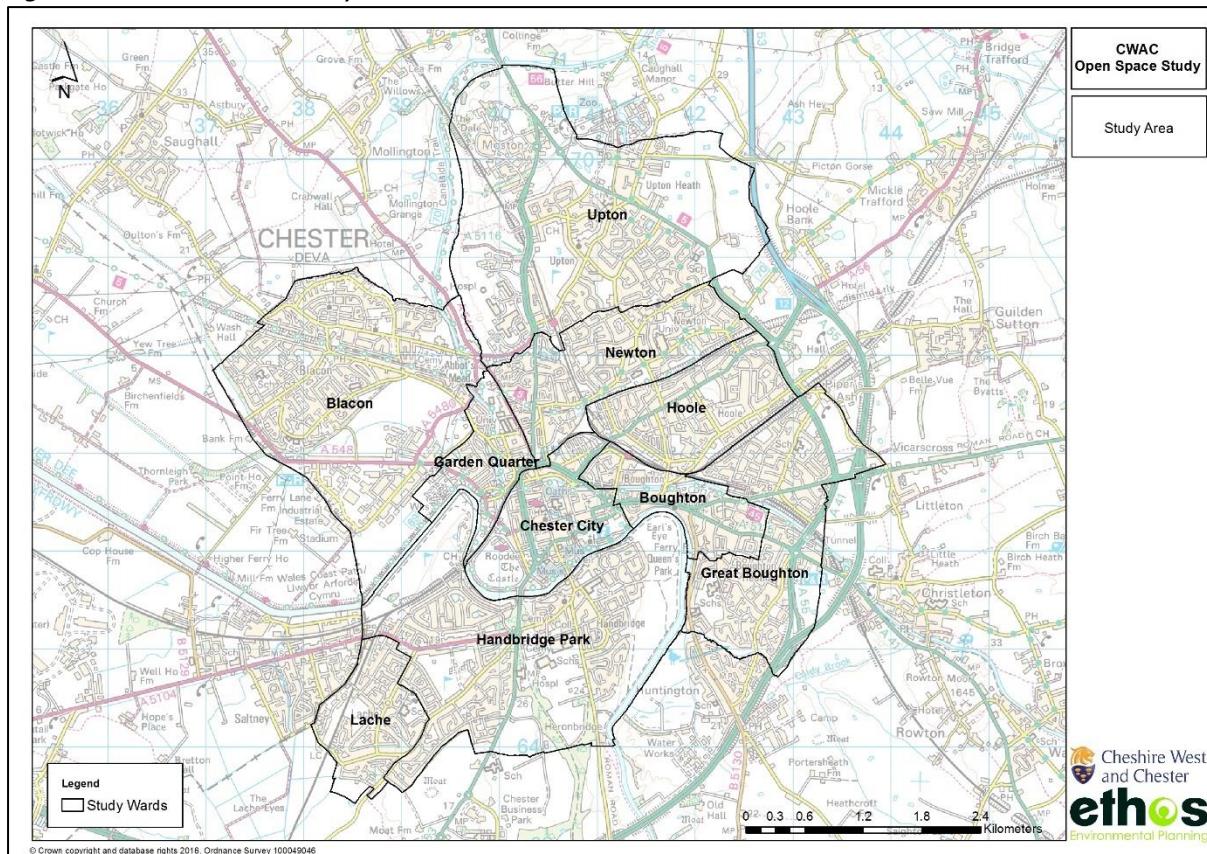
Figure 6 Open spaces within parishes that fall outside of study areas



1.4.4.2 Chester

This area includes the wards of Chester City, Boughton, Handbridge Park, Blacon, Lache, Garden Quarter, Newton and Hoole (this area is unparished). The wards of Upton and Great Boughton are also included within this area for the purpose of the study.

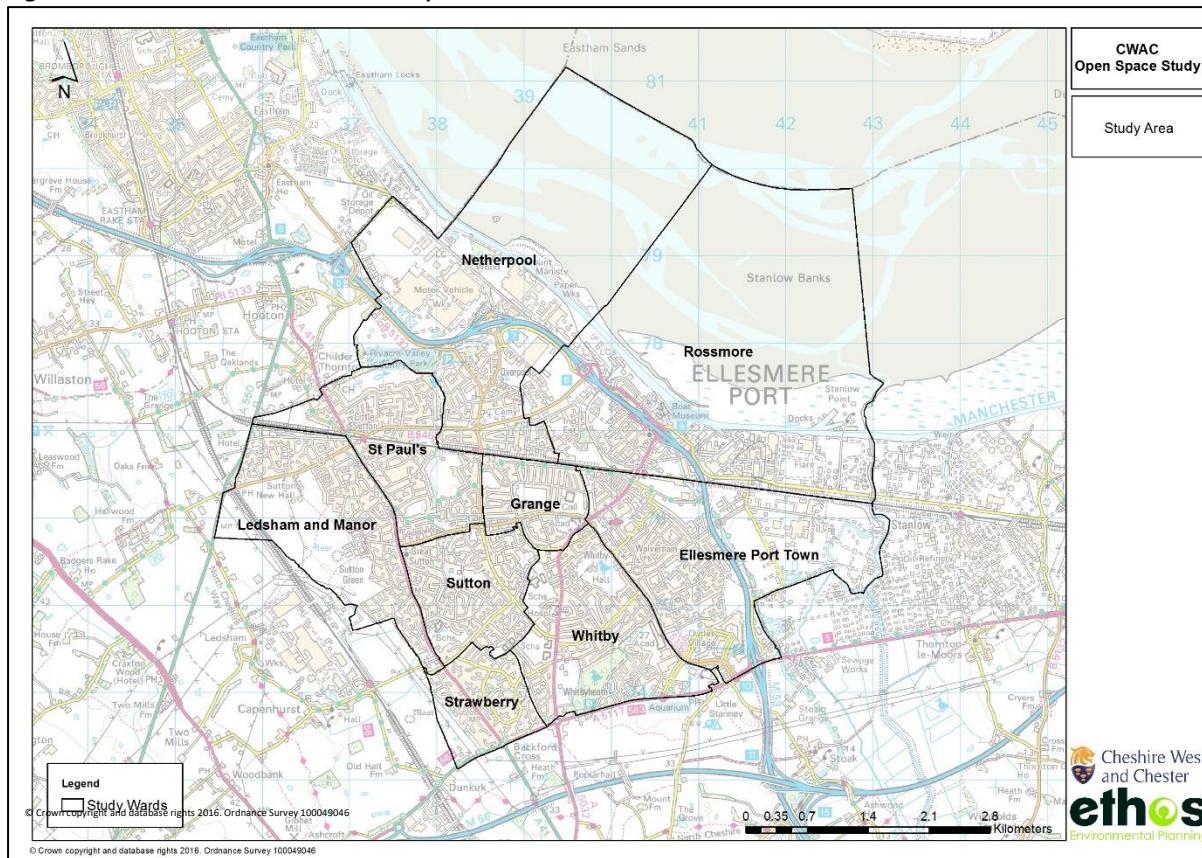
Figure 7 Chester study area



1.4.4.3 Ellesmere Port

This area includes the wards of Ellesmere Port Town, Rossmore, Whitby, Strawberry, Sutton, Grange, Netherpool, St Paul's, Ledsham and Manor.

Figure 8 Ellesmere Port study area



1.4.4.4 Rural study area

This study area includes the wards of Chester Villages, Dodleston and Huntington, Elton, Farndon, Frodsham, Gowy, Helsby, Kingsley, Little Neston and Burton, Malpas, Marbury, Neston, Parkgate, Saughall and Mollington, Shakerley, Tarporley, Tarvin and Kelsall, Tattenhall, Weaver and Cuddington and Willaston and Thornton as shown in figure 9. Within the rural area profile, more detailed analysis has also been undertaken across each of the ten Key Service Centres as shown in figure 10.

Figure 9 Rural study area

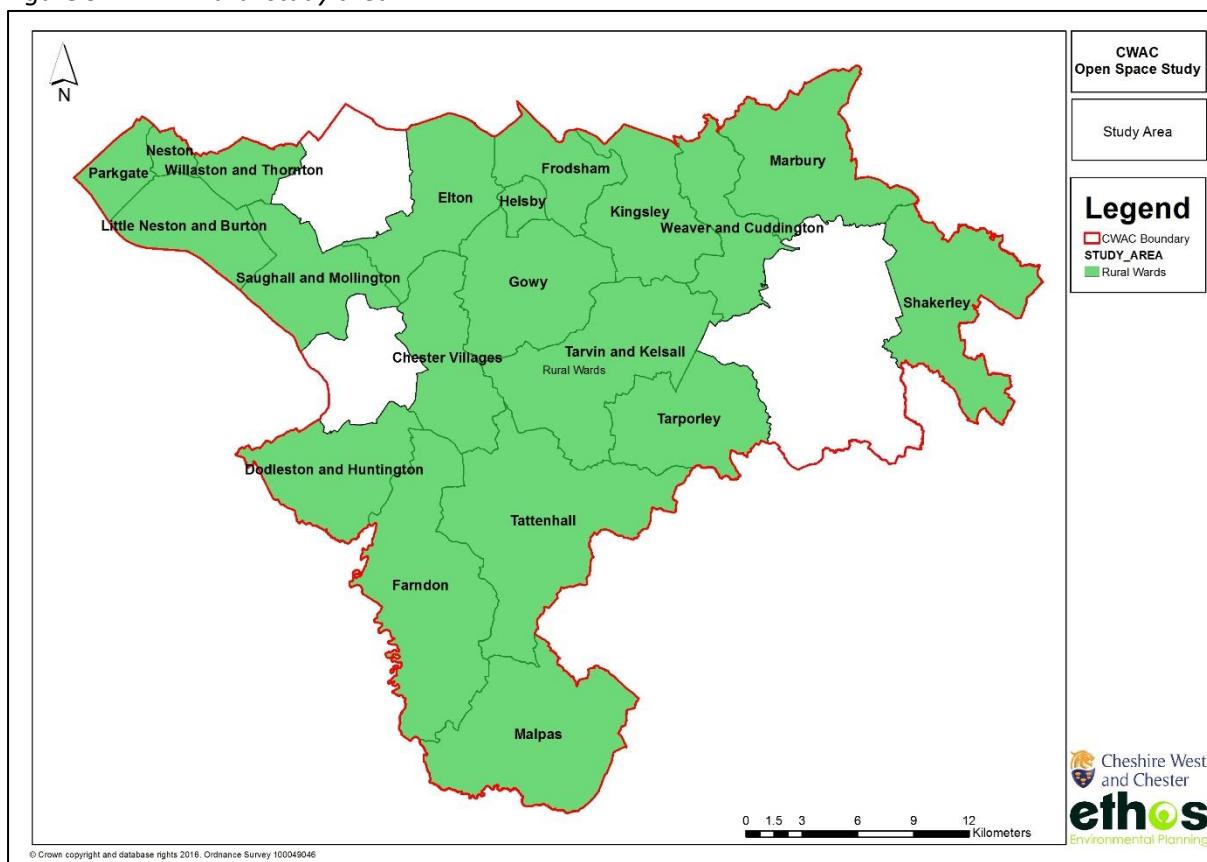
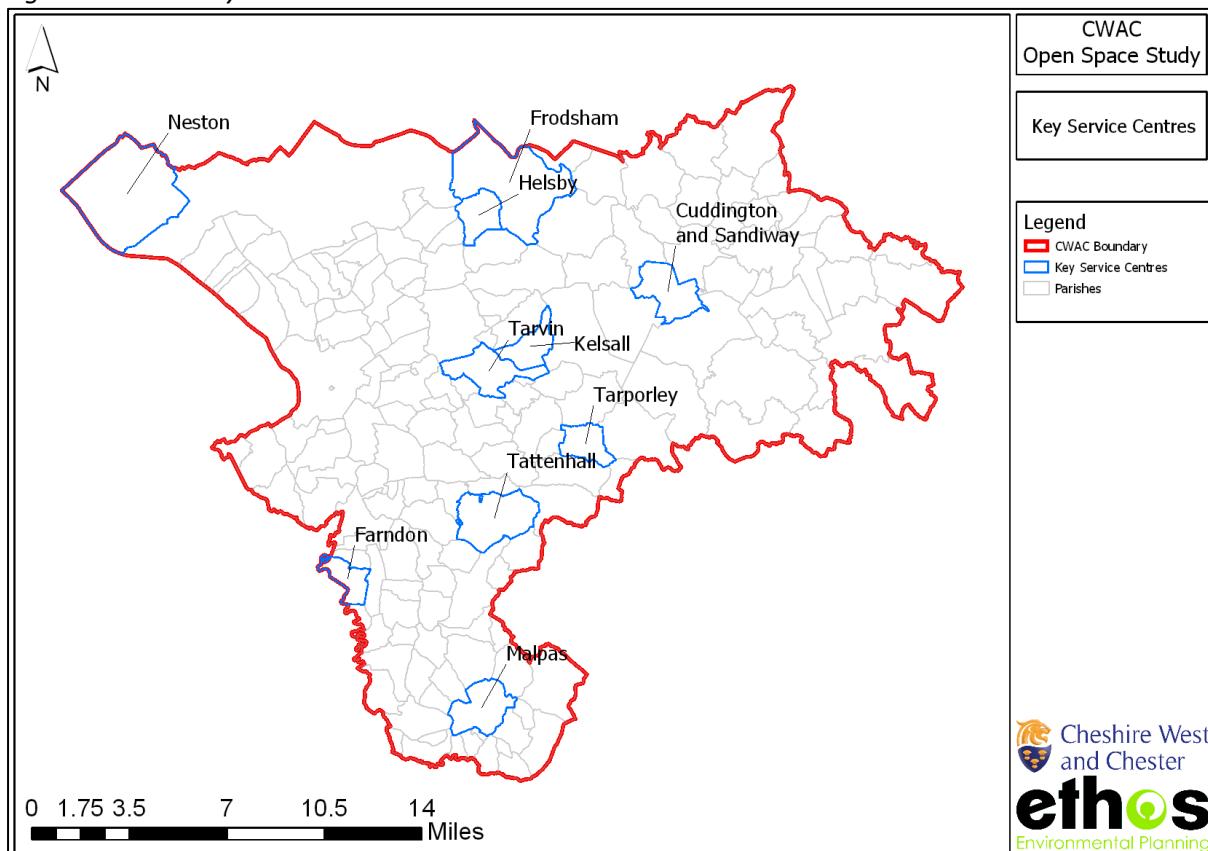


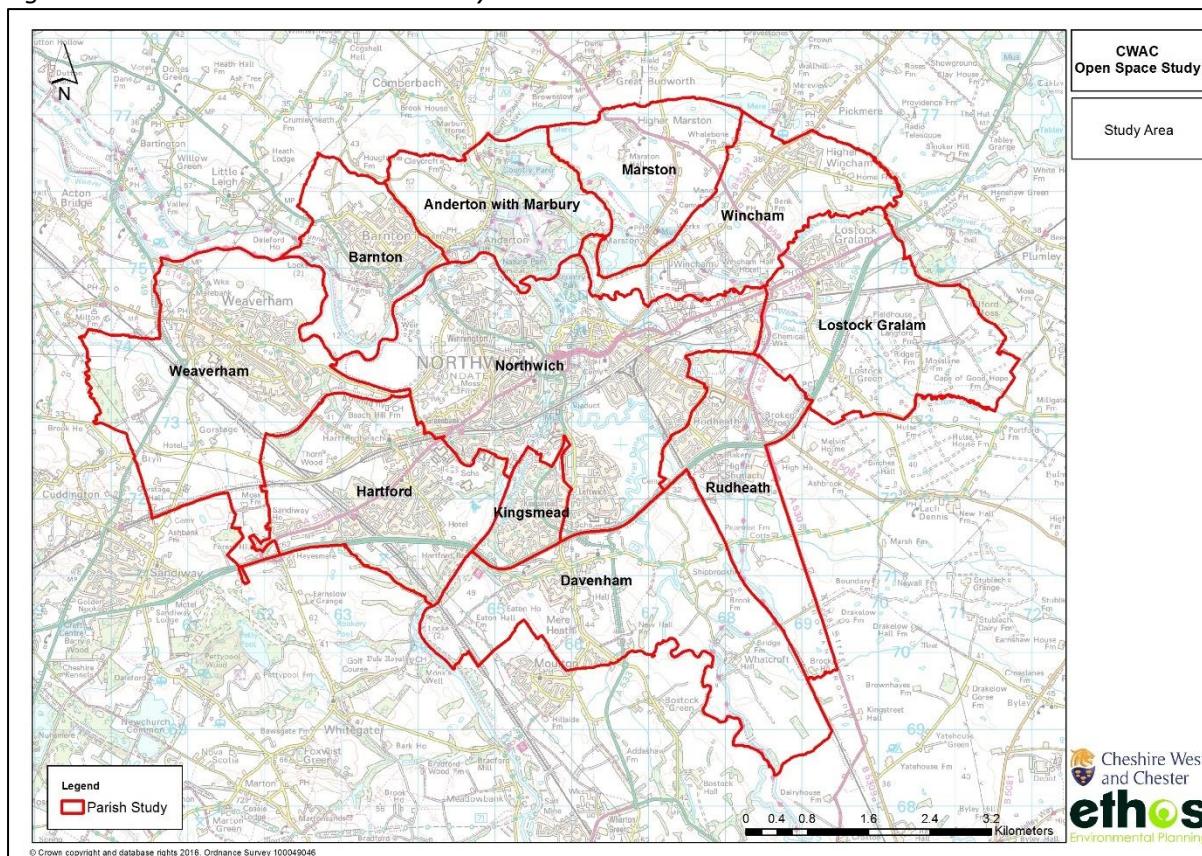
Figure 10 Key Service Centres



1.4.4.5 Northwich

For this study area, Northwich Parish forms the core, with the surrounding parishes of Barnton, Weaverham, Hartford, Kingsmead, Wincham, Lostock Gralam, Davenham, Rudheath Anderton with Marbury and Marston also included within this study area.

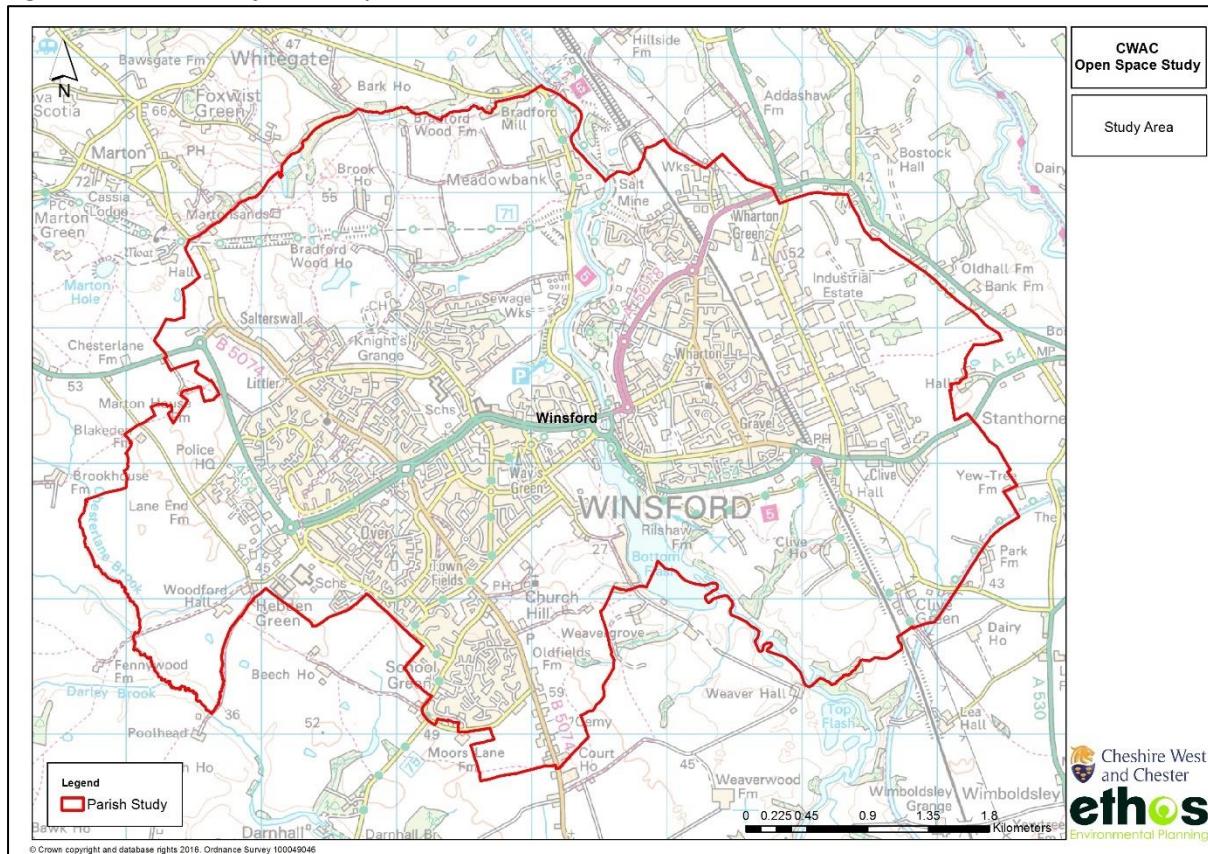
Figure 11 Northwich Study Area



1.4.4.6 Winsford

This study area comprises the parish of Winsford, as shown in figure 12.

Figure 12 Winsford Study Area



2.0 METHODOLOGY

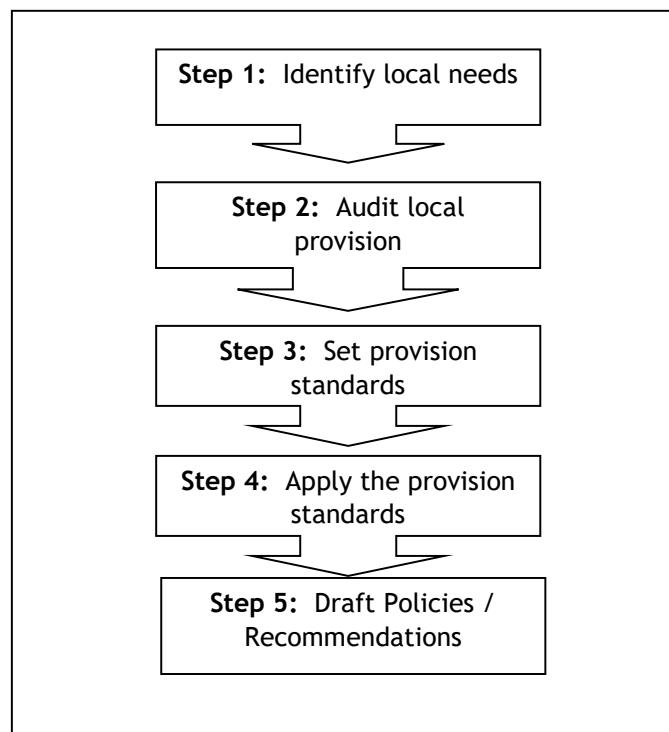
2.1 General

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

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

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

Figure 13 Summary of methodology



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

2.2 Identifying Local Need (Step 1)

The report examines identified local need for various types of open space, sports and recreational opportunities. It has drawn upon a range of survey and analytical techniques as well as a detailed review of existing consultation data and other relevant documentation. The report details the community consultation and research process that has been undertaken as part of the study as well as the main findings. The findings of this assessment are summarised in this document and full details are provided at appendix 1.

2.3 Audit of Existing Open Space Assets (Step 2)

2.3.1 Defining the scope of the audit

In order to build up an accurate picture of the current open space and play provision in Cheshire West and Chester, an audit of assets was carried out, this included:

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

Site visits were undertaken by Ethos at 490 open spaces and 301 play areas to assess the existing and potential quality issues with sites. The quality audit drew on criteria set out in the 'Green Flag Award'³, and sites were given an 'existing', 'potential' and 'gap' quality score. The audits were undertaken using a standardised methodology and consistent approach. However, audits of this nature can only ever be a snap-shot in time and their main purpose is to provide a consistent and objective assessment of a sites existing and potential quality rather than a full asset audit. Clearly, local communities may have aspirations which are not identified in the quality audit, but it is hoped that these can be explored further through site management plans and neighbourhood/parish plans as appropriate.

2.3.2 Approach to mapping

As part of the audit process, sites were mapped into their different functions using a multi-functional approach to mapping. The advantage of the multi-functional approach is that it gives a much more accurate picture of the provision of open space. This is more advantageous than the primary typology approach which tends to result in an over assessment of provision, and which can significantly impact decisions on quantity standards. The differences in approach are demonstrated in figures 14 and 15.

³ <http://www.greenflagaward.org.uk/judges/judging-criteria>

Figure 14 Primary approach to open space mapping

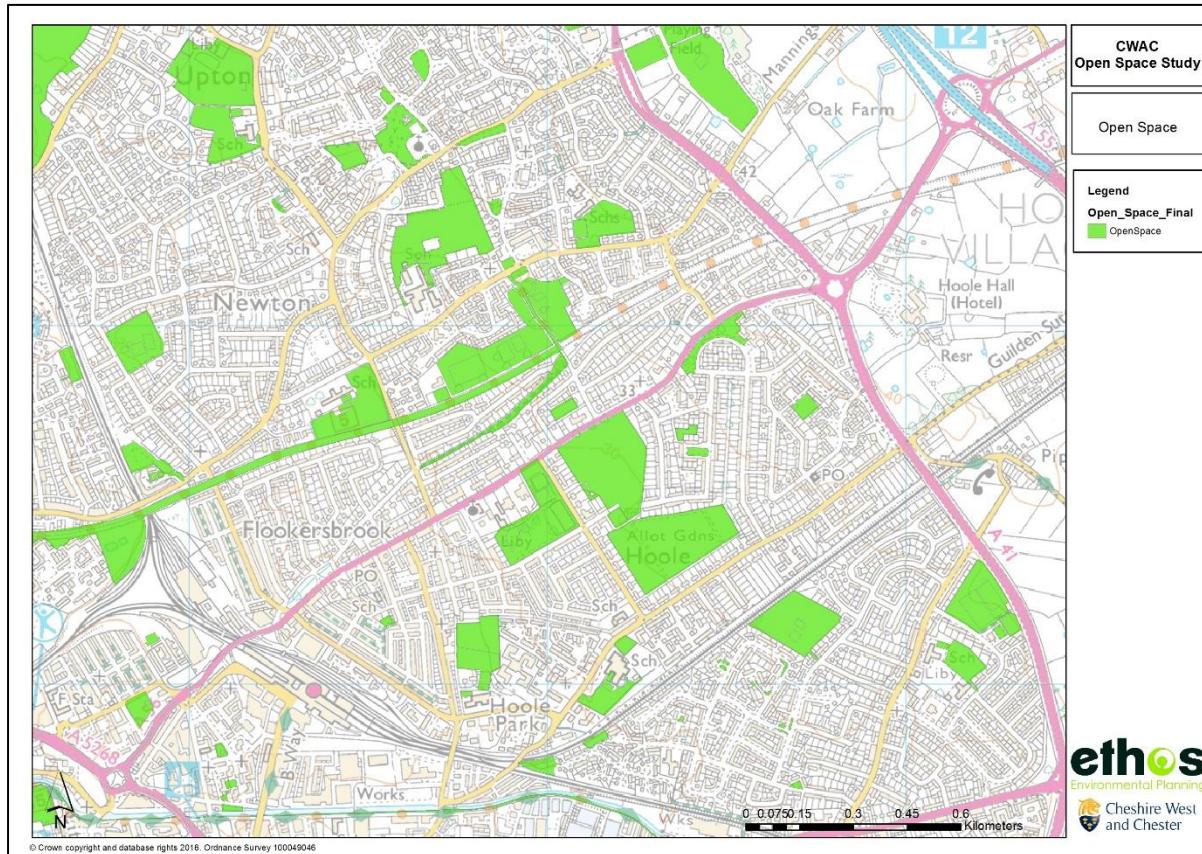
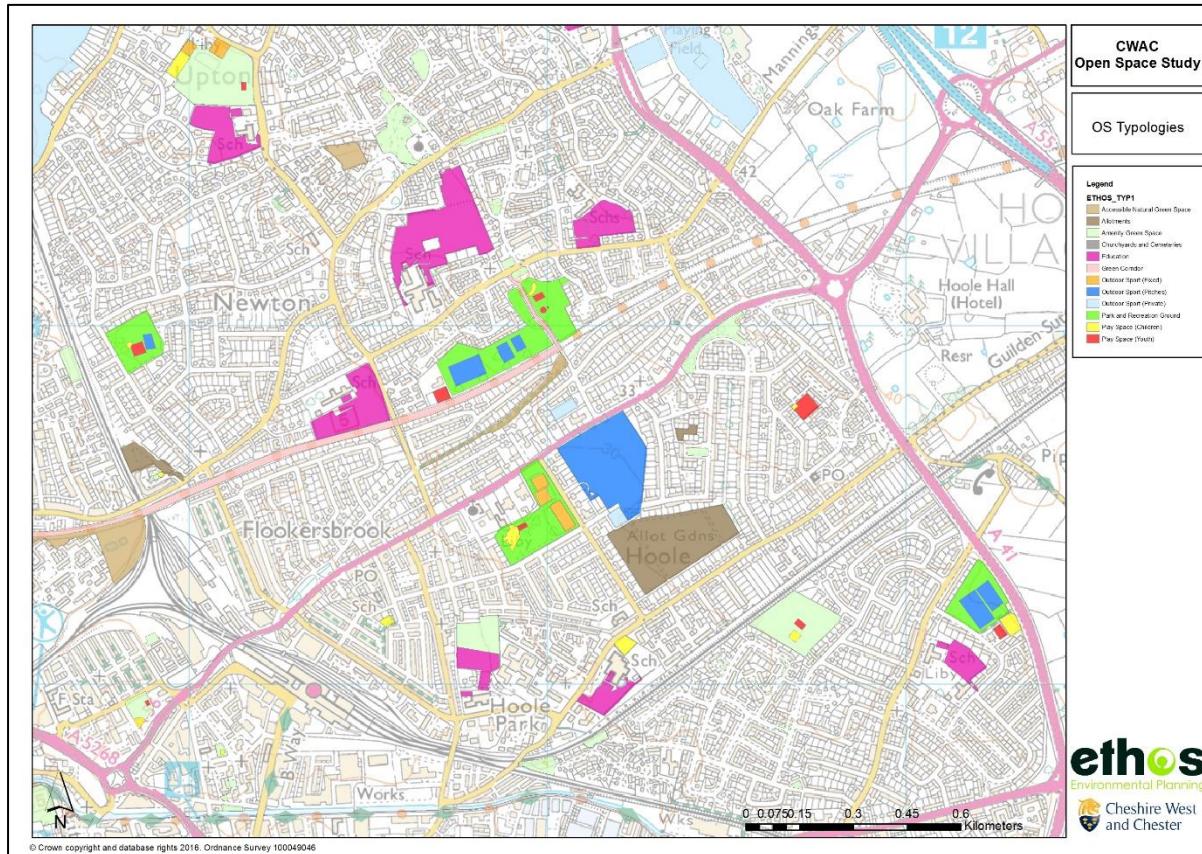


Figure 15 Multi-functional mapping of open space



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

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

- quantity;
- accessibility;
- quality.

Quantity

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

Access

Evidence from previous studies, the needs assessment and consideration of national benchmarks are used to develop access standards for open space. Typically standards are expressed as straight line walk times. A series of maps assessing access for different typologies are presented in the report (see section 7.3 of this report (part 1) for the borough wide overview, and section 4 of the area profiles (part 2) for more detail).

Quality

Quality standards have been developed drawing on previous studies and assessments, national benchmarks and good practice, evidence from the needs assessment and the findings of the quality audits. The quality standards also include recommended policies to guide the provision of new open space through development in the future.

2.5 Drafting Policy Recommendations (Step 5)

Section 8 of this report outlines higher level strategic options which may be applicable at town, parish, and study area wide level. The strategic options in the study are based on the strategic approach set out in CWAC Local Plan (Part 1) Policy SOC6 (see section 3.3.1 below) and address five key areas:

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

3.0 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

This section sets out a brief review of the most relevant national and local policies related to the study, which have been considered in developing the methodology and findings of the study.

Policies and strategies are subject to regular change, therefore the summary provided in this section was correct at the time of writing. Cheshire West and Chester Council reserve the right to change and update this section as policies change.

3.1 Introduction

The policy overview includes analysis of the Councils' existing strategies and policies. It also includes a review of other strategies of relevance at national and local levels and assesses their implications for the provision of open space, sport and recreation opportunities. In addition, an assessment of the relationship between the proposed study and other relevant Council strategies and initiatives is included.

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

3.2 National Strategic Context

3.2.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

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

- **Para 17 - Achieving Sustainable Development - Core Planning Principles:** Within the overarching roles that the planning system ought to play, a set of core land-use planning principles should underpin both plan-making and decision-taking.
- **Para 58 - Local and neighbourhood plans** should develop robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the area. **Para 73 - Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation** can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. The assessments should identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities in the local area. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sports and recreational provision is required.

- **Para 74** - Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:
 - an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
 - the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
 - the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.
- **Para 75** - Planning policies should protect and enhance public rights of way and access. Local authorities should seek opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails.
- **Para 99** - Local Plans should take account of climate change over the longer term, including factors such as flood risk, coastal change, water supply and changes to biodiversity and landscape.
- **Para 109** - The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment.

3.2.2 Green Infrastructure

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

The borough has a wide range of existing green infrastructure assets such as open spaces, parks and gardens, allotments, woodlands, street trees, fields, hedges, lakes, ponds, meadows and grassland playing fields, as well as footpaths, cycleways and waterways. However, the concept of GI looks beyond existing designations, seeking opportunities to increase function and connectivity of assets to maximise the benefits for the community.

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

The white paper⁴ recognised that a healthy natural environment is the foundation of sustained economic growth, prospering communities and personal wellbeing. It sets out how the value of nature can be mainstreamed across our society by facilitating local action; strengthening the connections between people and nature; creating a green economy and showing leadership in the EU and internationally.

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

3.2.4 Sporting Future - A New Strategy for an Active Nation

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

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

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

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

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

Funding will also be targeted at groups who have low participation rates to encourage those who do not take part in sport and physical activity to get involved. This includes supporting women, disabled people, those in lower socio-economic groups and older people.

3.2.5 Sport England Strategy – 'Towards and Active Nation' 2016-2021

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

- Dedicated funding to get children and young people active from the age of five, including a new fund for family based activities and offering training to at least two teachers in every secondary school in England to help them better meet the needs of all children, irrespective of their level of sporting ability.
- Working with the sport sector to put customers at the heart of everything they do, and using the principles of behaviour change to inform their work.

- Piloting new ways of working locally by investing in up to 10 places in England – a mix of urban and rural areas.
- Investing up to £30m in a new volunteering strategy, enabling more people to get the benefits of volunteering and attracting a new, more diverse range of volunteers.
- Helping sport keep pace with the digital expectations of customers – making it as easy to book a badminton court as a hotel room.
- Working closely with governing bodies of sport and others who support people who already play regularly, to help them become more efficient, sustainable and diversify their sources of funding.

3.3 Local Context

3.3.1 Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan

3.3.1.1 Overview

The Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies document was adopted in January 2015 and forms part of the statutory development plan for the borough. The Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies is the first local development document to be produced by Cheshire West and Chester Council. The purpose of this Plan is to provide the overall vision, strategic objectives, spatial strategy and strategic planning policies for the borough to 2030.

The Local Plan (Part One) is the starting point when considering planning applications and will be supported by the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies Plan (currently being prepared). This study is intended to better inform the development of the Local Plan (Part Two), and to ensure that a robust evidence base is available to support the emerging policies within it.

The vision for the borough is set out in Part 1 as follows:

- By 2030 Cheshire West and Chester will be a desirable and attractive place to live, work, learn and visit with vibrant towns and rural villages, reflecting the vision of the Sustainable Community Strategy. Development will reflect the character of local areas, conserving, managing and enhancing the valuable natural and historical environments, resources and assets.
- New housing and employment opportunities in sustainable and accessible locations will have enabled the borough to attract inward investment and business growth and enabled skills and jobs to be retained locally.
- Residents will have access to a range of high quality market and affordable homes and the needs of all our communities, in particular those of an ageing population, will be provided for. Opportunities for healthier lifestyles will be delivered through the provision of sport, recreation and social facilities.
- Positive adaptation to climate change will continue to be promoted and communities will be supported in taking positive action towards sustainable living. Sustainable use of resources and improved energy efficiency will achieve a reduction

in greenhouse gases and our carbon footprint. Waste will be managed in the most sustainable way and will be utilised as a valuable resource.

- Chester will continue its development as a prosperous sub-regional employment location, shopping and international tourist destination. The city will be a key asset to the borough with a thriving business, retail and tourism economy and as a centre for learning. The setting and special character of Chester will be maintained.
- Ellesmere Port will be a confident industrial area, a hub for high quality industries and technologies including the green energy and waste sector, attracting inward investment. Perceptions of the town will be enhanced as a result of improvements to the image of the town as a prosperous area.
- Northwich will have a vibrant town centre based around the regeneration and development of new retail, leisure and housing development opportunities. The waterways and surrounding countryside will provide an important resource for the recreational needs of local residents and visitors.
- Winsford will be integral to the improved prosperity of the borough particularly through development to meet the needs of local communities, whilst protecting the character of the Cheshire countryside and individual identity of rural settlements. The market towns and villages identified as Key Service Centres will remain viable settlements and will fulfil their role and function in providing access to services and facilities for their local and surrounding communities.

3.3.1.2 Strategic Development

Over the period of 2010 to 2030 the Plan will deliver at least:

- 22,000 new dwellings
- 365 hectares of land for employment development to meet a range of types and sizes of site

Development will be brought forward in line with the following settlement hierarchy:

1. The majority of new development will be located within or on the edge of the city of Chester and towns of Ellesmere Port, Northwich and Winsford to maximise the use of existing infrastructure and resources and allow homes, jobs and other facilities to be located close to each other and accessible by public transport.
2. To maintain the vitality and viability of rural areas, an appropriate level of new development will be brought forward to support new homes and economic and social development. Development will be focused in the Key Service Centres of Cuddington and Sandiway, Farndon, Frodsham, Helsby, Kelsall, Malpas, Neston and Parkgate, Tarporley, Tattenhall and Tarvin, which represent the most sustainable rural locations.
3. An appropriate level of development will also be brought forward in smaller rural settlements which have adequate services and facilities and access to public transport. These local service centres will be identified in the Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies Plan.

The following housing numbers are set out within the plan:

STRAT 3 Chester

Chester is the key economic driver for the borough and will deliver at least **5,200** new dwellings of which in the region of 1,300 dwellings will be provided through Green Belt release.

STRAT 4 Ellesmere port

Development in Ellesmere Port has the potential to deliver substantial economic growth through the availability of significant sites for industrial, manufacturing and distribution purposes. Further housing is planned to complement the town's role as a key employment location.

The Local Plan makes provision for at least **4,800** new dwellings in Ellesmere Port. To meet this requirement the following land is identified:

- Ledsham Road is identified on the Policies Map for up to 2,000 dwellings providing for a range and mix of housing types, including affordable housing in line with Policy 'SOC 1 Delivering affordable housing', together with essential community infrastructure including the provision of a new primary school. Development should be brought forward in line with an agreed development brief for the site to ensure the delivery of a high quality urban extension to Ellesmere Port.

STRAT 5 Northwich

Northwich will provide a key focus for development in the east of the borough.

Provision will be made for at least **4,300** new dwellings and 30ha of additional land for business and industrial development. The Green Belt around Northwich will be maintained and the character and individuality of the settlements that form the wider built up area of Northwich safeguarded.

STRAT 6 Winsford

Winsford will provide a key focus for development in the east of the borough and development proposals will help to support the continued regeneration in the town.

Provision will be made for at least **3,500** new dwellings and 35ha of additional land for business and industrial development.

The area profiles (part 2 of this report) will take the housing numbers for Chester, Ellesmere Port, Northwich and Winsford into account when analysing the need for future provision of open space.

Key strategic policies relating to open space

SOC 5 - Health and well-being

In order to meet the health and well-being needs of our residents proposals will be supported that:

- provide new or improved health facilities across the borough, particularly in areas of recognised need
- support improved links to healthcare in rural areas
- promote safe and accessible environments and developments with good access by walking, cycling and public transport
- support opportunities to widen and strengthen the borough's cultural, sport, recreation and leisure offer
- consider the specific requirements of different groups in the community (e.g. families with children, older people, people with disabilities, service families) in all relevant development work to reduce poverty and deprivation across the borough, particularly in areas of identified need
- promote high quality greenspace, and access to this across the borough, particularly in areas of recognised need.

Development that gives rise to significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life (e.g. soil, noise, water, air or light pollution, and land instability, etc) including residential amenity, will not be allowed.

SOC 6 – Open space, sport and recreation

The Council will seek to protect, manage and enhance existing open spaces, sport and recreation facilities to provide a network of diverse, multi-functional open spaces. Proposals will be supported that:

- Improve the quality and quantity of accessible open space, sport and recreation facilities in the local area
- Provide innovative solutions to improving the network of existing open spaces, increase accessibility to green corridors, and enhance biodiversity
- Improve access to open space for disabled people, pedestrians and children's play facilities

Proposals on existing open space, sport and recreation facilities will only be permitted where:

- A. Equivalent or better replacement quality and quantity open space, sport or recreation facilities will be provided in a suitable location; or
- B. An assessment has clearly demonstrated the site to be surplus for its current open space, sport or recreation function; And
- C. It could not fulfil other unsatisfied open space, sport or recreation needs; And
- D. In circumstances where the open space, sport or recreation facility has been demonstrated to be surplus to need for that function in accordance with part C of this policy any proposed

replacement will remedy a deficiency in another type of open space, sport or recreation facility in the local area; or

E. The development will be incidental to the use of the open space, sport or recreation facility.

Development will be required to incorporate or contribute towards the provision of an appropriate level and quality of open space, sport and recreation provision.

ENV 2 – Landscape

The Local Plan will protect and, wherever possible, enhance landscape character and local distinctiveness. This will be achieved by:

- The identification of key gaps in the Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies Plan between settlements outside the Green Belt that serve to protect and maintain their character
- Supporting the designation of Local Green Space
- Protecting the character of the borough's estuaries and undeveloped coast.

Development should:

- Take full account of the characteristics of the development site, its relationship with its surroundings and where appropriate views into, over and out of the site.
- Recognise, retain and incorporate features of landscape quality into the design.

ENV 3 – Green Infrastructure

The Local Plan will support the creation, enhancement, protection and management of a network of high quality multi-functional Green Infrastructure. This will be achieved by:

- Development incorporating new and/or enhanced Green Infrastructure of an appropriate type, standard and size or contributing to alternative provision elsewhere.
- Increased planting of trees and woodlands, particularly in urban areas and the urban fringe.

ENV 4 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity

The Local Plan will safeguard and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity through the identification and protection of sites and/or features of international, national and local importance.

Sites will be protected from loss or damage taking account of:

- The hierarchy of designations of international, national and local importance
- The irreplaceability of habitats, sites and/or features and contribution to the borough's ecological network of sites and features
- Impact on priority habitats and protected/priority species

Development should not result in any net loss of natural assets, and should seek to provide net gains. Where there is unavoidable loss or damage to habitats, sites or features because of exceptional overriding circumstances, mitigation and compensation will be required to ensure there is no net loss of environmental value.

3.3.2 Infrastructure Delivery Plan

To ensure the delivery of infrastructure improvements, to secure the future of sustainable communities throughout Cheshire West and Chester, and meet the wider sustainability objectives of the borough, the Council will:

- support the provision of appropriate new infrastructure, including schemes intended to mitigate and adapt to climate change and any cross boundary schemes necessary to deliver the priorities of the Local Plan where this will have no significant adverse impact upon recognised environmental assets.
- support measures to protect, enhance or improve access to existing facilities, services and amenities that contribute to the quality of life of residents, businesses and visitors, including access to information and communication technologies (ICT).
- facilitate the timely provision of additional facilities, services and infrastructure to meet identified needs, whether arising from new developments or existing community need, in locations that are appropriate and accessible.

To facilitate the delivery of the above, new development will, where appropriate, be required to contribute towards the Council's identified infrastructure priorities in accordance with Circular 5/2005, Community Infrastructure Levy regulations or successor regulations/guidance.

Other planning obligations will be directly related to the nature and potential impact of a development taking into account material considerations including viability of a development.

The timing of provision of infrastructure and facilities will be carefully considered in order to ensure that appropriate provision is in place before development is occupied.

Within this policy, a list of types of infrastructure are listed which include:

- natural environment assets including green infrastructure and open space; and
- sport and recreational provision.

The Council has submitted its Community Infrastructure Levy Draft Charging Schedule and related evidence to the Planning Inspectorate and is currently undergoing the process of examination. Recommendations in relation to CIL and open space are made in section 8 of this report.

3.3.3 Council Plan 2016-2020 'Helping the Borough to Thrive'

The Council Plan sets the overall direction for the Council for 2016-20, and:

- outlines the vision and priorities of the organisation;
- describes the difference the Council are seeking to make and the actions required;
- provides a focus for all services and decisions;
- informs the allocation of resources;
- fully aligns with the priorities shared with other partner organisations;
- helps the Council to monitor progress and take stock of their achievements.

A key theme throughout this document is a **vision to help the borough - including residents, communities and the local economy - to thrive by 2020.**

10 specific priorities have been developed as follows:

Thriving residents

- All of our families, children and young people are supported to get the best start in life
- Older people and vulnerable adults are compassionately supported to lead fulfilled and independent lives
- Vulnerable adults and children feel safe and are protected

Thriving communities

- Cleanest, safest and most sustainable neighbourhoods in the country
- Good quality and affordable housing that meets the needs of our diverse communities
- Vibrant and healthy communities with inclusive leisure, heritage and culture
- Our resources are well managed and reflect the priorities of our residents

Thriving economy

- People are well educated, skilled and earn a decent living
- A great place to do business
- A well connected and accessible borough

3.3.4 Cheshire West and Chester Open Space Assessment (Jan 2011)

The study drew on an assessment of local need to provide the baseline. This included a desk based strategy review; consultation with households; children and young people; and key stakeholders including Council officers, community groups and Town and Parish Councils.

An audit of existing provision was undertaken using existing data sources and from meetings with Council officers. Sites were classified using their primary purpose, although the secondary function of sites was considered where appropriate. All sites were then quality assessed against a number of criteria.

Ward boundaries were used for the analysis and they were split according to whether they were predominately urban or rural.

Table 3 shows the recommended standards for quantity, quality and access. The assessment was reviewed in detail within the Cheshire West and Chester Consultation Report (Section 4.2.1). The standards set out below will be reviewed within section 6 of this report.

Table 3 Recommended Standards in Open Space Assessment (Jan 2011)

Typology	Quantity Standard	Access Standard	Quality Standard
Parks and Gardens	0.37ha/1000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urban Wards – 15 min walk time (720m) Rural Wards – 15 min drive time 	<p>Essential:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clean and litter free Well kept grass Flowers, trees and shrubs Clearly defined and well maintained footpaths Seating Dog and litter bins A range of facilities <p>Desirable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Toilets (at larger sites) Events/activities (particularly at larger sites) Park wardens/CCTV/security measures Information Boards Lighting Car Park and cycle storage facilities
Natural and semi natural open space	1.5ha/1000 (to be applied to new development only).	10 minute walk time (480m)	<p>Essential:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clean and litter free Clearly defined footpaths Trees Wildlife and conservation benefits <p>Desirable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dog and litter bins Parking (at larger sites) and cycle storage Seating Water features Information boards
Amenity Green Space	0.81ha/1000	10min walk (480m)	<p>Essential:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clean and litter free Seating Level surface Litter and dog bins <p>Desirable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flowers and trees Footpaths Lighting (where appropriate)/overlooked to aid perceptions of personal security
Provision for Children (Below 12)	No standard set	10 minute walk time (480m)	<p>Essential:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A variety of challenging and exciting play facilities for a range of ages

Typology	Quantity Standard	Access Standard	Quality Standard
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean and litter free • Well kept grass and safety surfacing • Appropriate boundaries • Litter bins • Conformity with national guidance including size (to be a minimum of LEAP size) buffer zones and location.
Provision for Young People (above 12)	No standard set	<p>15 minute walk time (720m)</p> <p>Access to a strategic facility within a 15 minute drivetime.</p>	<p>Essential:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenging and exciting play facilities • Clean and litter free • Well kept grass and safety surfacing • Appropriate boundaries • Litter bins • Seating <p>Desirable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dog free area • Community involvement • Appropriate location – overlooked/natural surveillance
Allotments	0.15ha/1000	<p>15 minute walk time (720m)</p>	<p>Essential:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality boundaries • Clean, tidy and well maintained • Composting and litter bins • Features enhancing safety and security <p>Desirable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice boards at site entrances • Toilets • Clearly defined access routes suitable for residents of all ages • Accessible water supply • Parking facilities at sites where residents have to travel by car to access them
Outdoor Sports Facilities	<p>Pitches: Provision – protection of existing provision. Standard to be superseded by standard set in Playing Pitch Strategy 2011).</p> <p>Tennis Courts:</p>	<p>Grass pitches – 10 minute walk time</p> <p>Multi pitch site – 10 minute drive time</p> <p>Synthetic Pitches – 20 minutes drive time</p> <p>Bowling Greens – 10</p>	<p>Essential:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean and litter free • Effective maintenance and management • Parking facilities • Good site access <p>Desirable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate specification for key users (designed in accordance with NGB guidance) • Changing facilities • Toilets • Accessible pricing • Lighting and security measures • Ancillary provision – bar etc.

Typology	Quantity Standard	Access Standard	Quality Standard
	0.45 courts/1000 Bowling Greens: 0.23 greens/1000 Golf Courses: No standard set	minutes drive time Tennis Courts – 10 minutes drive time Golf Course – 20 minute drive time	
Cemeteries and churchyards	2.34 of burial space will be required up to 2026.	No standard set	<p>Essential:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean and litter free • Dog and litter bins • Clearly defined footpaths • Parking and cycle storage <p>Desirable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well kept and appropriately managed grass and vegetation • Seating • On site security • Wildlife and conservation benefits
Green Corridors	No standard set	No standard set	<p>Essential:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean and litter free • Dog and litter bins at entrance/exit points • Clearly defined footpaths • Parking and cycle storage <p>Desirable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flowers, trees, and natural features • Seating • Clear signage
Civic Spaces	No standard set	No standard set	<p>Essential:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean and litter free • Clearly defined and even footpaths • Flowers, trees and natural features <p>Desirable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dog and litter bins • Parking and cycle storage • Seating • Public transport links

3.3.5 Cheshire West and Chester Playing Pitch Strategy (October 2015)

This report presents a supply and demand assessment of playing pitch facilities in accordance with Sport England's Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance: An approach to developing and delivering a playing pitch strategy. It has been followed to develop a clear picture of the balance between the local supply of, and demand for, playing pitches and other outdoor

sports facilities.

A steering group has been set up to lead and drive the PPS forward, and to ensure the delivery of its recommendations and actions.

The following types of outdoor sports facilities were agreed by the steering group for inclusion in the Assessment and Strategy, and some of the key summary points from the assessment report are highlighted:

- **Football pitches (including 3G AGPs)**

- *There is an overall shortfall of match equivalent sessions to satisfy current and future demand for grass football in CWAC. It is likely that the required quantitative shortfall can in part be met through improving pitch quality (and therefore capacity) and securing community use at education sites.*
- *In order to satisfy current (training) demand by analysis area, there is a need for at least 14 full size 3G pitches (on the basis of 60 teams per pitch) across CWAC resulting in a current shortfall of 11.*

- **Cricket pitches**

- *There is a shortfall of pitches in the Chester, Northwich and Rural South analysis areas. This shortfall can be attributed solely to overplay, with no spare capacity existing on any pitches within the three analysis areas.*
- *By preventing overplay it is anticipated that the majority of future demand can be accommodated on the current stock of pitches.*

- **Rugby union pitches**

- *There is an overall shortfall of senior pitches amounting to 11.5 match equivalent sessions, of which all is identified in the Chester, Ellesmere Port & Neston and Northwich analysis areas.*
- *Improving pitch quality will help to provide greater capacity throughout CWAC. First and foremost, this can be done through the installation of drainage systems and improving maintenance.*
- *One of the main reasons for overplay is training on match pitches. However, another reason for overplay is mini teams playing on senior pitches.*
- *A more practical way to alleviate overplay would be to install additional floodlighting.*

- **Rugby league**

- *There is one rugby league pitch within CWAC, located at Cheshire County Sports Club.*
- *In order for Chester Gladiators RLFC to continue to grow, there is a requirement for access to an additional pitch in the Area. In addition, an additional pitch could support use by the University as its rugby league team currently uses a rugby union pitch.*

- **Hockey/artificial grass pitches (AGPs)**
 - *The key issues are to provide a solution to the displaced demand expressed by Deeside Ramblers Hockey Club and Neston South Wirral Hockey Club and the latent demand expressed by Chester Hockey Club. In addition, there is a need to build future capacity for all hockey clubs that express a desire to grow, for example, Chester Hockey Club reports aspirations for growth which couldn't be accommodated at Cheshire County Sports Club.*
 - *Ensuring Neston Recreation Centre is re-provided to a good standard will ensure the return of teams from Neston South Wirral Hockey Club.*
- **Other grass pitch sports (Walking football, Gaelic football, American football and Lacrosse).**
 - *Walking football - Participation in the sport has risen substantially over the last three years. If demand continues to grow, increased access to AGPs may be required. All sessions are currently operated outside of the peak time and therefore could be accommodated on the current supply of AGPs.*
 - *Gaelic football - There is one Gaelic football team in CWAC, Chester GAA St Patricks. The Club is currently without a home pitch as there are no suitable pitches within CWAC, causing home matches to be played in Manchester. It is a recommendation that a pitch is provided within CWAC, preferably in the Chester Analysis Area as this would be ideal for the Club. Providing a Gaelic football pitch will ensure displaced demand returns to the Area and also secures the clubs long term stability.*
 - *American football – no issues*
 - *Lacrosse - Whilst there are no community lacrosse clubs in CWAC, it is played by the University of Chester, which fields two teams. The teams use a pitch at the university's Kingsway Campus and train on the 3G AGP at the main Campus. The proposed development on the site (relating to the potential loss of Sealand Road Sports Ground) will see additional football pitches marked out, as well as a rugby pitch. This will result in the lacrosse pitch being over marked onto a football pitch and potentially overplayed.*

3.3.6 Cheshire West and Chester Council Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2015-2020

This Health and Wellbeing Strategy sets out the strategic framework for improving health and reducing inequalities across Cheshire West and Chester. It builds on the work of the local organisations that form the Health and Wellbeing Board and is a result of our shared commitment to making the borough an even more healthy, vibrant and resilient place to live. The focus is on prevention, which will enable more people to live healthier, more active and fulfilling lives, and provide a greater proportion of resources to support the most vulnerable and needy people living in the borough.

The vision for this strategy is: 'to reduce health inequalities and improve the health and

wellbeing of people in the borough, enabling our residents to live more fulfilling, independent and healthy lives. We will do this by working with communities and residents to improve opportunities for all to have a healthy, safe and fulfilling life’.

Below are the four priorities for Cheshire West and Chester, and the high level outcomes associated with each:

1. Starting Well – Every child and young person has the best start in life (excess weight is one of a number of indicators);
2. Living Well – People have healthier lifestyles (indicators include excess weight, physical activity and killed and seriously injured (KSI) casualties).
3. Mental Health and Wellbeing - Improved mental health, wellbeing and personal resilience where mental health is valued equally with physical health.
4. Ageing Well - Older people live healthier and more independent lives, feel supported and have a good quality of life.

3.3.7 Other strategies and documents

Other strategies and documents were also reviewed as part of the local needs assessment (consultation report – section 4.2) including:

- Green Space Strategic Review – Consultation Findings Report (2012) Draft V1;
- Chester Waterways Strategy (2012);
- Equestrian Strategy;
- Rights of way improvement plan (2011-2016);
- Rural Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan (2011);
- Cheshire Biodiversity Action Plan (CrBAP).

3.4 Wider Benefits of Open Space

The Natural Environment White Paper (2011) recognises that a healthy natural environment is the foundation of sustained economic growth, prospering communities and personal wellbeing. The Council’s Local Plan, Council Plan and Health and Wellbeing Strategy reflect this within their vision and strategic priorities (sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.3 and 3.3.6).

The Local Plan sets out the vision for the area which includes:

‘By 2030 Cheshire West and Chester will be a desirable and attractive place to live, work, learn and visit with vibrant towns and rural villages, reflecting the vision of the Sustainable Community Strategy. Development will reflect the character of local areas, conserving, managing and enhancing the valuable natural and historical environments, resources and assets’.

Open spaces will play a leading role in helping to realise this vision. The borough’s open spaces provide publically accessible spaces for residents to pursue active lifestyles; venues for community events and activities; space for sustainable food production; sustainable transport

routes; and through provision of a functioning green infrastructure, they also help to attract and retain investment.

There is a raft of evidence that highlights the importance of good quality open space for health and well-being and community benefits, some of which is included within section 3.3 of the consultation report/needs assessment (appendix 1).

This study will help to ensure that open spaces continue to deliver these benefits until 2030, supporting the delivery of the vision within the Local Plan, and the strategic priorities (where relevant) within the Council Plan.

This study identifies where surpluses and deficiencies in provision exist, which will enable Cheshire West and Chester to work with partners to enhance existing, and create new, provision - meeting the needs of those living and working within the borough. This in turn will inform the Council's services plans for the existing, and developing estate. The five open space area profiles will help to inform and direct efforts more locally and will provide evidence for related work including a potential Green Infrastructure Strategy. Finally, the results of the quality audit will help to target resources where they are most needed in specific sites - guiding the aspirations and objectives of management plans.

4.0 LOCAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT (STEP 1)

4.1 Introduction

This section provides a summary of the Open Spaces Study Community and Stakeholder Needs Assessment. It provides a snapshot of key issues and priorities at an overarching level (as identified by strategic stakeholders and the wider community). Detail of findings on individual categories of open space and outdoor recreational facilities can be found in the full Community and Stakeholder Consultation Report (Appendix 1).

The summary is comprised of 4 sections:

- Summary of consultation method (what was done).
- Key findings, issues and priorities
- Observations and considerations
- Moving forward - how the findings influence the main Open Spaces Study report

4.2 Consultation Method

The Open Spaces Study covers all kinds of recreational and public open spaces/facilities and for all of these types the consultation process collected views on whether stakeholders (strategic and community) thought there were enough of such spaces; what the quality of provision is like; how accessible the different kinds of open spaces are; and what the issues and priorities are in relation to potential future improvements and new provision.

The consultation and research programme was undertaken from July to November 2015. Questionnaire surveys were undertaken as below:

- An online survey utilising the Council's Citizen's Panel (supplemented by a postal general household survey)
- Surveys of town and parish councils and neighbouring local authorities
- Local groups and organisations' survey (including play and youth organisations)
- Surveys of sports national governing bodies and local sports/recreation clubs.

In addition to the above a series of one to one stakeholder interviews was undertaken; and existing consultation findings, strategy documents and other relevant material were reviewed.

4.3 Key findings - issues and priorities

4.3.1 Quantity

- Overall, for most kinds of open space and outdoor recreational facilities stakeholders indicated that borough-wide there is enough⁵; and the issue is more of maintaining and improving the quality of what exists.
- Stakeholders do however indicate that overall they believe there is a shortfall in the provision of outdoor facilities for young people and many highlight a need for additional allotment plots/sites.
- Broadly speaking stakeholders suggested that there are enough bowling greens, tennis courts and outdoor netball courts to meet demand; retaining existing facilities and aiming for improvements to the quality of key sites being the main priority.
- The level of provision varies considerably across the borough and some parts of the borough do appear to have shortfalls in specific types of open space – the detail can be found within section 7.2 of this report, and within the five area profiles (part 2).

4.3.2 Quality

- Borough-wide stakeholders indicated that, in general, the quality of most kinds of outdoor facilities/open spaces is of adequate or better quality.
- However the quality of open spaces was noted as being very variable across the borough (as confirmed in the quality audit (appendix 2 of this report)).
- Open spaces broadly thought to be good or better by a clear majority across the borough are parks and gardens; country parks/countryside/woodlands; and local recreation grounds.
- Significant numbers of stakeholders highlighted facilities for teenagers including multi-use games areas as being of poor quality.

4.3.3 Access

- There is great variance in the willingness of residents to spend time travelling to different types of facility and open space; and the normal mode of travel to different kinds of open space. For example, while many people will travel by car for 20 minutes to visit country parks and nature reserves, many would not expect to travel more than 10 minutes on foot to access play areas or allotments.
- Connectivity to and within sites is of great importance. For example, a significant majority indicated that that they would visit spaces more often (and travel further) by foot and cycle if the quality of the route was improved.
- Some sectors of the community face particular barriers to access such as disabled people; children and young people; households in the more isolated rural areas⁶ and those in the more deprived urban wards of the study area.

⁵ This is particularly notable in relation to parks and gardens, local recreation grounds and bowling greens.

⁶ E.g. poor public transport, long walks to facilities or general inaccessibility.

- Disability Access - the CWAC Senior Access Officer highlighted the importance of adopting the principle of Least Restrictive Access (LRA)⁷. This recognises that it is not possible for all open spaces, particularly in the countryside, to be made fully accessible; but requires that any work undertaken, whether planned improvement or ad hoc maintenance, should meet the highest standards of access possible for that work.

4.4 Issues and Priorities

- The importance of biodiversity, ecological networks and the health and wellbeing benefits associated with access to good quality open space were key issues highlighted throughout the consultation.
- The multi-functional value and potential of sites was recognised and it was suggested that consideration made for developing "hub" type open space provision that could provide a range of functions, facilities and open space types within one site.
- The importance of further developing partnership working with organisations such as town and parish councils, strategic partners, housing associations, and volunteer organisations, e.g. Friends Of groups, in the management, maintenance and development of open space was highlighted.
- Specifically, many town and parish councils have an interest in open space, play outdoor recreation facilities and there is potential for them to take more responsibility for provision.
- It was pointed out by many that resources for the management and maintenance of open space have been severely reduced over recent years and this is having an impact on the maintenance of sites/facilities.
- Stakeholders highlighted the importance of ensuring that when new open space facilities are developed, or investment made into improvements, it is essential to ensure that ongoing budgetary provision is sufficient for maintenance.

4.5 Observations and considerations

Based on the views of stakeholders, ten broad observations and suggestions for further consideration in the Open Space Study are noted below:

- In general, as regards the future development and management of open spaces the main approach should be on maintaining and improving existing sites rather than providing new facilities⁸. Sites can also be better managed to encourage greater biodiversity.
- Where there are clear gaps in provision and new provision is strategically justified such provision should only be made if ongoing sustainability can be demonstrated.
- Provision of additional youth facilities is a clear priority for stakeholders, though such provision also needs to be sustainable.

⁷ The Countryside Agency's *By All Reasonable Means* and Fieldfare Trust's *BT Countryside for All* recommend specific standards.

⁸ The audit will of course be likely to indicate some areas with significant gaps where new provision is needed.

- The rationalisation of outdoor open space facilities is likely to be needed in some areas to ensure long-term sustainability. In this respect consideration should be made of multi-functional hub sites providing a wide range of outdoor recreation facilities.
- The significant health benefits of providing open space and outdoor recreation facilities should be emphasised in future strategy work. This could help secure additional funding for open space development and maintenance.
- Given the significant variation in acceptable access times, and preferred modes of travel, for different kinds of open space careful consideration needs to be made of these findings in drawing up local standards.
- Green corridors and footpath/cycle routes are important in relation to connectivity between sites. These can be developed as "linear" recreational facilities and can provide additional opportunities for siting things like green gyms and play facilities.
- Future strategic work should consider the potential for further developing partnership work between the various managers of open spaces; and for assessing the most appropriate roles in relation to the management of different kinds of open spaces. E.g. in general the Borough Council may be the most appropriate managers of destination and strategic sites whereas town/parish councils, recreation trusts, housing associations etc. may be the most appropriate managers of local recreation grounds and play areas.
- Prior to developing or rationalising any specific open space areas a comprehensive consultation programme should be carried out. For play and youth provision this needs to include the engagement of children and young people.
- In relation to disability access consideration should be made of the adoption of the principle of Least Restrictive Access. It may not be possible to provide full access to all open spaces but providing accurate and up to date information on the level of accessibility is key. The Borough Council commission 25 access audits and guides per year from Disabled Go. It was noted that there is an opportunity in the future that a proportion of these each year are dedicated to appropriate open space sites.

4.6 Moving Forward - how the findings influence the Open Spaces Study

The Community and Stakeholder Needs Assessment is a vital element of the evidence base of the Open Spaces Study. It sits alongside the detailed open spaces audit and quality assessment, and the GIS mapping analysis (based on the proposed local standards). A comprehensive community and stakeholder consultation programme is a requirement of the National Planning Policy Framework in relation to open space assessments.

The Open Space Study takes all three of these elements of the evidence base into account in its analysis, conclusions and recommendations. More specifically the findings of the Community and Stakeholder Needs Assessment are essential in terms of developing the quantity, quality and access elements of the local standards for the different kinds of open space facility categories. The application of these standards underpins the conclusions of the Open Space Study in relation to determining the sufficiency and adequacy of open space across all wards of Cheshire West and Chester.

The Open Space Study also provides detailed Area Profiles where area specific recommendations are made. In this respect the detailed responses from the Community and

Stakeholder Needs Assessment on different kinds of open spaces and the views of local partners such as the town and parish councils feed into these profiles.

The survey work, stakeholder consultation, desk-based research and group sessions have highlighted a wide range of issues of value to the Open Space Study. There is a strong degree of consistency across the various sources on key areas of local need and aspiration from which we can be confident that the findings are robust and reliable, providing a strong element of the evidence base.

5.0 AUDIT OF EXISTING OPEN SPACE ASSETS

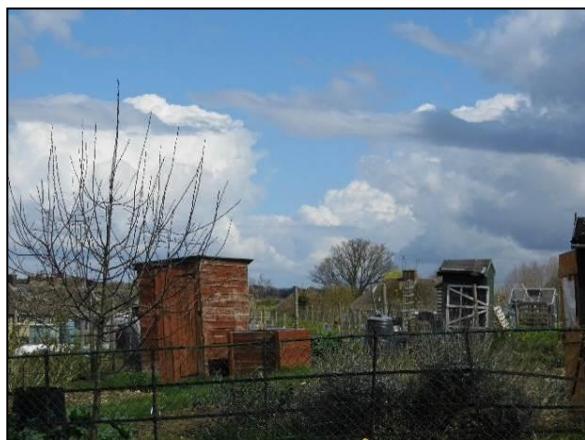
5.1 General approach

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

Table 4 Cheshire West and Chester typologies

Typologies with standards	Typologies mapped but no standards ⁹
<p>Formal provision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allotments • Amenity Green Space (>0.15ha) • Park and Recreation Grounds (excluding fixed outdoor sports space and pitches) • Play Space (Children) • Play Space (Youth) • Natural Green Space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor Sports Space (Pitches) • Outdoor Sports Space (Fixed) • Outdoor Sports Space (Private) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Includes the sub typology 'Other' which includes golf courses and fishing lakes • Education sites • Churchyard and Cemetery • Green Corridors • Private open space (e.g. paid access sites)

5.1.1 Allotments



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

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

⁹ An explanation for not developing standards for these typologies is outlined in the following sections

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

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

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

5.1.2 Amenity Green Space



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

- Unlikely to be physically demarcated by walls or fences.
- Predominantly lain down to (mown) grass.
- Unlikely to have identifiable entrance points (unlike parks).
- They may have shrub and tree planting, and occasionally formal planted flower beds.
- They may occasionally have other recreational facilities and fixtures (such as play equipment or ball courts).

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

It should be noted that sites smaller than 0.15ha were not mapped or included within the quantity analysis or quality audit, as their small size limits their recreational function. Spaces smaller than 0.15ha may have visual amenity and/or biodiversity value, but will not contribute towards the required level of recreational provision, and should be covered by other policy outside of the scope of this study.

5.1.3 Parks and Recreation Grounds



The consultation undertaken indicated that people refer to their local park or rec, and communities do not make a distinction between, parks, gardens, recreation grounds or outdoor sports space. Therefore, an overarching typology of 'parks and recreation grounds' is recommended that embrace a wide range of functions including:

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

The multi-functional approach to mapping has provided detail to the range of functions that exist within parks and recreation grounds, with all outdoor sport and play facilities being mapped (see section 2.3.2). This has meant that more accurate assessment of these facilities can be undertaken.

The recommended standards for this typology (set out in Section 6 below) have been analysed using the general space that comprises a park and recreation ground and excludes the facilities laid out for formal sport (i.e. Outdoor Sports Space (Pitches) and Outdoor Sports Space (Fixed)) and for play (children's and youth provision). The analysis of playing pitches is detailed in the separate playing pitch strategy, therefore no standards or analysis of provision of these facilities is included. Other outdoor non pitch sports are also assessed within a

separate facilities strategy for CWaC. For play space, separate standards are proposed (see 5.1.4 below) and a more in depth play strategy has also been developed for CWaC.

*It should be noted that parks and open spaces that require an entry fee, for example Beeston Castle, have been mapped, but have not been included within the quantity analysis (**these sites are included within the Private open space typology**). This is because access is restricted, however these sites are used by local people and form part of the Green Infrastructure network.*

5.1.4 Play Space (Children and Youth)



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

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

The study has recorded the following:

- **Children's Play Space** – Areas of play that cater for the needs of children up to and around 12 years. Play Areas are an essential way of creating safe but adventurous places for children of varying ages to play and learn. The emphasis in play area management is shifting away from straightforward and formal equipment such as slides and swings towards creating areas where imagination and natural learning can flourish through the use of landscaping and natural building materials and the creation of areas that need exploring.
- **Youth Play Space** - informal recreation opportunities for, broadly, the 13 to 16/17 age group, and which might include facilities like skateboard parks, basketball courts and

'free access' Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs). In practice, there will always be some blurring around the edges in terms of younger children using equipment aimed for youths and vice versa.

Teenagers should not be ignored, it is important to create areas for 'hanging out' such as shelters and providing them with things to do such as bike ramps. Currently recognisable provision for teenagers is few and far between.

5.1.5 Natural Green Space



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

The nature of the geography of Cheshire West and Chester means there are large tracts of open countryside in and around settlement areas. Much of this is private land used for farming, however, there is significant access to the countryside provided through the rights of way network (see section 5.3.3). It was not the intention of this audit to survey and map all these areas, but to focus on sites where there are definitive boundaries or areas of natural green space which have some form of public access.

Access to these spaces may be provided via statutory rights of access or permissive codes allowing the public to wander freely, or via defined Rights of Way or permissive routes running through them. In some cases, access may not be fully clear, however, there was evidence of some level of informal use and access.

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

Some natural spaces were found to have no access at all, and whilst they cannot be formally used by the general community, they can be appreciated from a distance, and contribute to visual amenity, green infrastructure and biodiversity. Whilst every effort was made to exclude

these spaces from the assessment, as already identified, in certain sites access was not always clear.

The local consultation and research elsewhere (Natural England) have identified the value attached to natural spaces for recreation and emotional well-being. A sense of 'closeness to nature' with its attendant benefits for people is something that is all too easily lost in urban areas. Natural Green spaces can make important contributions towards local Biodiversity Action Plan targets and can also raise awareness of biodiversity values and issues.

5.1.6 Outdoor Sports Space (Private)

Outdoor sports space with limited public access (e.g. private sports grounds), have also been recorded and mapped where known. Private sport space makes up an important part of outdoor sports provision across the study area, and forms an important part of the community facilities. The private sports spaces have been mapped separately to publicly accessible sites, to determine exact provision of the different types of provision. However, no standards for this typology have been developed as the assessment of these facilities is covered in a separate playing pitch strategy.

This typology also includes the **sub typology 'Other' (including golf courses and fishing lakes)**. More often than not, public access to these spaces is restricted. Nevertheless, these facilities are used by local people and they form part of the green infrastructure network. Golf courses and fishing lakes have been identified and mapped where known, however, no quantity or access standard for provision have been set, as it is outside the scope of this study to make recommendations related to requirements for new provision.

5.1.7 Churchyards and cemeteries

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

However, the quality of churchyards can be influenced by this study, particularly closed churchyards which have become the responsibility of the Local Authority. This reflects the priorities established through consultation, which identifies the need to provide and improve open spaces.

5.1.8 Education

Many schools and colleges have open space and sports facilities within their grounds. This may range from a small playground to large playing fields with several sports pitches. More often than not, public access to these spaces is restricted and in many cases forbidden.

Nevertheless, many of the sports facilities are used by local people on both an informal and formal basis.

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

Quantity and access standards have not been proposed for education sites. This is because they are not openly accessible to the public and whilst important to the local community, there is less opportunity for the Council to influence their provision and management¹⁰. However, their existence is still an important factor of local provision, and as such they will be subject to the same policy considerations as publicly accessible space.

5.1.9 Green Corridors

Natural England¹¹ define green corridors as comprising '*rivers and canal (including their banks), road verges and rail embankments, cycling routes, and rights of way*'. For the purpose of this study, key green corridors have been mapped where they provide recreational value, so are generally accessible to the public. The provision of other green corridors (most notably verges, rail embankments) are not covered in this study, as they are deemed not to have recreational value (these features are more likely to be covered in a GI Strategy). Green corridors and Rights of Way have been mapped to show connectivity between open spaces at a strategic level, but have not been included in the quantitative analysis.

5.1.10 Private open space

During the audit of open space, a number of sites were identified which were in private ownership, largely these sites were not openly accessible to the public and required payment or membership to access them. This typology does not include private sports facilities (e.g. golf courses, bowling greens and tennis courts – which are covered elsewhere), but those open spaces which contribute to green infrastructure and the overall open space asset.

¹⁰ Although the importance of establishing new relationships with schools to explore the potential for community use agreements to help in areas of known deficiencies is noted.

¹¹ Green Infrastructure Guidance, Natural England, 2009

5.2 Existing provision of open space

This section provides a summary of the existing provision of open space by wards, parishes and within each of the study areas. It focusses on typologies of open space where proposed standards for provision have been developed (see table 6). More detail on provision is provided within part 2 of the study - open space area profiles.

Section 5.3 provides information on the provision of open space typologies where no standards have been developed.

5.2.1 Existing provision across the whole study area

Table 4 shows the existing provision of open space across the whole borough. The second column 'Existing Provision Ha' shows the total amount of open space for each typology in hectares. The third column 'Existing Provision Ha/1000' shows hectares of open space per 1000 of the population (using 2011 census data, population: 329,608).

The existing provision (ha/1000) is used as the basis for assessing the existing average levels of provision across the whole study area. Further assessment by wards and study areas is summarised in the following sections (and part 2: area profiles). Details of provision within each of the 168 parishes has been provided at appendix 3.

Table 4 Existing provision of open space across the borough

Typology	Existing Provision (Ha)	Existing Provision (Ha/1000)
Allotments	36.23	0.11
Amenity Green Space	169.21	0.51
Park and Recreation Ground	169.76	0.52
Play Space (Children)	16.2	0.05
Play Space (Youth)	4.65	0.01
Accessible Natural Green Space	2550.12	7.74

5.2.2 Existing provision within the study areas

Section 1.4.4 defines the areas used in the open space study, each of which are assessed in more detail within the area profiles in part 2 of the study. This section provides a summary of provision within each of the study areas. For Chester, Ellesmere Port and the Rural Areas, the study areas comprise a grouping of wards, by which analysis is made. For Northwich and Winsford, the analysis is by Parish (see section 1.4.4). Further details, including the provision in each of the wards/parishes that make up each area profile, are provided in part 2 (within the open space area profiles). Figures are also provided for each of the wards below, and parish figures are included in Appendix 3.

5.2.2.1 Provision in study areas by groupings of wards

Table 5 Existing provision of open space (hectares) within each ward study area

Study Area	Allotments	Amenity Green Space	Park and Recreation Ground	Play Space (Children)	Play Space (Youth)	Natural Green Space
Chester Study Area	16.72	24.75	38.15	3.57	1.48	126.8
Ellesmere Port Study Area	8.19	29.64	35.19	2.01	0.91	98.67
Rural Wards	6.84	56.92	46.10	6.40	1.26	2165.83

Table 6 Existing provision of open space (ha/1000 population) within each ward study area

Study Area	Allotments	Amenity Green Space	Park and Recreation Ground	Play Space (Children)	Play Space (Youth)	Natural Green Space
Chester Study Area	0.21	0.31	0.48	0.04	0.02	1.59
Ellesmere Port Study Area	0.14	0.49	0.58	0.03	0.02	1.64
Rural Wards	0.06	0.48	0.39	0.05	0.01	18.36

5.2.2.2 Provision in study areas by groupings of parishes

Table 7 Existing provision of open space (hectares) within each parish study area

Study Area	Allotments	Amenity Green Space	Park and Recreation Ground	Play Space (Children)	Play Space (Youth)	Natural Green Space
Northwich	2.89	34.88	34.10	3.02	0.47	460.4
Winsford	1.76	30.26	18.89	2.29	0.74	82.26

Table 8 Existing provision of open space (ha/1000 population) within each parish study area

Study Area	Allotments	Amenity Green Space	Park and Recreation Ground	Play Space (Children)	Play Space (Youth)	Natural Green Space
Northwich	0.05	0.64	0.63	0.06	0.01	8.45
Winsford	0.06	0.99	0.62	0.08	0.02	2.70

5.2.3 Provision in wards

Table 9 Existing provision of open space (hectares) in wards

Ward	Allotments	Amenity Green Space	Park and Recreation Ground	Play Space (Children)	Play Space (Youth)	Natural Green Space
Blacon	4.63	7.24	4.53	1.13	0.17	15.75
Boughton	0	0.77	0.24	0.27	0	0
Chester City	0	1.68	6.33	0.1	0.02	0.75
Chester Villages	0	3.1	1.83	0.42	0.13	6.18
Davenham and Moulton	0	9.57	3.41	0.37	0.1	78.24
Dodleston and Huntington	0	2.73	2.02	0.86	0.22	60.85
Ellesmere Port Town	1.13	8.88	7.4	0.34	0.29	5.3
Elton	0	12.65	2.34	0.33	0.03	7.14
Farndon	0.27	0	6.42	0.2	0.04	0.87
Frodsham	1.23	3.44	12.44	0.39	0.14	98.83
Garden Quarter	1.17	1.21	0.69	0.18	0.15	0
Gowy	0.36	1.64	0	0.31	0.03	549.31
Grange	0.75	0	5.75	0.14	0.07	0
Great Boughton	1.99	2.57	3.37	0.62	0.27	11.29
Handbridge Park	2.19	5.51	11.02	0.55	0.35	61.65
Hartford and Greenbank	0.32	2.98	17.24	0.52	0.03	41.43
Helsby	0.58	0.18	1.31	0.09	0.02	20.76
Hoole	5.09	2.04	2.13	0.47	0.07	0.65
Kingsley	0	2.54	0	0.37	0.02	595.73
Lache	0.12	0.42	1.3	0.06	0.09	7.99
Ledsham and Manor	0	1.77	0	0	0	4.63
Little Neston and Burton	0.97	2.62	0.59	0.26	0.01	125.96
Malpas	0	0.66	1.36	0.14	0.05	136.26
Marbury	0.14	2.12	2.65	0.95	0.18	338.87
Neston	0.45	0.79	4.9	0.25	0.14	1.71
Netherpool	0.53	1.55	0	0.27	0.03	52.82
Newton	1.53	2.13	5.89	0.12	0.34	3.26
Parkgate	0.13	4.53	0	0.07	0	12.77
Rossmore	0.76	1.81	0.59	0.1	0.04	10.78
Saughall and Mollington	0	5.02	2.41	0.15	0.01	25.12
Shakerley	0	2.01	0.54	0.58	0	128.05
St Pauls	3.82	5.55	1.13	0.47	0.28	45.6
Strawberry	0	4.17	0	0	0	2.7
Sutton	0	4.78	3.38	0.31	0.05	49.34
Tarporley	0.81	0.97	0.76	0.05	0.01	60.09
Tarvin and Kelsall	0	1.7	2.78	0.26	0.05	1010.88
Tattenhall	0.22	4.79	0.05	0.05	0.01	125.72
Upton	0	2.73	2.64	0.25	0.03	26.91
Weaver and Cuddington	0	5.17	1.79	0.39	0.19	127.77
Whitby	1.13	1.44	16.93	0.38	0.15	25.25
Willaston and Thornton	1.68	0.27	1.91	0.27	0	2.27
Winnington and Castle	1.88	16.11	22.4	0.31	0.12	173.65
Winsford Over and Verdin	1.5	10.15	16.83	1.11	0.47	145.97
Winsford Swanlow and Dene	0	11.72	0	0.24	0.06	6.48
Winsford Wharton	0.26	9.04	2.06	0.94	0.21	52.04
Witton and Rudheath	0.6	6.22	5.62	0.73	0.09	21.72

Table 10 Existing provision of open space (ha/1000 population) in wards

Ward	Allotments	Amenity Green Space	Park and Recreation Ground	Play Space (Children)	Play Space (Youth)	Natural Green Space
Blacon	0.34	0.53	0.33	0.08	0.01	1.16
Boughton	0	0.14	0.04	0.05	0	0
Chester City	0	0.44	1.64	0.03	0.01	0.19
Chester Villages	0	0.36	0.21	0.05	0.02	0.72
Davenham and Moulton	0	0.71	0.25	0.03	0.01	5.77
Dodleston and Huntington	0	0.69	0.51	0.22	0.06	15.37
Ellesmere Port Town	0.12	0.98	0.81	0.04	0.03	0.58
Elton	0	2.78	0.51	0.07	0.01	1.57
Farndon	0.07	0	1.6	0.05	0.01	0.22
Frodsham	0.14	0.38	1.37	0.04	0.02	10.89
Garden Quarter	0.22	0.23	0.13	0.03	0.03	0
Gowy	0.09	0.42	0	0.08	0.01	139.99
Grange	0.16	0	1.24	0.03	0.02	0
Great Boughton	0.22	0.29	0.38	0.07	0.03	1.26
Handbridge Park	0.25	0.62	1.25	0.06	0.04	6.97
Hartford and Greenbank	0.04	0.36	2.06	0.06	0	4.96
Helsby	0.12	0.04	0.26	0.02	0	4.18
Hoole	0.54	0.22	0.23	0.05	0.01	0.07
Kingsley	0	0.6	0	0.09	0	141.1
Lache	0.02	0.07	0.23	0.01	0.02	1.39
Ledsham and Manor	0	0.23	0	0	0	0.59
Little Neston and Burton	0.11	0.31	0.07	0.03	0	14.85
Malpas	0	0.17	0.34	0.04	0.01	34.28
Marbury	0.01	0.18	0.22	0.08	0.01	28.08
Neston	0.1	0.18	1.13	0.06	0.03	0.4
Netherpool	0.16	0.47	0	0.08	0.01	16.07
Newton	0.16	0.22	0.62	0.01	0.04	0.34
Parkgate	0.04	1.26	0	0.02	0	3.56
Rossmore	0.2	0.48	0.15	0.03	0.01	2.83
Saughall and Mollington	0	1.12	0.54	0.03	0	5.63
Shakerley	0	0.48	0.13	0.14	0	30.39
St Pauls	0.41	0.6	0.12	0.05	0.03	4.93
Strawberry	0	0.82	0	0	0	0.53
Sutton	0	0.52	0.37	0.03	0.01	5.38
Tarporley	0.18	0.22	0.17	0.01	0	13.66
Tarvin and Kelsall	0	0.21	0.34	0.03	0.01	123.02
Tattenhall	0.05	1.1	0.01	0.01	0	28.74
Upton	0	0.31	0.3	0.03	0	3.02
Weaver and Cuddington	0	0.4	0.14	0.03	0.01	10
Whitby	0.14	0.18	2.09	0.05	0.02	3.12
Willaston and Thornton	0.44	0.07	0.5	0.07	0	0.59
Winnington and Castle	0.2	1.74	2.42	0.03	0.01	18.73
Winsford Overand Verdin	0.11	0.76	1.25	0.08	0.04	10.88
Winsford Swanlow and Dene	0	1.3	0	0.03	0.01	0.72
Winsford Wharton	0.03	0.93	0.21	0.1	0.02	5.33
Witton and Rudheath	0.07	0.75	0.68	0.09	0.01	2.61

5.3 Provision of open space (with no standards)

This section provides a summary of the provision of typologies of open space that have been mapped, but where no standards for provision have been developed (see explanation in section 5.1). The typologies covered are:

- Education sites;
- Churchyard and Cemetery;
- Green Corridors;
- Private open spaces (e.g. paid access sites);
- Outdoor Sports Space (Private), which includes 'other' open space e.g. golf courses and fishing lakes;
- Outdoor Sports Space (Pitches);
- Outdoor Sports Space (Fixed);

No further analysis is made of these typologies (nor are they subject to the policy recommendations in section 8, which only covers recreation space with standards), however, it is considered important that an understanding of existing levels of provision and location is provided as they are an important part of the overall green infrastructure of the study area. The mapping and provision of education and churchyards and cemeteries are also analysed in more detail in the open space area profiles. The mapping of outdoor sports space (private, pitches and fixed), green corridors and private open spaces are also shown within the area profile provision maps (part 2), but no quantity analysis has been undertaken. The provision and requirements for outdoor sports space is covered in detail within the CWAC Playing Pitch Strategy (2015).

The maps below are intended to be indicative at this scale, as details are provided in the GIS database supporting this study, and more detailed maps are also provided within the area profiles.

5.3.1 Education Sites

Figure 16 Spatial distribution of education sites across the borough

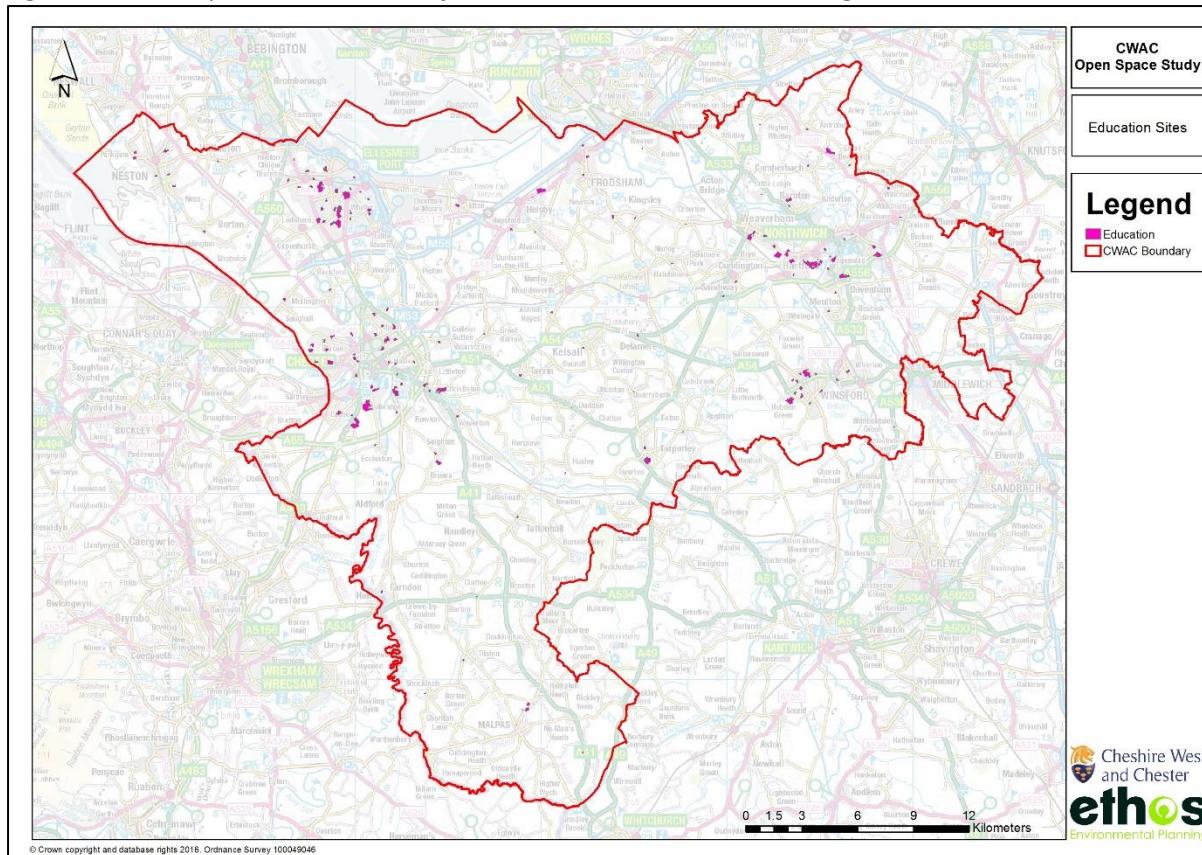


Table 11 Provision of education sites across the Borough and Study Areas

Education	Existing Provision (Ha)	Existing Provision (Ha/1000)
Borough Wide	342.37	1.04
Study Areas (Wards)		
Chester	85.59	1.07
Ellesmere Port	69.31	1.15
Rural	108.87	0.92
Study Areas (Parish)		
Northwich	74.15	1.36
Winsford	29.94	0.98

5.3.2 Churchyards and Cemeteries

Figure 17 Spatial distribution of churchyards and cemeteries across the borough

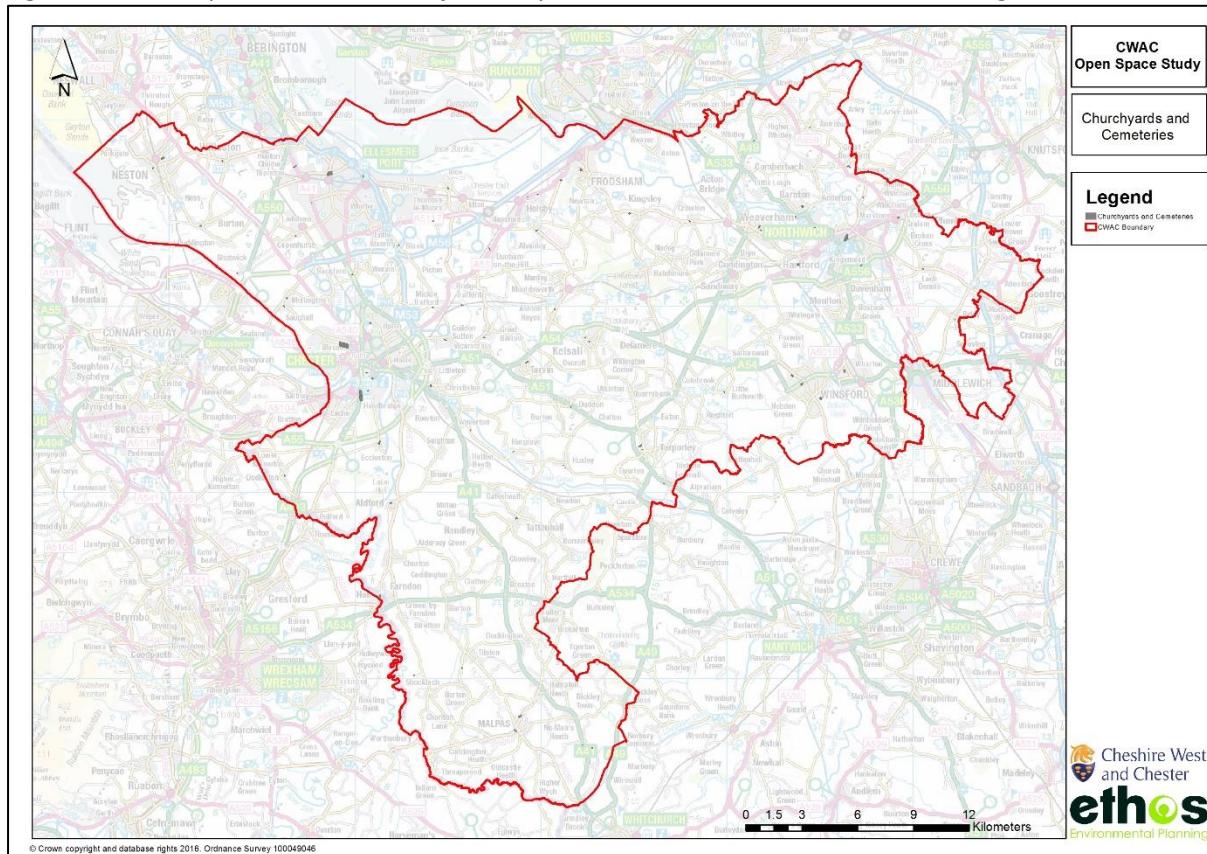


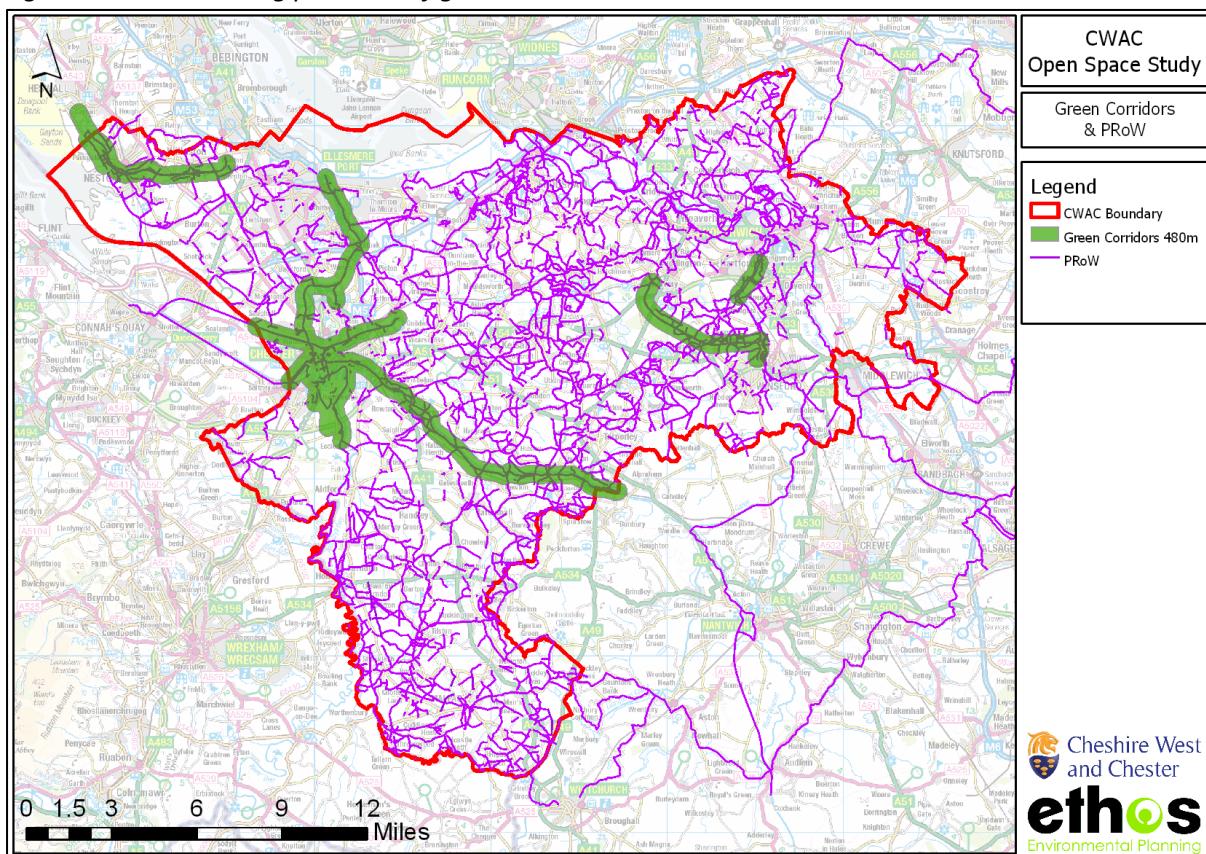
Table 12 Provision of churchyards and cemeteries across the Borough and Study Areas

Churchyards and Cemeteries	Existing Provision (Ha)	Existing Provision (Ha/1000)
Borough Wide	70.29	0.21
Study Areas (Wards)		
Chester	21.86	0.27
Ellesmere Port	6.38	0.11
Rural	31.34	0.27
Study Areas (Parishes)		
Northwich	10.41	0.19
Winsford	4.61	0.15

5.3.3 Green Corridors

Natural England¹² define green corridors as comprising '*rivers and canal (including their banks), road verges and rail embankments, cycling routes, and rights of way*'. For the purpose of this study, key green corridors have been mapped where they provide recreational value, so are generally accessible to the public. The provision of other green corridors (most notably verges, rail embankments) are not covered in this study, as they are deemed not to have recreational value (these features are more likely to be covered in a GI Strategy). Figure 18 shows the mapped green corridors and the rights of way network within the study area. Green Corridors have been shown with a 480 metre buffer (the recommended access standard for amenity green space coming out of this study) so that their location is more obvious on the map. This is covered in more detail within each of the area profiles (part 2 of this report).

Figure 18 Existing provision of green corridors and the PROW network

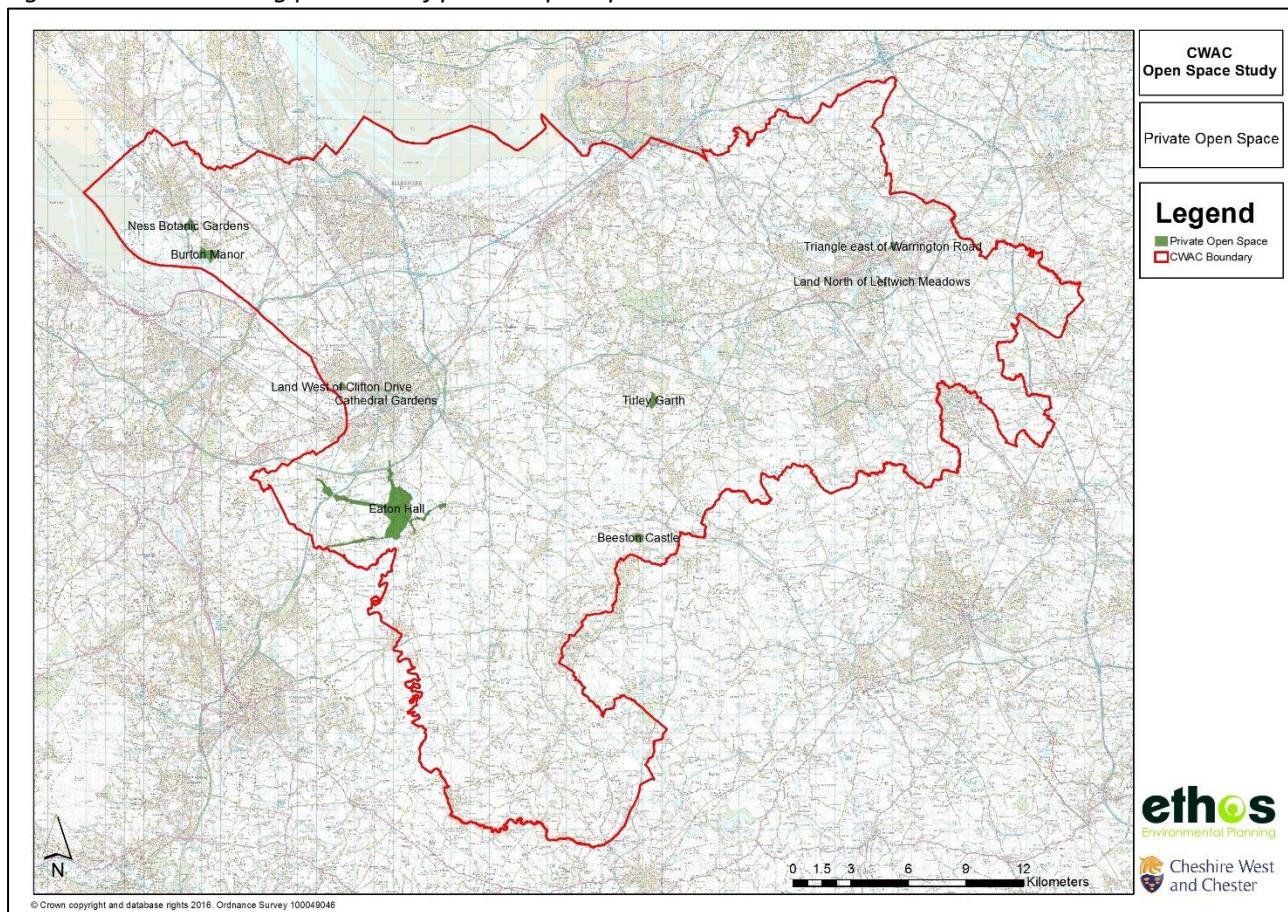


¹² Green Infrastructure Guidance, Natural England, 2009

5.3.4 Private open spaces (e.g. paid access sites)

Figure 19 shows the provision of open spaces which were deemed 'private'. The private spaces have been excluded from the general assessment of open space (i.e. they have not been included within the quantity analysis) as they are not openly accessible, however, it is recognised they do provide value for recreation, biodiversity and contribute towards green Infrastructure. Parks and gardens are included in the assessment where there is open public access.

Figure 19 Existing provision of private open space



5.3.5 Outdoor Sports Space (Private, Pitches and Fixed)

Figure 20 shows the provision of Outdoor Sports Space (Private) across the borough. Outdoor Sport (Pitches) and Outdoor Sport (Fixed) are shown within the area profiles (part 2) only. The quantity of these facilities has not been analysed within the study, as it is covered within the Playing Pitch Strategy (2015).

Figure 21 shows the provision of 'other' open space (a sub-typology within Outdoor Sports Space (Private) typology) within the study area, which includes golf courses and fishing lakes. These types of facility have recreational value and contribute towards green (and blue) infrastructure. Whilst no standards for provision have been set for these typologies, the following map provides information on their location and distribution and can be used to inform any future queries or issues which could arise related to the provision of these features.

Figure 20 Existing provision of Outdoor Sport (Private)

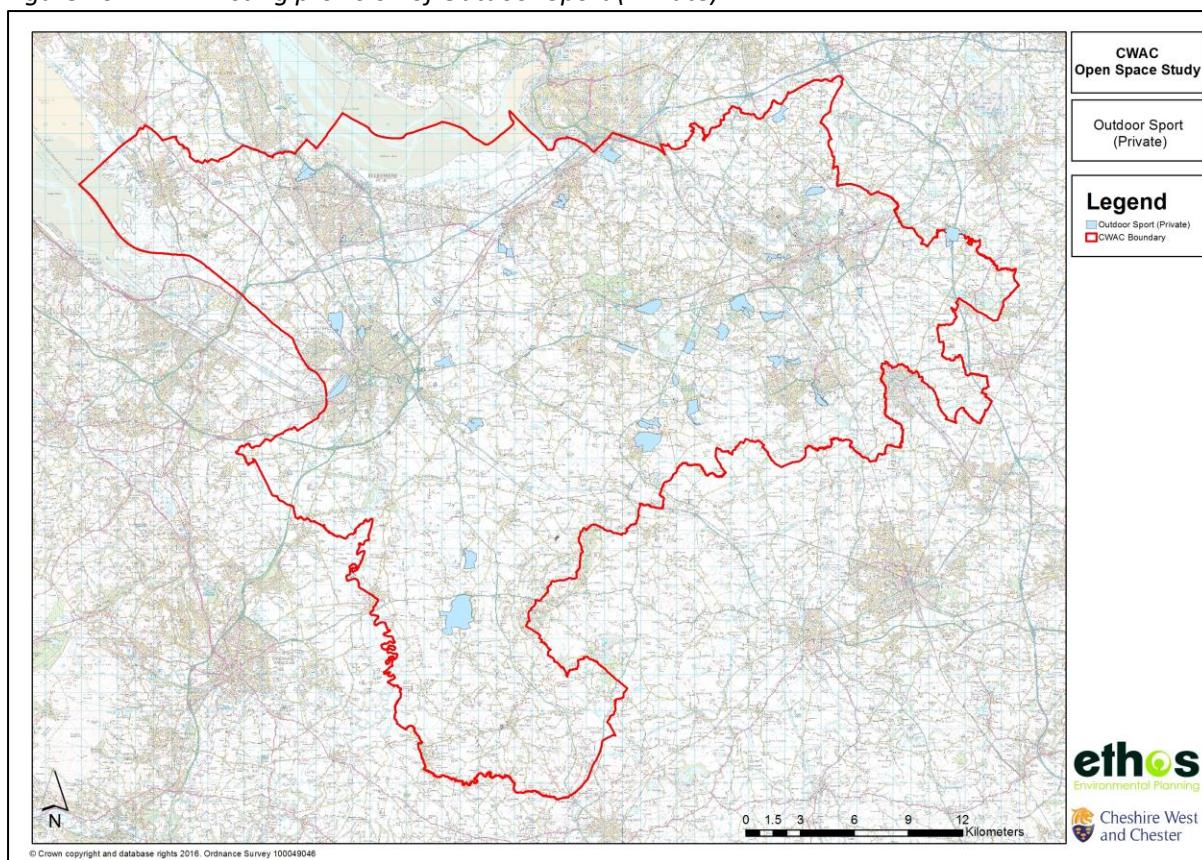
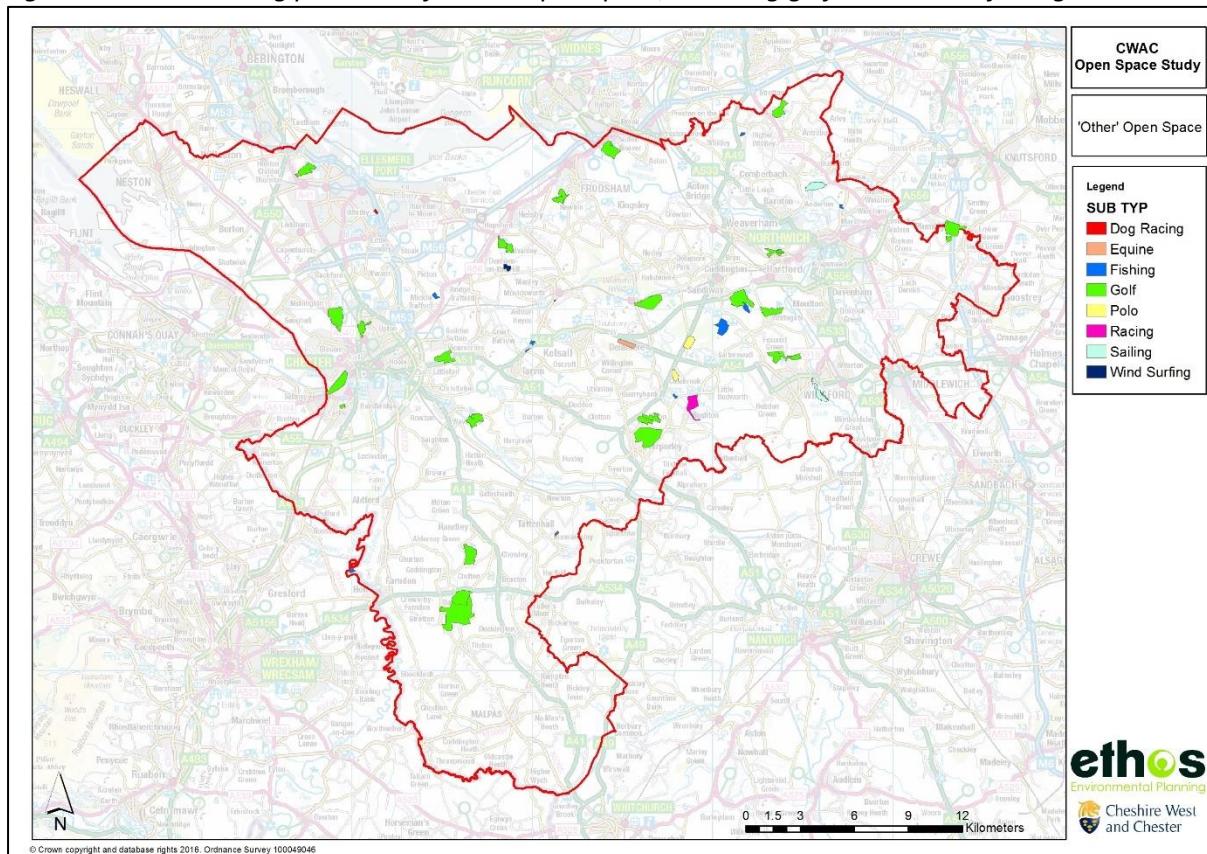


Figure 21 Existing provision of 'other' open space, including golf courses and fishing lakes



6.0 THE DEVELOPMENT OF STANDARDS

6.1 Introduction

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

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

- **Quantity standards:** These are determined by the analysis of existing quantity, consideration of existing local and national standards and benchmarks and evidence gathered from the local needs assessment. It is important that quantity standards are locally derived and are realistic and achievable. The recommended standards need to be robust, evidence based and deliverable through new development and future mechanisms of contributions through on site provision and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).
- **Accessibility standards:** These expressed as a straight line walking distance and therefore provide a broad guideline. Spaces likely to be used on a frequent and regular basis need to be within easy walking distance and to have safe access. Other facilities where visits are longer but perhaps less frequent, for example country parks, can be further away. Consideration is also given to existing local or national standards and benchmarks.
- **Quality standards:** The standards for each form of provision are derived from the quality audit, existing good practice and from the views of the community and those that use the spaces. Again, quality standards should be achievable and reflect the priorities that emerge through consultation.

The standards that have been proposed are for **minimum guidance levels of provision**. So, just because geographical areas may enjoy levels of provision exceeding minimum standards does not mean there is a surplus, as all such provision may be well used.

6.2 Allotments

Table 13 Summary of quantity and access standard (Urban areas)

Quantity Standard	Access Standard
0.15 ha/1000 population	720m (15 minutes' straight line walk time)

Existing national or local standards

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

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

The Cheshire West and Chester Open Space Assessment (Jan 2011) recommended a provision standard of 0.15ha/1000 population and an access standard of 720m (15 minutes' walk time).

Quantity standard for allotments

Quantity:

- 83% of all respondents from the household survey 'never' use allotments, meaning this is the least used type of open space;
- The existing average level of provision across the study area is 0.11 ha/1000;
- The household survey identified 51% of people felt there should be more allotments, and 42% felt there are enough;
- Other consultation identified several areas where there are long waiting lists and unmet demand for allotments;
- Discussions with Council Officers highlight the need to at least maintain existing levels of provision, and ensure new high density developments provide allotments above the existing average level;
- A minimum standard of 0.15 ha/1000 is therefore proposed for analysing existing provision and for new provision (this is inclusive of associated infrastructure e.g. paths, haulage ways, sheds etc.). This is higher than the current average, but reflects the results of the needs assessment and current propensity for higher density housing with smaller gardens, and potential increased demand for allotments;

Access standard for allotments

- Responses received in relation to acceptable travel times to allotments from the household survey identified a mix in responses, however, the two largest responses

were from 32% of people who wanted facilities within 10 minutes and a further 23% within 15 minutes.

- This suggests that people do not want to travel too far to reach their allotment and the majority of people are prepared to travel no more than 15 minutes' walk time;
- It is considered that the availability of allotments is more important than having them very close to home, nevertheless there is some demand for facilities relatively nearby. Therefore, a standard of no more than 15 minutes' walk time (720 metres straight line walk) is proposed.

Quality standards for allotments

- The household survey identified 52% of respondents felt the quality of allotments was average, 29% thought they were poor or very poor and only 20% felt they were good or very good.
- Council officers highlighted that resources for the management and maintenance of Council allotment sites have been severely reduced over recent years and this is having an impact on their maintenance.
- The information gathered in relation to allotments is more difficult to assess in comparison to other types of open space. The reason for this is twofold: Firstly, the number of people who actually use allotments is very low compared to the numbers who use other types of open space and, therefore specific comments related to the quality of allotments are less frequent; Secondly, the majority of allotments sites are locked, and the quality audit only allows for assessment against key criteria such as the level of cultivation and general maintenance, which is less comprehensive than the assessments of other open space.

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

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

6.3 Amenity Green Space

Table 14 Summary of quantity and access standard

Quantity Standard	Access Standard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.60 ha/1000 population for analysing existing provision (for sites > 0.15ha) • 1.0ha/1000 population for new provision (in combination with natural green space). 	480 metres (10 minutes' straight line walk time)

Existing national or local standards

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

The Cheshire West and Chester Open Space Assessment (Jan 2011) set a quantity standard of 0.81ha/1000 people and an access standard recommended was 10 minutes walking (480m).

Quantity standard for Amenity green space

- Existing average level of provision in the study area is 0.51 ha/1000 population (for sites greater than 0.15 ha in size);
- The household survey identified that 44% of people felt there was a need for more informal open space areas, whilst 55% felt there were enough;
- Provision also varies greatly with many areas having no provision or falling well below the average;
- Therefore, when analysing current provision, a minimum standard of 0.60 ha/1000 population proposed, which is in line with the guideline recommended by FIT;
- It is recommended that amenity green space is provided in tandem with natural green space in new development, and therefore a combined standard of 1.0ha/1000 population is proposed for analysing the requirements from new development. The natural green space standard reflects this (section 6.6).
- The minimum size of a space that will be considered acceptable and count towards open space provision is recommended to be 0.15 ha in size (about the size of a mini football pitch). This minimum size threshold should be applied to developments that are of a size that would generate less than this (see section 8.2). This will avoid a proliferation of small amenity spaces which have no real recreation function. Any spaces below this size will be acceptable in terms of their visual amenity, but would not count towards the required level of provision and should be covered by other policy outside the scope of this study.

Access standard for amenity green space

- Consultation identified people want spaces relatively close to home (22% less than 5 mins, 26% less than 10 mins and 24% less than 15 mins), and that they access these spaces by foot (68%);
- Therefore, a recommended standard of 480 metres (10 minutes' walk time).

Quality standards for amenity green space

The audit of provision as well as the consultation has identified the importance attached by local people to open space close to home. The value of 'amenity green space' must be recognised especially within housing areas, where it can provide important local opportunities for play, exercise and visual amenity that are almost immediately accessible. On the other hand, open space can be expensive to maintain and it is very important to strike the correct balance between having sufficient space to meet the needs of the community for accessible and attractive space, and having too much which would be impossible to manage properly and therefore a potential liability and source of nuisance. It is important that amenity green space should be capable of use for at least some forms of public recreation activity, in addition to visual amenity and biodiversity.

It is therefore recommended that in addition to the minimum size threshold identified above, that all amenity green space should be subject to landscape design, ensuring the following quality principles:

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

6.4 Parks and Recreation Grounds

Table 15 Summary of quantity and access standard

Quantity Standard	Access Standard
0.5 ha/1000 population	720 metres (15 minutes' straight line walk time)

Existing national and local policies

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

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

The Cheshire West and Chester Open Space Assessment (2011) recommends a quantity standard of 0.37ha/1000 people for parks and gardens. Quantity standards are also provided for Tennis Courts (0.45 courts/1000) and Bowling Greens (0.23 greens/1000).

The access standards recommended in the 2011 Open Space Assessment are 15 minutes' walk time (720m) for parks and gardens within urban wards and 15 minutes driving for parks and gardens within rural wards. Access standards for outdoor sports facilities are also set as follows:

- Grass pitches – 10min walk time
- Multi pitch site – 10min drive time
- Synthetic pitches – 20min drive time
- Bowling greens – 10min drive time
- Tennis courts – 10min drive time
- Golf course – 20min drive time

Quantity of parks and recreation grounds

- Existing average level of provision in the study area is 0.52 ha/1000, however, this does vary in provision across different parts of the study area;
- Provision of formal sports space including private and public pitches and fixed sports facilities have been mapped but excluded from the calculation for existing provision as they are covered in the playing pitch strategy and Facilities Strategy (see section 5.1.3);

- The household survey identified the following in relation to open spaces relevant to this typology:
 - 72% of people felt there was enough local parks and gardens;
 - 73% felt there were enough local recreation grounds;
- As there is relative satisfaction with existing levels of provision, it is recommended that there is no significant change from the existing average level of provision, therefore a standard of 0.5ha/1000 has been adopted.
- The importance of pitches, fixed sports facilities and private provision is also acknowledged and it is recommended that this type of provision is afforded suitable protection within relevant policies (see section 8). Further analysis and policy in relation to these facilities is also provided in the playing pitch strategy.
- It should be reiterated that this standard is intended to provide sufficient space for general recreation, and the requirement for pitches and other outdoor sports facilities are detailed in a separate playing pitch strategy and facilities strategy.

Access standard for parks and recreation grounds

- The household survey identified the following:
 - 18% want parks and gardens within 10 mins, 23% within 15 mins, 28% within 20 mins and 26% more than 20 mins. 48% are likely to walk to these sites, and driving is also a significant form of transport (45%).
 - 36% want local recreation grounds within 10 mins and 24% within 15 mins. The majority of people prefer to walk to these sites (76%), and 19% drive.
- A standard of 720 metres (15 minutes' walk time) is recommended.

Quality standards for parks and recreation grounds

For parks and gardens, 49% of people felt the quality was good and for local recreation grounds 47% of people felt they were good – these were the two highest scores across all typologies.

National guidance relevant to this typology is provided in the 'Green Flag' quality standard for parks which sets out benchmark criteria for quality open spaces.

Further information in relation to playing pitches and other outdoor sports space is provided in the separate playing pitch study and facilities strategy.

6.5 Play Space (children and youth)

Table 16 Summary of quantity and access standards

Typology	Quantity Standard	Access Standard
Children's Play Space	0.05 ha/1000 population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 480m (10 minutes' straight line walk time)
Youth Play Space	0.03 ha/1000 population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 600m (12-13 minutes' straight line walk time)

Existing National and Local Policies

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

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

Standards for access and quality for provision for children (below 12 years old) and young people (above 12 years old) are set out in the Cheshire West and Chester Open Space Assessment (Jan 2011). The accessibility standards are 10 minutes' walk (480m) for children and 15 minutes' walk (720m) for young people in urban areas, and 15 minutes' drive in rural areas.

Quantity standards for play

- Current average levels of provision of children's play space is 0.05 ha/1000 population, for youth space this is 0.01 ha/1000 population;
- The household survey identified that 59% of people felt there was sufficient children's play space, in contrast only 37% of people felt there was sufficient youth facilities, with 60% of people identifying a need for more;
- It is therefore recommended that existing levels of children's play facilities are maintained with a standard of 0.05 ha/1000, however, there is an increase in facilities for young people with a standard of 0.03 ha/1000.
- It should be reiterated that these are minimum standards for equipped provision and do not include the need for surrounding playable space as recommended by FIT¹³ and

¹³ Fields In Trust Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play, Beyond the Six Acre Standard - sets out guidance on buffer zones, which should be well designed to enhance play

Play England¹⁴ i.e. this surrounding playable space will need to be provided in addition to the quantity standard.

Access standards for play

- The household survey identified that for children's play space 46% of people want facilities within 10 minutes. For teenage facilities 36% of people wanted facilities within 10 minutes, with a further 31% willing to travel up to 15 minutes.
- 82% of people walk to children's facilities, the figure for teenage facilities is less with 60% walking, the rest using other modes (e.g. car (21%), bike (10%)).

In light of these findings, the following access standards are recommended:

- Children's provision – 480m (10 minutes' straight line walk time), and
- Youth Provision – 600m (12-13 minutes' straight line walk time).

Quality standards for play

The household survey identified that 38% of people felt children's facilities were good quality, and 35% felt they were average. For teenage facilities 41% felt they were average and 36% felt they were poor. Again, this highlights the difference in opinions in relation to children and teenage facilities, and the need for improvement to provision.

The CWAC Play Strategy adopts good practice and guidelines in relation to play space design, risk and challenge and inclusion as follows:

- The Play England publication *Design for Play: A guide to creating successful play spaces* as its guide to good practice in play space design.
- *Inclusion by Design - A guide to creating accessible play and childcare environments* published by KIDS - the Disabled children and young people's charity.

The Play Strategy adopts the High Level Statement from the Play Safety Forum and Health and Safety Executive: *Children's play and leisure: Promoting a balanced approach*. It also adopts the associated detailed approach recommended in the Play England Document *Managing Risk in Play Provision: implementation guide*. This is endorsed by the Health and Safety Executive. It also includes guidance on playable space, play equipment, natural play and boundaries/fencing.

It is recommended that the good practice and guidelines set out within the Play Strategy are adhered to wherever possible.

The CWAC Play Strategy sets out specific requirements for play at a local level, and should be consulted for more detail. It should be noted that the Open Space Study and the Play Strategy use different study areas in order to analyse provision/supply, and therefore the figures will differ.

¹⁴ Design for Play: A guide to creating successful play spaces

6.6 Natural Green Space

For Natural Green Space, there are a number of national standards recommended by Natural England which are summarised below.

6.6.1 *Natural England Accessible Natural Green space Standards (ANGSt)*

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

6.6.2 *Local standards*

The current local standards for natural green space are 1.5 ha/1000 for quantity and 10 minutes' walk time (480 metres) for access.

Recommended standards

The provision of natural greenspace across CWAC varies significantly (see section 5.1.6). The current average level of provision across the borough is 7.74 ha/1000 and this includes sites of significantly varying size and dispersal.

Due to the nature of provision, it is not felt appropriate that quantity and access standards are applied in the same way as for other typologies, and that the focus should be on assessing current provision in line with the Natural England ANGSt.

However, it is recommended that local standards are adopted for providing new levels of provision through new development. It is recommended that this provision is considered in tandem with provision of amenity green space in new development. The aim would be to provide guidance for development to provide amenity/natural green spaces which have both a recreational value and biodiversity value through native planting. There should be a move away from providing numerous small amenity grass area, to providing fewer, larger amenity/natural spaces in new development. This is reflected in the natural green spaces standards below:

Table 17 Summary of natural green space standards

Typology	Quantity standards (ha/1000 population)		Access standard
	For assessing current provision	Requirement from new development	
Natural Green Space	ANGSt	1.0ha/1000 population to include natural and amenity green space	ANGSt

6.6.4 Quality of natural green space

Satisfaction levels with the quality of natural green space are above average:

- For country parks etc, 46% of people felt quality was good;
- Wildlife and nature reserves, 43% of felt they were good;
- Footpaths and bridleways, 47% of people felt they were good.

Consultation results also highlight the value attached to certain attributes of open space, in particular:

- Good maintenance and cleanliness
- Ease of access
- Lack of antisocial behaviour, noise etc.

This suggests that the provision of new or improved open space cannot be considered in isolation from the means of maintaining such space, perceptions of antisocial behaviour, and ease of access from within the surrounding environment.

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

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

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

The above should in any event be principles to be pursued and encouraged at all times. Further guidance in this regard should be included in appropriate SPDs.

6.7 Summary of open space standards

The following table provides a summary of the quantity and access standards for each typology of open space included within the study. The quality standards are too detailed to summarise, but are provided in the sections above. Specific guidance in relation to playing pitches is detailed in the playing pitch strategy.

The quantity standards are used for analysing existing provision of the various types of open space and also the requirements from new development, with the exception of Natural Green Space and Amenity Green Space as explained below:

- Amenity Green Space – a standard of 0.6ha/1000 (of sites larger than 0.15ha) is used for analysing existing provision, however when providing amenity space as part of new development, a standard of 1.0ha/1000 is to be used, combined with Natural Green Space i.e. the space should be designed and planted to be more natural in character, maximising wildlife and biodiversity opportunities e.g. with native, species-rich planting.
- Natural Green Space - Analysis of existing provision of Natural Green Space should use the Natural England ANGSt and Woodland Trust WASt access standards, however new provision should use the standard of 1.0ha/1000 which is combined with Amenity Green Space as explained above.

Table 18 Summary of open space standards

Typology	Quantity standards (ha/1000 population)	Access standard
Allotments	0.15	720 metres or 15 minutes' walk time
Amenity Green Space	0.60 for analysing existing provision of sites > 0.15 ha 1.0 for new provision (in combination with natural green space).	480 metres or 10 minutes' walk time
Parks and Recreation Grounds (excluding pitches and fixed sports space)	0.5	720 metres or 15 minutes' walk time
Play Space (Children)	0.05	480 metres or 10 minutes' walk time
Play Space (Youth)	0.03	600 metres or 12-13 minutes' walk time
Natural Green Space	1.0 to include natural and amenity green space for new provision	ANGSt and Woodland Trust for analysing existing provision

Typology	Quantity standards (ha/1000 population)	Access standard
	ANGSt and Woodland Trust for analysing existing provision (same as access standard)	
Churchyards and Cemeteries	None, but sites mapped and quantity analysed	None
Education	None, but sites mapped and quantity analysed	None
Outdoor Sports Space (Pitches)	None, but sites mapped. Further details provided in playing pitch strategy	None
Outdoor Sports Space (Fixed)	None, but sites mapped. Further details provided in facilities strategy	None
Outdoor Sports Space (Private) -includes sub typology 'Other' i.e. golf courses and fishing lakes	None, but sites mapped	None
Green Corridors	None, but sites mapped	None
Private open space (e.g. paid access sites)	None, but sites mapped	None

7.0 APPLYING LOCAL STANDARDS

7.1 Introduction

This part of the report uses the recommended standards to analyse provision across the study area. This section provides an overview of provision across the five 'study areas', with further detail provided in the Open Space Area Profiles in part 2 of the report. This section includes:

Quantity analysis

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

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

For each typology, a table showing quantity analysis is shown, it provides:

- Existing provision (hectares);
- Required provision against the standards (hectares);
- Surplus or deficiency of Supply (hectares);

Access analysis

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

However, the key to access analysis, is understanding the picture at a more localised level, therefore, maps showing local access provision are provided within the area profiles (part 2 of the report).

Quality analysis

This section of the report makes analysis of each typology across the study area – it highlights any common themes or issues that have arisen from the quality audit. Again, local recommendations are highlighted within the area profiles (part 2 of the report).

7.2 Application of quantity standards

7.2.1 Current supply against the Cheshire West and Chester standards

The existing quantity levels of provision of open space are summarised in section 5.2. Proposed quantity standards for each typology are outlined in section 6. The following section analyses the existing provision against the standards to assess existing supply. The assessment considers provision across the borough and across each study area (by groupings of wards or parishes), and by each ward. Further details are provided in the open space area profiles (part 2 of this report), and statistics for each of the 162 parishes have been provided as an electronic database (appendix 3).

In Tables 19-22 below, where there is **insufficient** supply of open space, the minus number is highlighted **red** to make this stand out.

7.2.1.1 Summary of provision across the borough

Table 19 Supply (Ha) of open space across the borough against the CWAC Standard

Allotments	Amenity Green Space	Park and Recreation Ground	Play Space (Children)	Play Space (Youth)
-13.21	-28.55	4.96	-0.28	-5.24

7.2.1.2 Summary of provision across study areas that are grouped by wards

Table 20 Supply (Ha) of open space in study areas against the CWAC Standard

Study Area	Allotments	Amenity Green Space	Park and Recreation Ground	Play Space (Children)	Play Space (Youth)
Chester	4.77	-23.04	-1.67	-0.41	-0.91
Ellesmere Port	-0.85	-6.52	5.06	-1	-0.9
Rural	-10.86	-13.87	-12.89	0.5	-2.28

7.2.1.3 Summary of provision across study areas that are grouped by parishes

Table 21 Supply (Ha) of open space in study areas against the CWAC Standard

Study Area	Allotments	Amenity Green Space	Park and Recreation Ground	Play Space (Children)	Play Space (Youth)
Northwich	-5.28	2.18	6.85	0.29	-1.16
Winsford	-2.81	11.97	3.65	0.77	-0.17

7.2.1.4 Summary of provision by Ward

Table 22 Supply of open space by Wards against the CWAC Standard (Ha)

Wards	Allotments	Amenity Green Space	Park and Recreation Ground	Play Space (Children)	Play Space (Youth)
Blacon	2.59	-0.94	-2.28	0.45	-0.24
Boughton	-0.82	-2.5	-2.48	0	-0.16
Chester City	-0.58	-0.63	4.4	-0.09	-0.1
Chester Villages	-1.28	-2.03	-2.44	-0.01	-0.13
Davenham and Moulton	-2.04	1.43	-3.37	-0.31	-0.31
Dodleston and Huntington	-0.59	0.36	0.04	0.66	0.1
Ellesmere Port Town	-0.24	3.42	2.85	-0.12	0.02
Elton	-0.68	9.92	0.06	0.1	-0.11
Farndon	-0.33	-2.41	4.41	0	-0.08
Frodsham	-0.13	-2.01	7.9	-0.06	-0.13
Garden Quarter	0.37	-1.98	-1.97	-0.09	-0.01
Gowy	-0.23	-0.71	-1.96	0.11	-0.09
Grange	0.05	-2.79	3.43	-0.09	-0.07
Great Boughton	0.64	-2.82	-1.12	0.17	0
Handbridge Park	0.86	0.21	6.6	0.11	0.08
Hartford and Greenbank	-0.93	-2.04	13.06	0.1	-0.22
Helsby	-0.17	-2.8	-1.18	-0.16	-0.13
Hoole	3.69	-3.58	-2.55	0	-0.21
Kingsley	-0.63	0.01	-2.11	0.16	-0.11
Lache	-0.74	-3.04	-1.58	-0.23	-0.08
Ledsham and Manor	-1.17	-2.91	-3.9	-0.39	-0.23
Little Neston and Burton	-0.3	-2.47	-3.65	-0.16	-0.24
Malpas	-0.6	-1.72	-0.63	-0.06	-0.07
Marbury	-1.67	-5.12	-3.38	0.35	-0.18
Neston	-0.2	-1.81	2.74	0.03	0.01
Netherpool	0.04	-0.42	-1.64	0.11	-0.07
Newton	0.1	-3.6	1.11	-0.36	0.05
Parkgate	-0.41	2.38	-1.8	-0.11	-0.11
Rossmore	0.19	-0.47	-1.31	-0.09	-0.07
Saughall and Mollington	-0.67	2.34	0.18	-0.07	-0.12
Shakerley	-0.63	-0.52	-1.57	0.37	-0.13
St Pauls	2.43	0	-3.5	0.01	0
Strawberry	-0.76	1.12	-2.54	-0.25	-0.15
Sutton	-1.29	-0.73	-1.21	-0.15	-0.23
Tarporley	0.15	-1.67	-1.44	-0.17	-0.12
Tarvin and Kelsall	-1.23	-3.23	-1.33	-0.15	-0.2
Tattenhall	-0.44	2.17	-2.14	-0.17	-0.12
Upton	-1.34	-2.61	-1.81	-0.2	-0.24

Wards	Allotments	Amenity Green Space	Park and Recreation Ground	Play Space (Children)	Play Space (Youth)
Weaver and Cuddington	-1.92	-2.5	-4.6	-0.25	-0.19
Whitby	-0.09	-3.42	12.88	-0.03	-0.09
Willaston and Thornton	1.11	-2.02	0	0.08	-0.11
Winnington and Castle	0.49	10.55	17.76	-0.15	-0.16
Winsford Over and Verdin	-0.51	2.1	10.12	0.44	0.07
Winsford Swanlow and Dene	-1.35	6.31	-4.51	-0.21	-0.21
Winsford Wharton	-1.2	3.18	-2.82	0.45	-0.08
Witton and Rudheath	-0.65	1.23	1.46	0.31	-0.16

7.3 Application of access standards

This section provides an overview of access to different types of open space typologies across the whole study area. The maps are intended to provide an overview and are for illustrative purposes only. More detailed maps by study area are provided within the open space area profiles in part 2 of this report.

7.3.1 Access to open space in study areas

Figure 22 Access to allotments (720 metres)

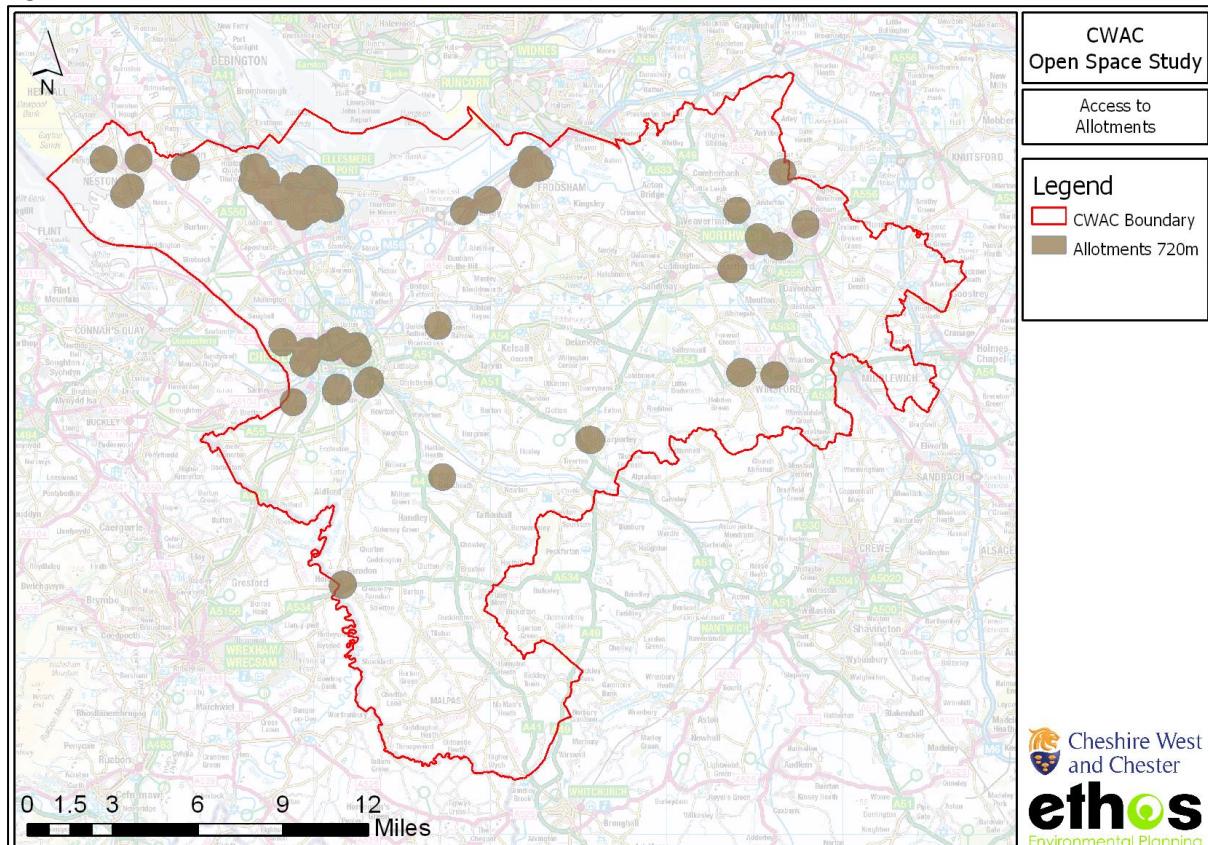


Figure 23 Access to amenity green space (480 metres)

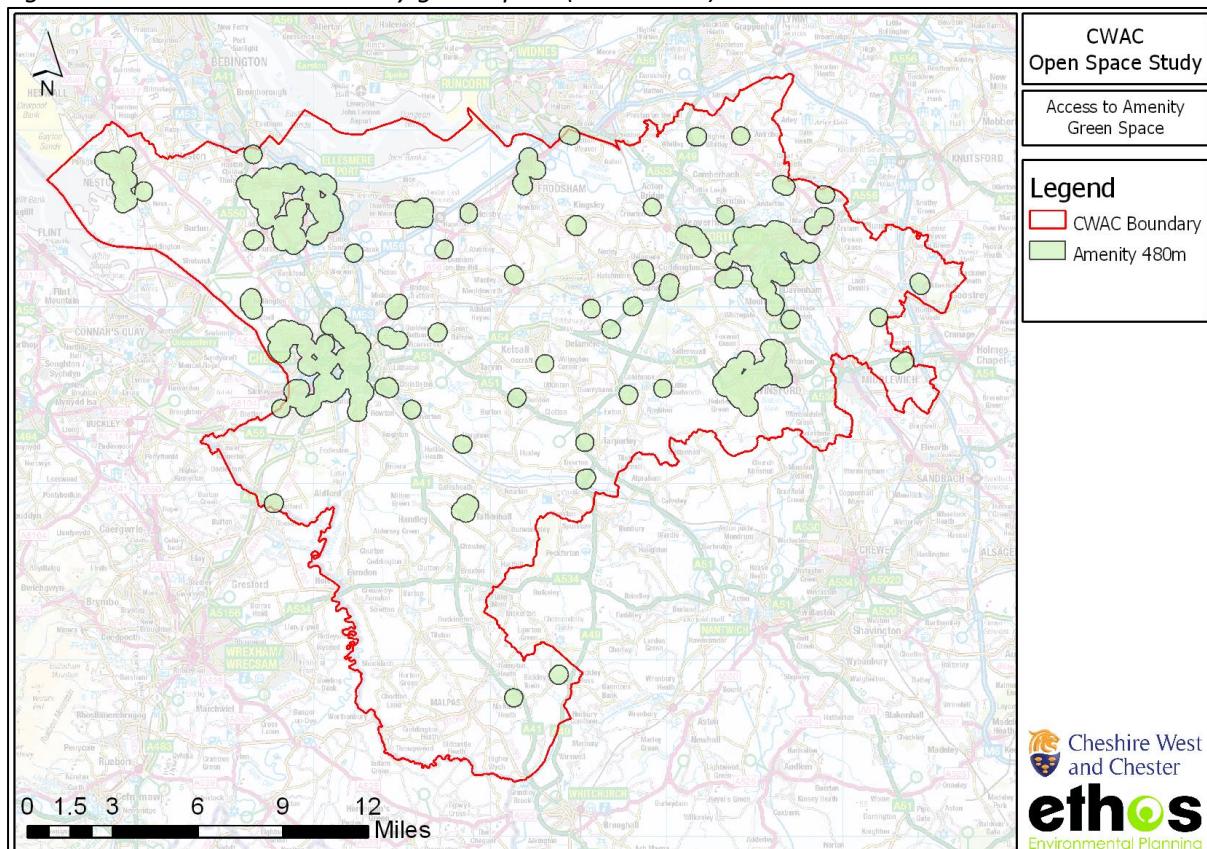


Figure 24 Access to parks and recreation grounds (720 metres)

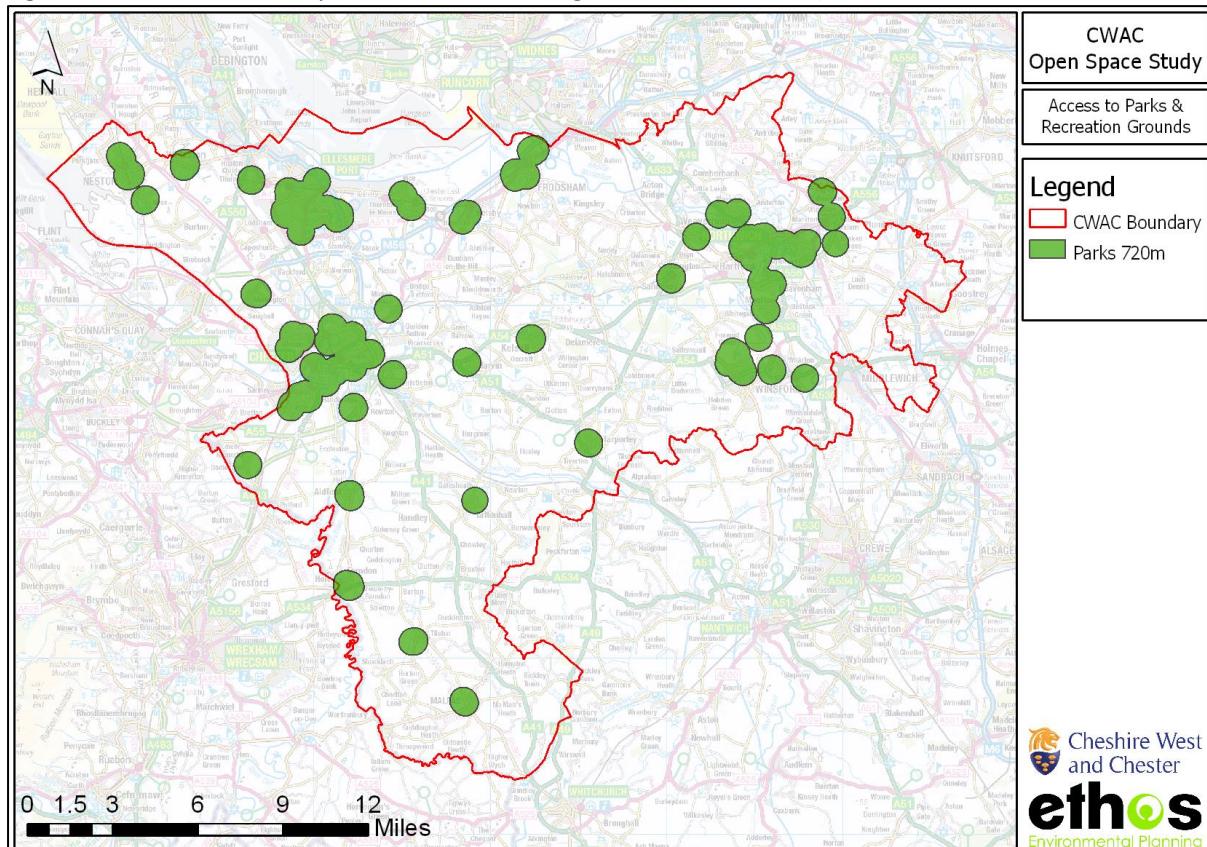


Figure 25 Access to children's play space (480 metres)

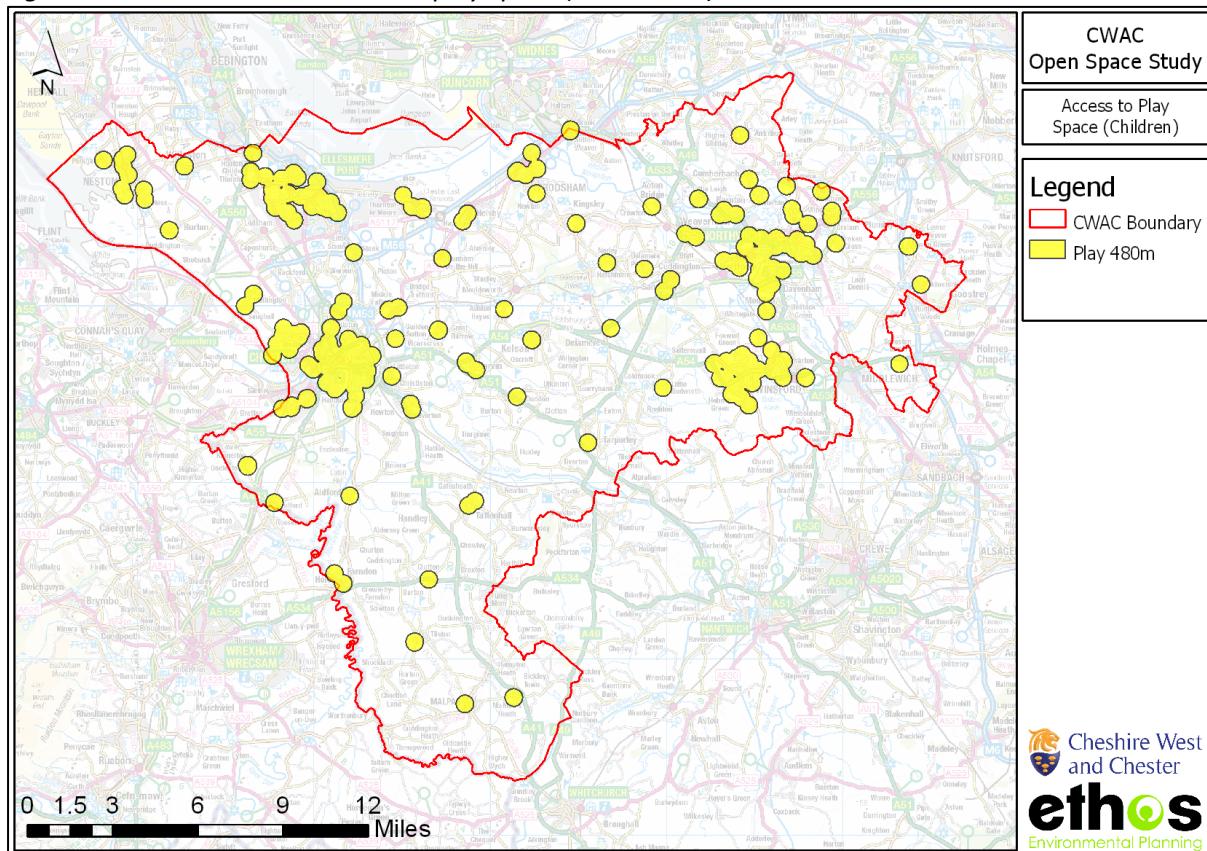


Figure 26 Access to youth play space (600 metres)

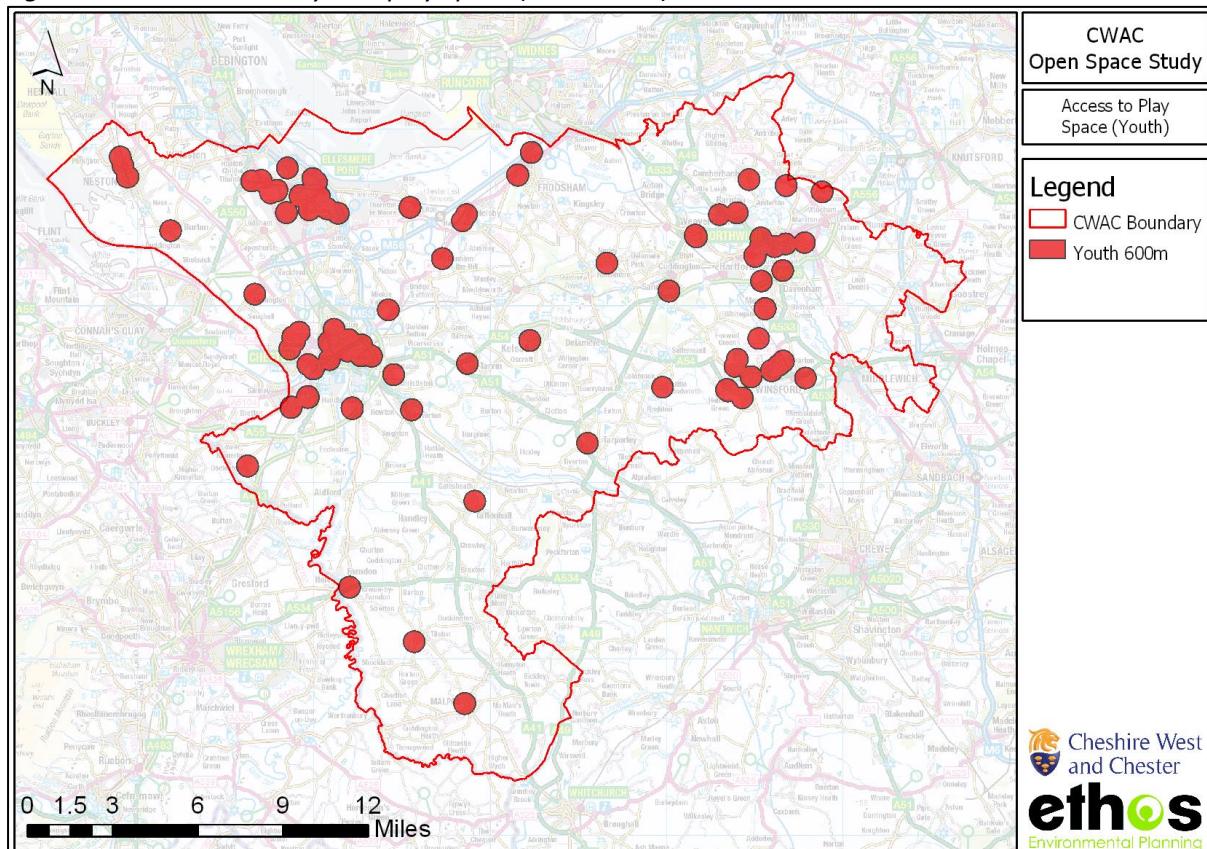


Table 23 Summary of access issues

Typology	Key access issues
Allotments	Good access in Ellesmere Port, gaps across all other key settlement areas, most notably in Northwich and Winsford.
Amenity green space	Generally good access in all key settlement areas
Parks and Recreation Grounds	Generally good access in Chester, larger gaps in access in Ellesmere Port and also Northwich and Winsford.
Children's Play Space	Generally good access, although there are gaps in access in both urban and rural areas
Youth Play Space	Sporadic provision, with many gaps in access in both urban and rural areas.

7.3.2 Application of standards (natural green space)

This section looks at the application of standards for natural green space, and also considers the provision of green corridors and rights of way.

The Accessible Natural Green Space Standards (ANGST) are:

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

Figure 27 Access to 20 ha site within 2km

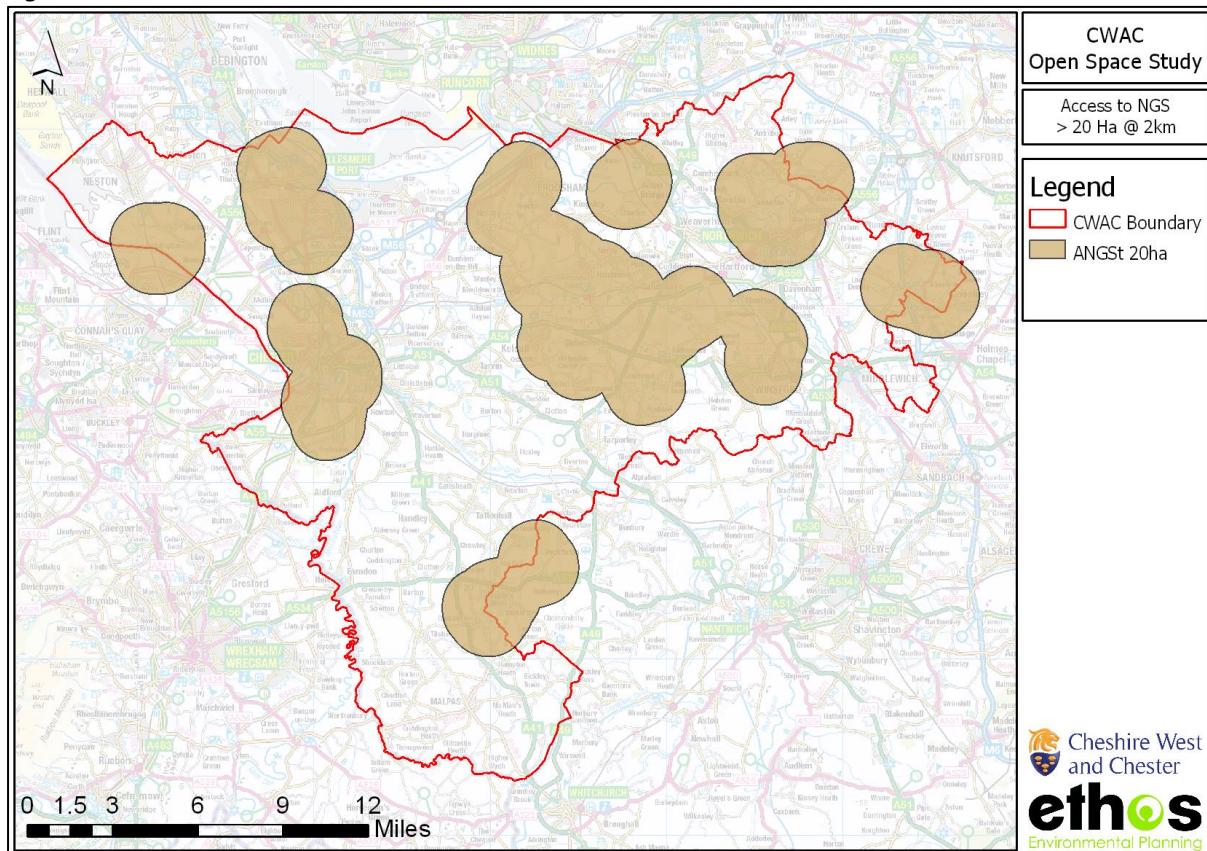


Figure 28 Access to 100 ha site within 5 km

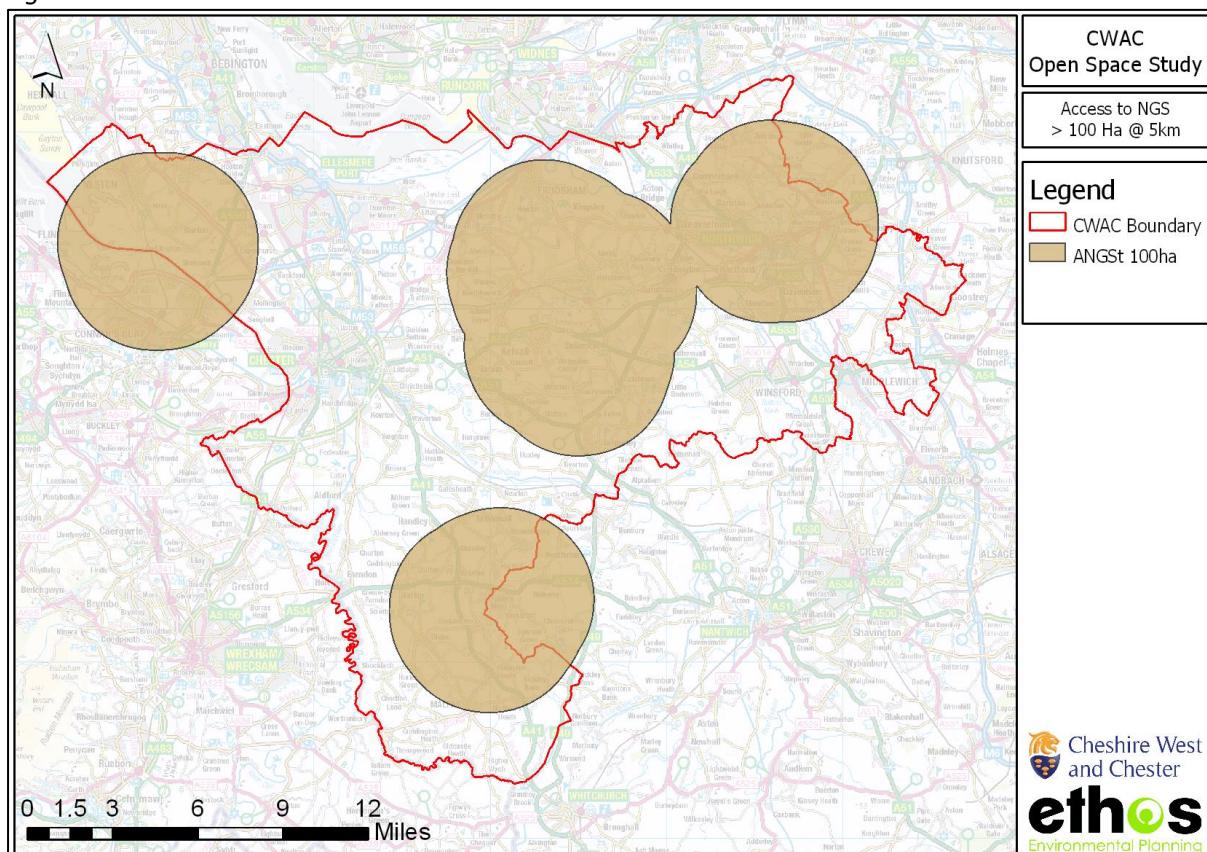


Figure 29 Access to 500 ha site within 10 km

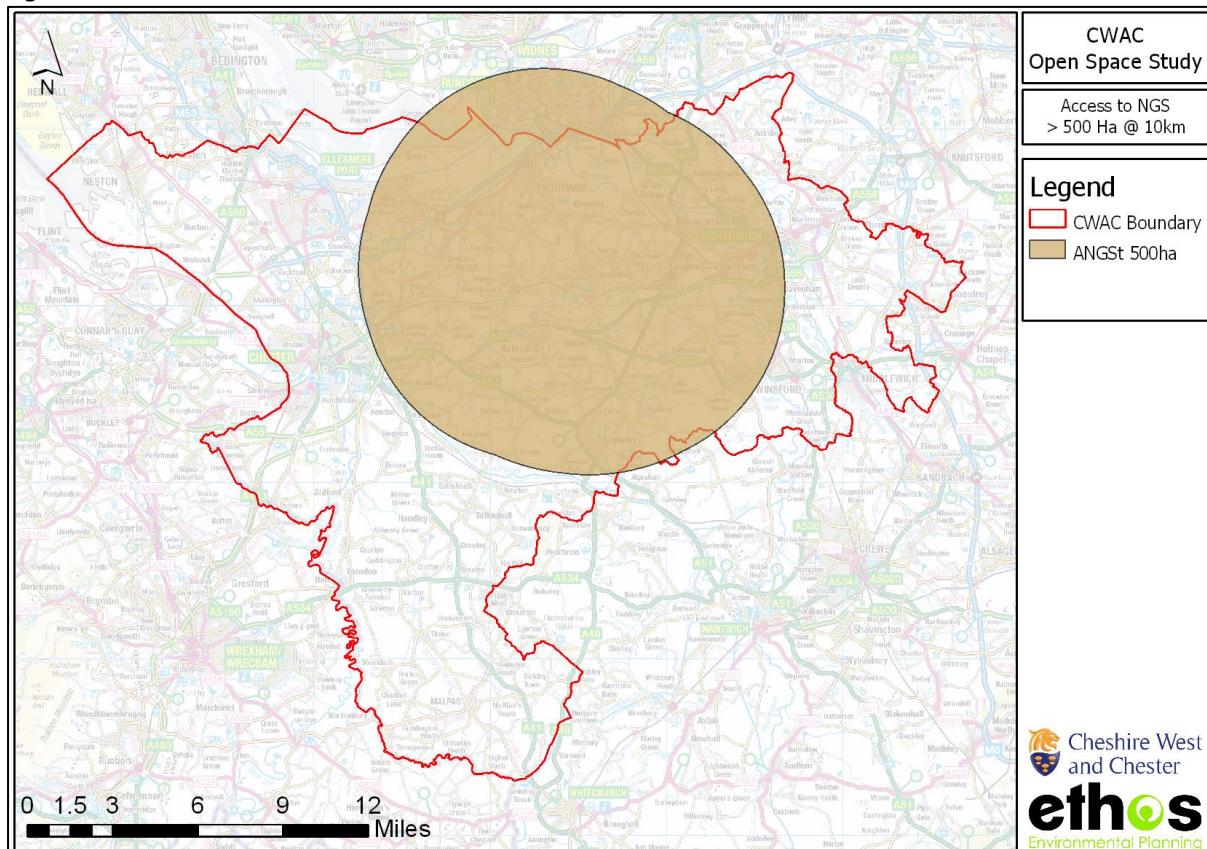


Table 24 Summary of access issues for natural green space

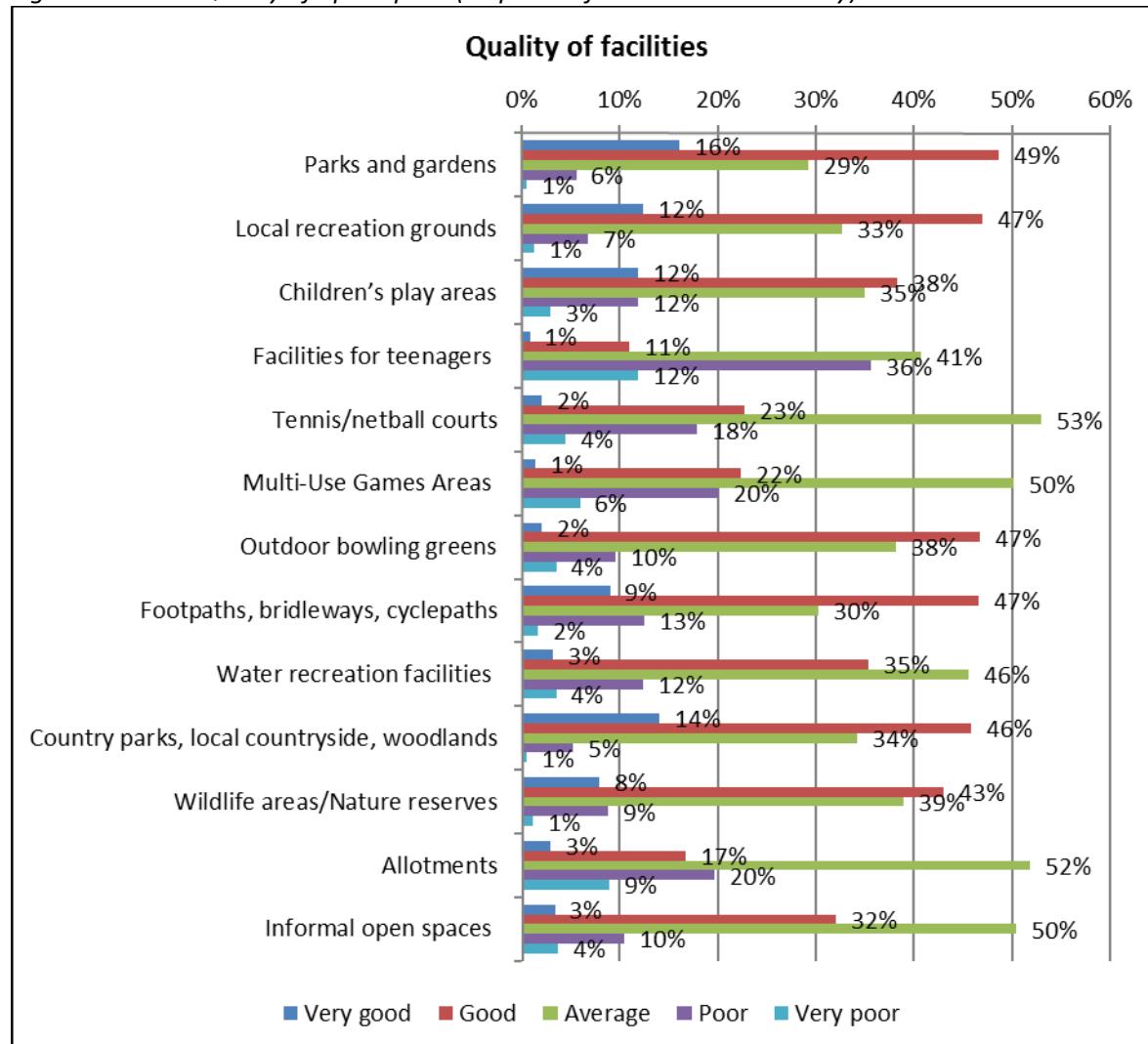
Standard	Key access Issues
ANGST:	
At least one accessible 20 hectare site within two kilometres of home	Good access in the four key settlement areas, gaps in rural areas
One accessible 100 hectare site within five kilometres of home	Gaps in Ellesmere port, Chester and Rural Areas
One accessible 500 hectare site within ten kilometres of home	Provision restricted to Delamere Forest which only covers part of northern area, gaps in Chester, Ellesmere Port and large parts of the rural area.

7.5 Application of quality standards

7.5.1 Quality of open space – consultation key findings

Respondents were asked how they rated various types of facilities in the study area in terms of quality. The responses of those expressing an opinion on specific categories of facility are illustrated below:

Figure 30 Quality of open space (responses from household survey)



For all kinds of outdoor facilities/open spaces a majority of households suggested that in general they were of average or better quality. However, for some typologies there were notable levels of dissatisfaction with general levels of quality.

- 48% of households highlighted the overall quality of outdoor facilities for teenagers as being either poor or very poor.
- Over 25% rated the quality of Multi-Use Games Areas and tennis courts as poor or very poor.

By contrast, some kinds of facilities/open spaces were rated relatively highly by a clear majority in terms of quality.

- Parks and gardens (65% rate quality in general as being good or very good);
- Country parks/countryside/woodlands (60% similarly);
- Local recreation grounds (59%).

7.5.2 Quality of open space – audit findings

The quality audit was undertaken at 490 open spaces and 301 play areas across the study area. The details on the sites audited are provided in a quality audit database which has been provided as an electronic document as part of this study. The key findings and sites with most potential for improvements are highlighted in the open space area profiles (part 2 of this report).

8.0 STRATEGIC OPTIONS, POLICY & MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

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

8.1 Strategic Options

8.1.1 Introduction

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

- 6) Existing provision to be protected;
- 7) Existing provision to be enhanced;
- 8) Opportunities for re-location/re-designation of open space;
- 9) Identification of areas for new provision;
- 10) Facilities that may be surplus to requirement.

Specific requirements at a localised level are provided in the open space area profiles under the same headings listed above.

8.1.2 Delivering Strategic Options

Since the adoption of the National Planning Policy Framework in 2012, the planning environment is still in a state of change and flux.

The abolition of regional spatial strategies, and the move towards localism, puts more focus on local authorities to work with local communities to make decisions and deliver services, rather than relying on national or regional guidance. This will clearly impact how some of the recommendations in this study will be delivered.

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

One of the emerging priorities from localism is for there to be much more local decision making with regards to planning, and for local communities to develop neighbourhood plans. Although it is up to local communities to define their own priorities within neighbourhood plans, the information provided within this study will form a good basis to inform any decisions related to the provision of open space.

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

consider how they can fit into local decision making. With this agenda still relatively new, the following sections serve to highlight issues, but do not necessarily resolve how they may be delivered.

The policies recommended below aim to provide specific guidance on implementing adopted Local Plan policy SOC 6 (see below) within the Council's Local Plan (Part 1). The policy recommendations within this study are required to inform the development of the Local Plan Part 2.

SOC 6 – Open space, sport and recreation

The Council will seek to protect, manage and enhance existing open spaces, sport and recreation facilities to provide a network of diverse, multi-functional open spaces. Proposals will be supported that:

- *Improve the quality and quantity of accessible open space, sport and recreation facilities in the local area*
- *Provide innovative solutions to improving the network of existing open spaces, increase accessibility to green corridors, and enhance biodiversity*
- *Improve access to open space for disabled people, pedestrians and children's play facilities*

Proposals on existing open space, sport and recreation facilities will only be permitted where:

- A. Equivalent or better replacement quality and quantity open space, sport or recreation facilities will be provided in a suitable location; or*
- B. An assessment has clearly demonstrated the site to be surplus for its current open space, sport or recreation function; And*
- C. It could not fulfil other unsatisfied open space, sport or recreation needs; And*
- D. In circumstances where the open space, sport or recreation facility has been demonstrated to be surplus to need for that function in accordance with part C of this policy any proposed replacement will remedy a deficiency in another type of open space, sport or recreation facility in the local area; or*
- E. The development will be incidental to the use of the open space, sport or recreation facility.*

Development will be required to incorporate or contribute towards the provision of an appropriate level and quality of open space, sport and recreation provision.

This section draws together and provides a summary of the conclusions from each of the area profiles, which have been used to develop borough-wide policy.

The study considers the provision of open space at a study area level (groups of wards or parishes) and the recommendations are based on this wider area (with the exception of the rural area, due to its size, and the Winsford study area, which is a single parish). However, ward and parish level detail in relation to supply and access is provided, and becomes important when considering specific developments or neighbourhood plans (for example) which require more localised analysis and decision making by looking at access, supply and

quality at this more detailed level e.g. If a development falls within a study area that has a sufficient supply of amenity green space, but within the ward that the development lies there is an under supply and a gap in access to amenity green space, then on-site provision of this typology should still be sought.

The following provides further guidance on how the open space assessment would be applied within policy SOC 6.

8.1.3 Protecting Open Space

Within policy SOC 6, provision is made for the protection of open space. This section provides recommendations on how the open space assessment would be used to inform the protection of open space.

The starting point of the policy is that all open spaces covered in this study (i.e. recreation space with recommended provision standards as set out in section 6) will be afforded protection unless it can be proved it is not required in line with policy SOC 6.

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

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

Open Space Policy Recommendations (protecting open space):

OS1 The OSA defines open spaces into different typologies, the distribution of which varies across the study area, however, there are identified shortages of at least 1 typology of open space in the majority of areas. It is therefore recommended that priority is placed on protecting those open space typologies where there is an existing shortfall of supply as highlighted in this assessment (Table 25 below summarises supply by study area (more detail can be found in the area profiles in part 2). The figures highlighted red show the shortfalls in supply of each typology by study area).

OS2 Sites which are critical to avoiding deficiencies, or making existing deficiencies worse, in quality, quantity or access should be protected unless suitable alternative provision can be provided which would compensate for any deficiencies caused.

The supply tables, access maps and quality audit information within each of the open space area profiles should be used to identify which specific sites are critical to avoiding deficiencies or making deficiencies worse i.e. if the disposal/alternative use of an open space would result in access gaps or a shortfall in supply or quality, then it should not be considered for alternative use unless suitable alternative provision and/or quality and access improvements can be made (see section 8.1.7).

OS3 Sites which have significant nature conservation, historical, visual or cultural value should be afforded protection, even if there is an identified surplus in quality, quantity or access in that local area.

Table 25 Supply of open space by study area

Study Area	Allotments	Amenity Green Space	Park and Recreation Ground	Play Space (Children)	Play Space (Youth)
Chester	4.77	-23.04	-1.67	-0.41	-0.91
Ellesmere Port	-0.85	-6.52	5.06	-1.00	-0.90
Rural	-10.86	-13.87	-12.89	0.5	-2.28
Northwich	-5.28	2.18	6.85	0.29	-1.16
Winsford	-2.81	11.97	3.65	0.77	-0.17

Section 8.1.7 provides an outline of the decision process that should be followed before the development of an open space can be seriously contemplated, which is in accordance with policy SOC 6.

Although the assessment only considers amenity green space over 0.15ha, the exclusion of amenity green space smaller than this from the assessment is not a presumption that they will not be subject to the same policies and recommendations made within this report.

8.1.4 Improving Quality

Within policy SOC 6, provision is made for improving the quality of open space. This section provides recommendations on how the open space assessment would be used to inform this.

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

This includes those spaces or facilities which:

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

Those sites which require enhancement are identified within the quality audit that was undertaken (Appendix 2 and section 5 of the open space area profiles). Some of the key observations related to site enhancement include:

1. The importance of providing high quality provision and maintenance of formal facilities such as Parks and Recreation Grounds and Play Space.
2. The role of private sports spaces to some local communities and the need to provide opportunity for investment.

3. The need to ensure high quality open spaces are designed and provided through new development where feasible.
4. The importance of rights of way and natural green space within the Study area
5. The need to maintain and enhance provision for biodiversity
6. The role of open space in contributing to wider initiatives and strategies, for example providing background information for CWAC's green infrastructure strategy.
7. Extending and enhancing the network of green infrastructure including the connectivity between sites and improved accessibility to existing sites.

Open Space Policy Recommendations (enhancing open space):

OS4 Future LDPD's and Neighbourhood Plans should consider the opportunities for creating and enhancing a network of both utility and recreation routes for use by foot and bike in both urban and rural areas. Creative application of the amenity green space/natural green space components of the proposed overall standard in respect of new development should be explored.

OS5 The study makes recommendations for improving the quality of open space across the study area. However, a long term strategy for achieving improvements is required which could be delivered through a Green Space Strategy, neighbourhood plans and be considered within the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

OS6 Priorities for improvement identified within the community consultation include the enhancement of the rights of way network and improving provision for teenagers. SOC 6 also highlights the need to enhance biodiversity, improve access for disabled people and pedestrians and access to children's play spaces.

OS7 In order to improve the management and biodiversity of open spaces, management plans should be developed for the main parks and recreation grounds and open spaces. These priorities could be considered in neighbourhood plans and by the local community.

8.1.5 Improving quantity, access and quality

Policy SOC 6 states that '*Proposals will be supported that provide innovative solutions to improving the network of existing open spaces, increase accessibility to green corridors, and enhance biodiversity*'. This section provides recommendations on how the open space assessment would be used to inform this.

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

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

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

These decisions could include spatial and investment plans for open space, and set the foundations for open space provision (e.g. for the next 20 years). They should outline where different types of facilities and space - such as natural green space, children's playgrounds, sports pitches, young people's facilities etc. are to be located. It will also identify if any green space is no longer needed and its disposal or re use can be used to fund improvements to other spaces.

Each plan should apply the standards and policies set out in this study and ensure that any investment anticipated for open spaces is prioritised with the help of stakeholders and communities. The standards agreed in this study can determine a minimum level of quality and quantity of open space provision and the maximum distance people should have to travel to access different types of open space.

This study provides information on the existing supply of different types of open space, an analysis of access and identifies local issues related to quality. It will act as a good starting point for feeding into neighbourhood plans in consultation with the local community. Section 7 of the open space area profiles (part 2 of this report) considers some of the potential options for re-designation of open space at the typology level (rather than site specific - however some specific examples have been provided), based on the quantity and access analysis.

Open Space Policy Recommendations (relocating open space):

- OS8** Look to develop a pilot project with a neighbourhood plan group which incorporates open space planning.
- OS9** The quantity, quality and access assessment within this study should be used to inform a spatial strategy for open space and Green Infrastructure (GI), with the emphasis on improving connectivity of open space, access to open space and enhancing biodiversity.

8.1.6 Improving quantity

Policy SOC 6 states that '*Development will be required to incorporate or contribute towards the provision of an appropriate level and quality of open space, sport and recreation provision*'.

Identification of areas for new provision

New provision will be required where there is a new development and a planned increase in population, and/or an existing deficiency in supply or access to facilities exists.

The Local Plan (Part One) in Section 3.3.1.2 outlines the projected housing growth for the borough which aims to deliver 22,000 new dwellings with '*the majority of new development to be located within or on the edge of the city of Chester and towns of Ellesmere Port, Northwich and Winsford*'.

It splits this housing figure down by the main urban areas as follows:

- Chester – 5,200
- Ellesmere Port – 4,800
- Winsford – 3,500
- Northwich – 4,300

Population increases from new development have been assessed by applying the 2011 census figure of 2.3 people per dwelling, which is considered to be a sensible and robust figure to conduct onsite contributions calculations on.

This report (part 1) and the area profiles (part 2) recommend standards of open space provision for new development (taking into account the above figures), and identify the current supply of open space. Therefore, this study can be used as the basis for decision making related to open space requirements from new development as follows:

Quantity

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

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

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

Access

This study considers how access to different types of open space varies across the borough. The access maps in section 7.3 (and detailed maps in the area profiles) show where there are deficiencies and potential over supply of facilities. This information can be used alongside the quantity statistics to determine if new provision or improved accessibility is required in an area. For example, if a new development is proposed, the maps should be consulted to determine if there is an existing gap in provision of a particular typology which could be met by the development.

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

Delivering new provision

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

New development, CIL and developer contributions

Section 3.3.2 outlines the borough's current situation in relation to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which is yet to be finalised. Whilst it is understood that many community needs and aspirations could potentially utilise this levy, this open space study clearly identifies that there are needs for new and /or enhanced open space provision, particularly where new development is planned. It is important to note that communities may have the potential to use the CIL funding for infrastructure to support the development coming forward.

Outside of CIL, new development will also be required to provide on-site open space in line with the standards outlined in this study¹⁵. Whilst not all developments will be of a size that will generate the requirement for on-site open space (see table 28), when considering future housing numbers for Cheshire West and Chester, there will be many that will. This study should be used to make local decisions about where and when new on-site provision will be required.

Capital and grant funding

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

¹⁵ This is likely to be influenced by the final contents of the REG123 list.

Requirements for open space from new housing

The Council's Local Plan sets out housing numbers for the borough. These housing figures have been used to project the population increase for each of the open space study areas (part 2), and the resulting requirement for open space has been calculated using the CWAC quantity standards.

Table 26 below summarises the priorities by study area. More detail can be found within each of the open space area profiles (part 2 of this study).

Table 26 Requirements for new provision of open space typologies as part of new development

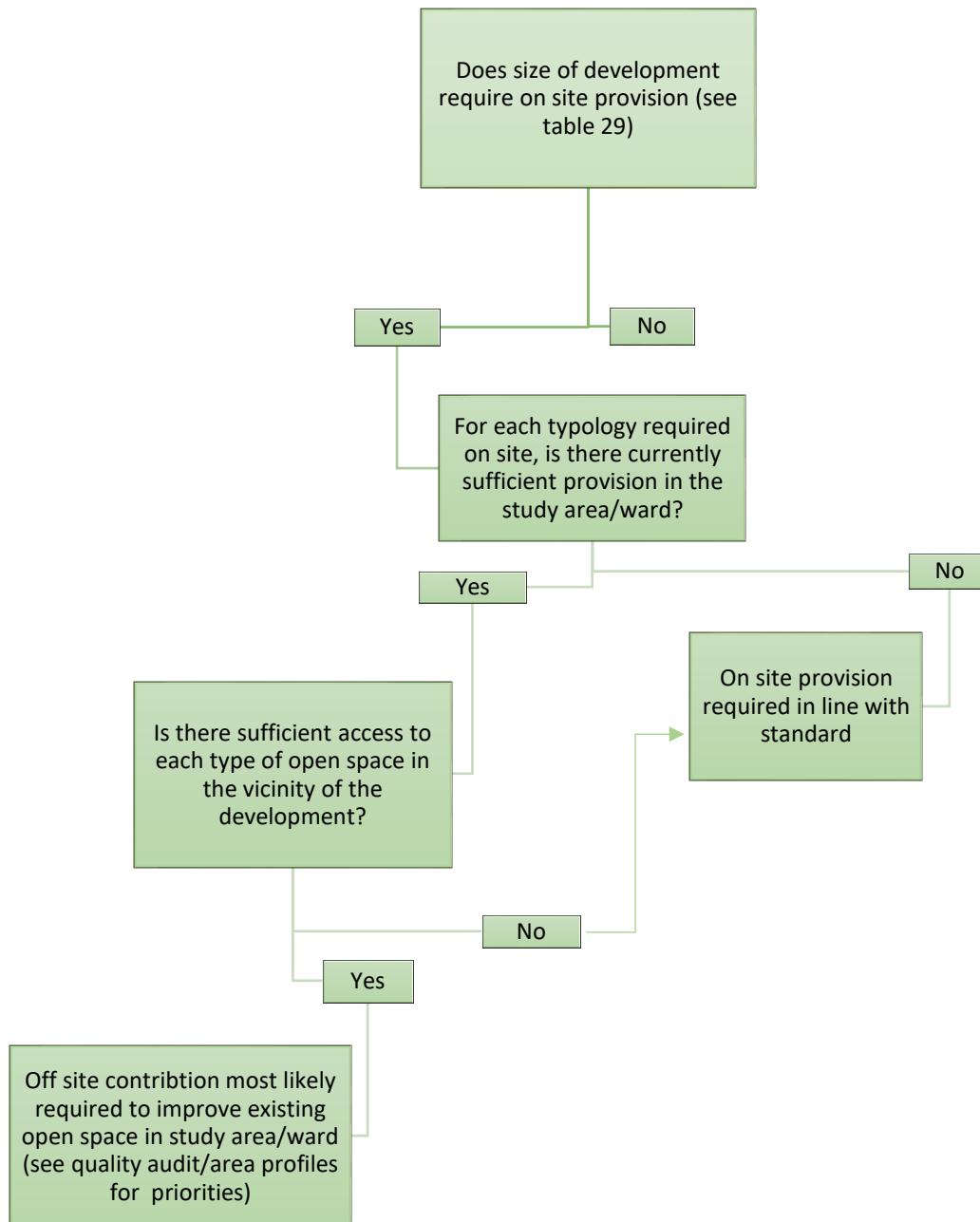
Study Area	Priorities for open space provision through new development
Chester	The assessment has identified that there is already an existing quantitative shortfall in the provision of all types of open space (except allotments) in the Chester study area. The impact of future housing growth has also been shown to exacerbate this situation. Therefore, the need to provide open space on site in new development (with the exception of allotments) is a key priority for the area. Provision of allotments may also be required on-site where this reduces gaps in access.
Ellesmere Port	The assessment has identified that there is already an existing quantitative shortfall in the provision of all types of open space (except parks and recreation grounds) in this study area. The impact of future housing growth has also been shown to exacerbate this situation. Therefore, the need to provide open space on site in new development is a key priority for the area. The exception would be for parks and recreation grounds, where improvements to the quality of and access to existing sites is likely to be required over new provision, unless development occurs in areas where gaps in access could be reduced.
Northwich	The assessment has shown that there is an existing shortfall of allotments and youth space, both of which also have gaps in access. Therefore, the priority for new development would be to provide these types of open space where feasible. The projected population increase also results in an overall under supply of amenity green space and play space (children) if no new provision were made – therefore on site provision of these typologies would be required. Although parks and recreation grounds would still be in sufficient supply after the projected population increase (and therefore the priority would be to improve the quality of and access to existing parks and recreation grounds), new provision may still be required where this would remove gaps in access.
Winsford	The assessment has identified that there is already an existing quantitative shortfall in allotments and youth play space within the Winsford study area. Therefore, the priority for new development would be to provide these types of open space where feasible. For amenity green space, parks and recreation grounds and children's play space, there is sufficient supply of these typologies even after the projected population growth, and so the priority for these types of open space would be to improve the quality of

	and access to existing spaces. However, on-site provision would still be sought where gaps in access to these types of open space could be reduced/removed.
Rural Areas	The assessment has shown that all wards have an under supply of at least one type of open space. The planned increase in population growth, also results in the need for additional open space. If no additional open space were to be provided, the increase in population would result in a shortfall of all typologies. Therefore, it is recommended that on site provision is sought across all typologies, in line with the requirements in part 1 of the study.

Decision making process for on/off site provision

Figure 31 shows an example flow chart/decision making process to help developers/council officers determine the need for on/off-site provision of open space. This is only a guide and requirements will be determined on a case by case basis using the standards and assessment within this study. This should be determined through pre-application discussions with the council.

Figure 31 Decision making process for on/off site provision of open space



Open Space Policy Recommendations (new provision of open space):

OS10 New provision of open space will be required as part of new development in study areas/wards/parishes where there are existing deficiencies in quantity or access to open space and/or where the new development will result in deficiencies (see table 26 for the priorities at the study area level).

Where on-site provision is required (see figure 31), it should be provided in line with the proposed open space standards.

Where on-site provision is deemed impractical, or not required e.g. for small sites, consideration will be given to opportunities for off-site provision and/or improvements, including through pooling of S106 contributions (although there are restrictions related to this). For example, the S106 from 5 development sites (that are too small for on-site provision) could be pooled to fund improvements to open spaces in that locality, based on the quality audit. The costs for providing new/improved facilities would be based on the figures provided in table 28. This could be dealt with through a green space strategy, which would be informed by this study.

Improvements to existing open space will be considered first in the ward or parish then within the wider study area. Priority sites requiring improvements will be identified using the ranking scores from the quality audit (detailed in the Area Profiles in Part 2 of this report), and also from site management plans and the Councils own knowledge of their sites.

8.1.7 Facilities that are surplus to requirement

Policy SOC 6 states that '*Proposals on existing open space, sport and recreation facilities will only be permitted where:*

- A. Equivalent or better replacement quality and quantity open space, sport or recreation facilities will be provided in a suitable location; or*
- B. An assessment has clearly demonstrated the site to be surplus for its current open space, sport or recreation function; And*
- C. It could not fulfil other unsatisfied open space, sport or recreation needs; And*
- D. In circumstances where the open space, sport or recreation facility has been demonstrated to be surplus to need for that function in accordance with part C of this policy any proposed replacement will remedy a deficiency in another type of open space, sport or recreation facility in the local area; or*
- E. The development will be incidental to the use of the open space, sport or recreation facility'.*

There are important issues to resolve in terms of getting the correct balance of open space across the study area before any disposal can be contemplated. Whilst there is under provision relative to the minimum standards in several areas, there are other areas where provision compares favourably with the standards. However, it is once again emphasised that

the proposed standards are for *minimum* levels of provision. Factors to be taken into account before any decision to release open space for alternative uses can be taken include:

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

Section 7 of the open space area profiles provides a summary of the priorities for each study area which includes consideration of open space typologies that may be surplus to requirement, and this is summarised in table 26 below.

As can be seen from table 27, it has been assessed that the Winsford Study Area may have opportunities for alternative use of open space – specifically amenity green space and children’s play space (although the CWAC Play Strategy should be consulted for specific detail). Other areas may need further review towards the end of the plan period before any decisions could be made.

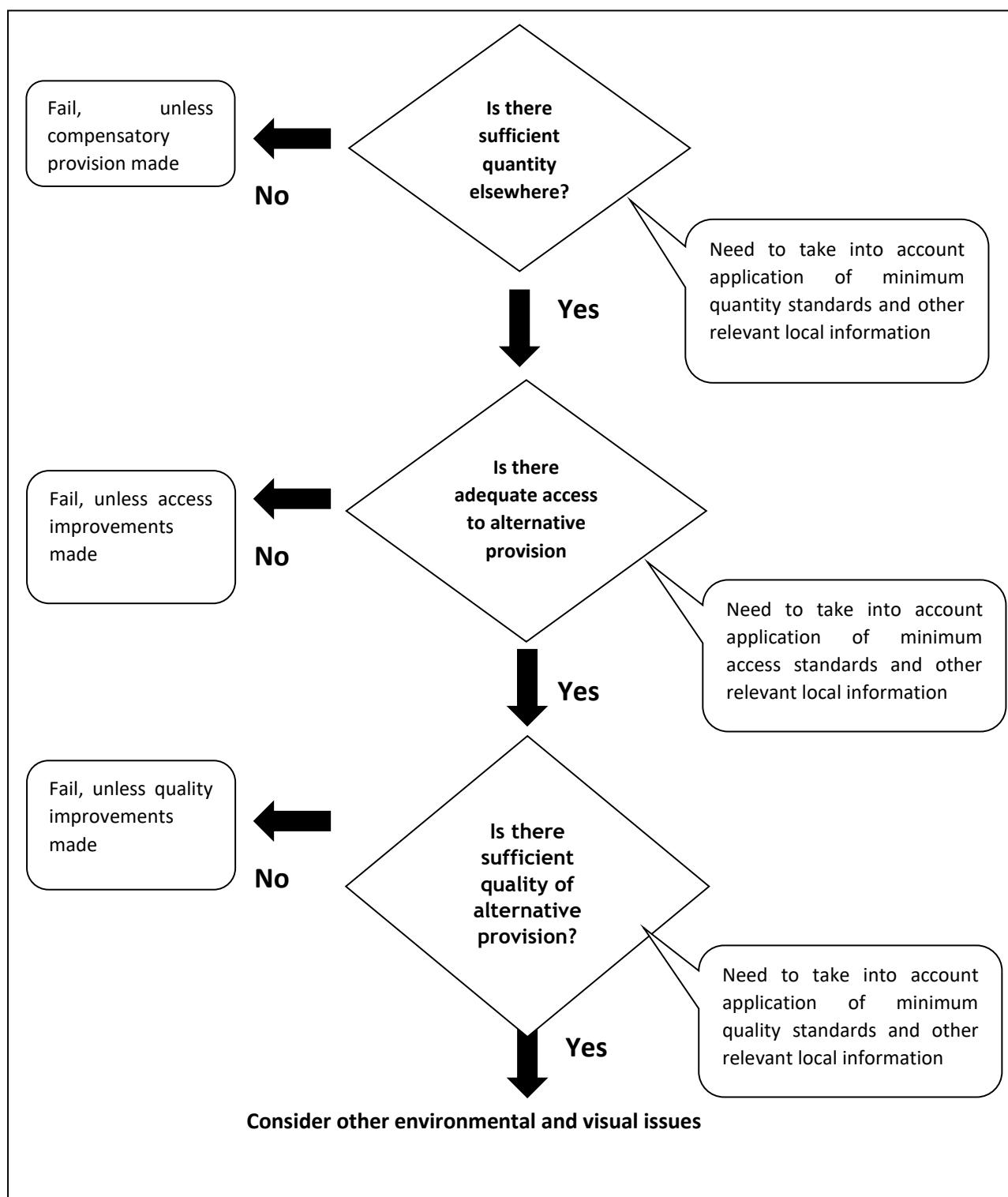
Open Space Policy Recommendations (Facilities that are surplus to requirement):

OS11 Figure 32 suggests an outline of the decision process that should be followed before the development of an open space can be seriously contemplated, in accordance with policy SOC 6.

Table 27 *Open space typologies that may be surplus to requirement*

Study Area	Consideration of open space typologies that may be surplus
Chester	Due to the existing quantitative shortfall in the provision of open space across all types of open space (except allotments which would result in gaps in access if any were to be lost), it is recommended that there are no open space facilities that are surplus to requirement.
Ellesmere Port	Due to the existing quantitative shortfall in the provision of open space across all types of open space (except parks and recreation grounds which would be in under supply following the projected housing growth for the area if no new provision were made, and could accommodate other types of open space e.g. play space and allotments to reduce the shortfalls in provision and access to these typologies), it is recommended that there are no open space facilities that are surplus to requirement.
Northwich	The assessment has shown that whilst there is currently sufficient provision of some typologies of open space, the proposed housing growth would result in a shortfall across all typologies, with the exception of parks and recreation grounds. Although parks and recreation grounds would be in sufficient supply after the projected population increase, they provide opportunity for reducing the shortfalls in other typologies, and therefore their disposal/part disposal should not be considered unless other shortfalls have been addressed. It is therefore recommended that this is reviewed towards the end of the plan period to establish, how much open space has been provided within new development and how the resultant overall supply and access stands.
Winsford	<p>There is sufficient supply of parks and recreation grounds, although there are gaps in access to this typology, which means there is limited opportunity for disposal.</p> <p>There is also sufficient supply of children's play space. Consideration could be given for play space (children) to be surplus where access is overlapping, although the detail of this will be contained within the emerging Play Strategy.</p> <p>There is sufficient supply of amenity green space, many of which are small in size and overlapping in terms of access. Consideration could be given to disposing of sites within this typology, provided they do not fill any access gaps or could be suitable for allotments or youth play space (where an under supply has been identified).</p>
Rural Area	The assessment has shown that there is an under supply of all typologies (with the exception of children's play space) and the proposed housing growth would result in a shortfall in all typologies. Whilst there may be opportunity for re-designating some spaces, unless all developments provide their full quota of open space, there would be no opportunity for disposing of existing open spaces. It is therefore recommended that this is reviewed towards the end of the plan period to establish, how much open space has been provided within new development and how the resultant overall supply stands.

Figure 32 Outline decision making process in relation to sanctioning (re)development of open space



Example scenario for sanctioning (re)development of amenity green space:**Q. Is there sufficient quantity?**

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

Q. Is there adequate access to alternative provision?

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

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

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

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

8.2 Developer Contributions

This section draws on the policy recommendations in the previous section and outlines a process for assessing developer contributions for on and off site provision (i.e. for providing new open space on-site within new development also for new/improved facilities off site) and recommendations for management and maintenance procedures and costs.

The assumed population generated per dwelling is 2.3 people, based on the 2011 census e.g. a development of 100 dwellings would generate an assumed population increase of 230 people. This figure should be updated in accordance with further censuses.

8.2.1 Developer contributions and Community Infrastructure Levy

This section sets out higher level strategic recommendations and recommends an approach to developer contributions which can be used to inform policy for on-site contributions and to inform the feasibility for any off site investment proposed (through CIL or other external funding mechanisms¹⁶).

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

In order to calculate developer contributions for facilities, a methodology has been adopted which calculates how much it would cost the Local Authority to provide them. These costs have been calculated using local information, where available, and have also been benchmarked against other Local Authorities costs for providing facilities. A summary of the costs are outlined in table 28 below (detailed calculations are provided at appendix 4).

Contributions towards the provision or improvement of open space are calculated using the capital cost of provision. The same charges apply to both provision of new facilities and the upgrading/improvement of existing facilities, which more often than not includes new provision. Contribution per person is therefore taken to be a reasonable measure of that impact, irrespective of whether new provision or improvement of existing facilities is required. The calculated costs have drawn on the recommended standards of provision for Cheshire West and Chester.

Table 28 Costs for providing open space

Typology	Standard (Ha/1000)	Standard (m ²) per person	Cost / m ²	Contribution per person
Allotments	0.15	1.50	£30.00	£45.00
Amenity and Natural Green Space	1.00	10.00	£15.00	£150.00
Parks and Recreation Grounds	0.50	5.00	£72.00	£360.00
Play Space (Children)	0.05	0.50	£170.00	£85.00
Play Space (Youth)	0.03	0.30	£170.00	£51.00
Total	1.73	17.30	£457.00	£691.00

¹⁶ The CIL Regulations in general restrict the pooling of Section 106 contributions to no more than five obligations towards the provision of new infrastructure.

This shows that it costs £691 per person to provide new open space to meet the Cheshire West and Chester standard for open space. These calculations are to be used to calculate developer contributions for on-site provision and where feasible any off site projects. Overall costs will therefore vary depending on the size of the individual development and the required mix of open space typologies to be provided. The figures above within 'Parks and Recreation Grounds' do not allow for the cost of playing pitches, however, specific costs and guidance are provided in the separate playing pitch strategy.

2) Maintenance of on-site provision

If a development is required to provide open space on-site, developers will be required to maintain the new provision through a management company, in perpetuity. It is expected that a management plan for the open space would be submitted and approved by the Council as a planning condition.

The council's position is that it will not take on any new sites for management, however, if a situation arises where a developer does not manage the site, the council may be willing to accept a commuted sum and make arrangements for management of the open space through a third party. A 2% inflation raise should be applied per annum.

3) Thresholds for provision

The required open space, sport and recreation facilities can be provided by on-site provision, or through CIL (if included in adopted policy). Where facilities are to be provided on-site, the Council will expect the developer to provide the land for the facility and either:

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

The decision on whether facility provision is to be on-site, off-site or both is made by the Council and depends on the following considerations:

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

Table 29 below provides a guide to assess which scales of housing generate a need for facilities in the categories listed to be provided on-site. Developments with between 20 and 65 dwellings would generate less than the minimum requirement of 0.15ha for amenity/natural green space against the quantity standard. Therefore, for developments of this size, the minimum size of amenity green space/natural green space will be 0.15ha. For developments over this size, the quantity standard (1.0ha/1000) will apply. The assumed population generated per dwelling is 2.3 people, based on the 2011 census.

Table 29 Requirement for open space, sport and recreation facility provision on-site

Type of Provision	11-19 dwellings	20-49 dwellings	50-99 dwellings	100 - 199 dwellings	200+ dwellings
Allotments	Off-site	Off-site	Off-site	On-site	On-site
Amenity/Natural Green Space*	Off-site	On-site	On-site	On-site	On-site
Parks and Recreation Grounds	Off-site	Off-site	Off-site	Off-site	On-site
Play Space (children)	Off-site	Off-site	On-site	On-site	On-site
Play Space (Youth)	Off-site	Off-site	Off-site	Off-site	On-site

* For developments between 20 and 65 dwellings, the minimum size of amenity/natural green space is 0.15 ha. This is a combined typology i.e. the amenity space should be designed and planted to be natural in character, maximising wildlife and biodiversity opportunities e.g. with native, species-rich planting.

9.0 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study provides a solid snapshot of the status of open space within Cheshire West and Chester in 2016. It includes a suite of policies and methodology for interpreting and informing the needs for these assets over the coming years, up to 2030. It should be read in conjunction with the local needs assessment detailed report (appendix 1) and the 5 Open Space Area Profiles (Part 2 of the study).