

Undertaking the study

Introduction

- 2.1 As detailed in Section 1, the OSS study was undertaken in accordance with Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17): Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (July 2002), and its Companion Guide, published in September 2002¹. The key emphasis of PPG17 is the importance of undertaking a local needs assessment, rather than following national trends and guidelines. The strategy was also developed in line with the Mayor of London's Guidance to the Preparation of Open Space Strategies that aims to ensure consistency across the London Boroughs.
- 2.2 The Mayor of London's Guidance states that the principle objectives of an open space strategy should be to:
- protect and improve open space provision in terms of quality, quantity, accessibility and safety
 - improve linkages within and between the open space network
 - ensure open spaces meet the needs of all local people and promote greater social inclusion
 - ensure open spaces enhance the quality of the local environment
 - provide a clear framework for investment priorities and action.
- 2.3 It states that open space strategies should include:
- a comprehensive audit of all open space regardless of ownership
 - an assessment of local needs and the value of existing open spaces
 - protection by appropriate designation on UDP maps
 - prioritisation to address identified needs and deficiencies
 - identification of opportunities for improving access to open spaces
 - identification of opportunities for improved linkages between open spaces and the wider public realm.
- 2.4 The study provides an overarching review of open space in the Borough, with a detail audit and assessments of all the different types of open space in Bexley. This will feed into the Open Space Strategy, which will provide a framework for the future delivery of open space through emerging planning policy, corporate strategies or detailed action plans for different service areas.
- 2.5 The Companion Guide to PPG17 indicates that the four guiding principles in undertaking a local assessment are:
- (i) understanding that local needs will vary even within local authority areas according to socio-demographic and cultural characteristics
 - (ii) recognising that the provision of good quality and effective open space relies on effective planning but also on creative design, landscape management and maintenance

¹ Department for Communities and Local Government: PPG17 published July 2002; Companion Guide published September 2002.

- (iii) considering that delivering high quality and sustainable open spaces may depend much more on improving and enhancing existing open space rather than new provision
 - (iv) taking into account that the value of open space will be greater when local needs are met. It is essential to consider the wider benefits that sites generate for people, wildlife and the environment.
- 2.6 PPG17 recognises that individual approaches appropriate to each local authority will need to be adopted as each area has different structures and characteristics. The process set out in PPG17 has therefore been adopted to ensure that the needs and expectations of residents in London Borough of Bexley are adequately addressed.

Types of open space

- 2.7 The London Plan defines open space as:
- “All land use in London that is predominantly undeveloped other than by buildings or structures that are ancillary to the open space use. The definition covers the broad range of open space types within London, whether in public or private ownership and whether public access is unrestricted, limited or restricted”.*
- 2.8 The overall definition of open space within the government planning guidance is:
- “all open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can also act as a visual amenity”.*
- 2.9 Both guidance notes highlight the importance of including all sites regardless of ownership. Private gardens and grass verges are excluded from consideration.
- 2.10 Table 2.1 overleaf sets out the types of open space included within this study in London Borough of Bexley. These typologies are based on PPG17 guidance and the typologies set out in the Guide to the Preparation of Open Space Strategies in London.
- 2.11 It is important to note that although many sites are multifaceted, offering a range of facilities and different open space functions, sites have been classified by their primary purpose. Where there is a definitive facility within a larger site (for example a play area or sports pitch within a park) this site has been subdivided to ensure that the various opportunities offered are all considered.
- 2.12 Sites offering more than one type of recreational open space (for example, parks containing natural areas) have been classified under their primary purpose, although the multidimensional nature of the sites will be recognised within the individual sections of this report. This is referred to later in this section in relation to the audit of provision.

Table 2.1 – Typologies of Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities within London Borough of Bexley

Type	Definition	Primary Purpose
Parks and gardens	<p>Parks have been subdivided into three categories in line with London Guidance, specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metropolitan Parks (over 60ha) – either a) natural heathland, downland commons, woodland etc, or b) formal parks providing for both active and passive recreation. May contain playing fields, but at least 40 hectares for other pursuits • District Parks (20 – 60ha) - landscape setting with a variety of natural features providing for a wide range of activities, including outdoor sports facilities and playing fields, children’s play for different age groups, and informal recreation pursuits. Should provide some car parking • Local Parks (over 2ha) - providing for court games, children’s play, sitting-out areas, nature conservation areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • formal and informal recreation • community events.
Natural and semi-natural green spaces	<p>Includes publicly accessible woodlands, urban forestry, scrub, grasslands (eg downlands, commons, meadows), wetlands and wastelands.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wildlife conservation, • biodiversity • environmental education and awareness.
Amenity green space	<p>Most commonly but not exclusively found in housing areas. Includes informal recreation green spaces. Sites above 0.4ha have been included in line with recommendations set out in the Mayor of London’s Guide to the preparation of open space strategies.</p> <p>These spaces are also referred to in the London Public open space hierarchy as small local parks and pocket parks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • informal activities close to home or work • children’s play • enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas.
Provision for children	<p>Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children below the age of 12. While it is recognised that a wide variety of opportunities for children exist (including play schemes and open spaces not specifically designed for this purpose), as per PPG17, this typology considers only those spaces specifically designed as equipped play facilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • children’s play.
Provision for young people	<p>Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving young people aged 12 and above. While it is recognised that a wide variety of opportunities for young people exist (including youth clubs and open spaces not specifically designed for this purpose), as per PPG17, this typology considers only those spaces specifically designed for use by young people eg:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teenage shelters • skateboard parks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • activities or meeting places for young people.

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Type	Definition	Primary Purpose
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BMX tracks • multi use games areas. 	
Outdoor sports facilities	<p>Natural or artificial surfaces either publicly or privately owned used for sport and recreation. Includes school playing fields. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • outdoor sports pitches • tennis courts and bowls greens • golf courses • athletics tracks • playing fields (including school playing fields) • water sports. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • facilities for formal sports participation.
Allotments	<p>Opportunities for those people who wish to do so to grow their own produce as part of the long-term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion. May also include urban farms. This typology does not include private gardens.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • growing vegetables, fruit and flowers.
Cemeteries & churchyards	<p>Cemeteries and churchyards including disused churchyards and other burial grounds.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • burial of the dead • quiet contemplation.
Green corridors	<p>Includes towpaths along canals and riverbanks, cycleways, rights of way and disused railway lines. These linear routes/spaces are also frequently referred to as green chains.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • walking, cycling or horse riding • leisure purposes or travel • opportunities for wildlife migration.

The geographical area

- 2.13 Analysis of the open space, sport and recreation facilities across the Borough has been undertaken by investigating the supply and demand in six different areas across the local authority area (referred to as clusters in this report). These areas were discussed and agreed with the Council at the outset and take into account the location of town centres, growth areas and extended schools clusters. The areas have been generated by the amalgamation of wards.
- 2.14 The use of clusters allows examination of data at a more detailed local level, enabling an understanding of the geographical distribution of open spaces and ensuring that differences in perception and opinion of open spaces across the Borough are understood.
- 2.15 Although these clusters have been used to ensure that consultation was undertaken proportionately across the Borough, the application of local standards will enable the identification of priorities at neighbourhood level.
- 2.16 These areas used for the purposes of this Technical Paper are illustrated in Map 2.1 overleaf and are summarised in Table 2.2 below.

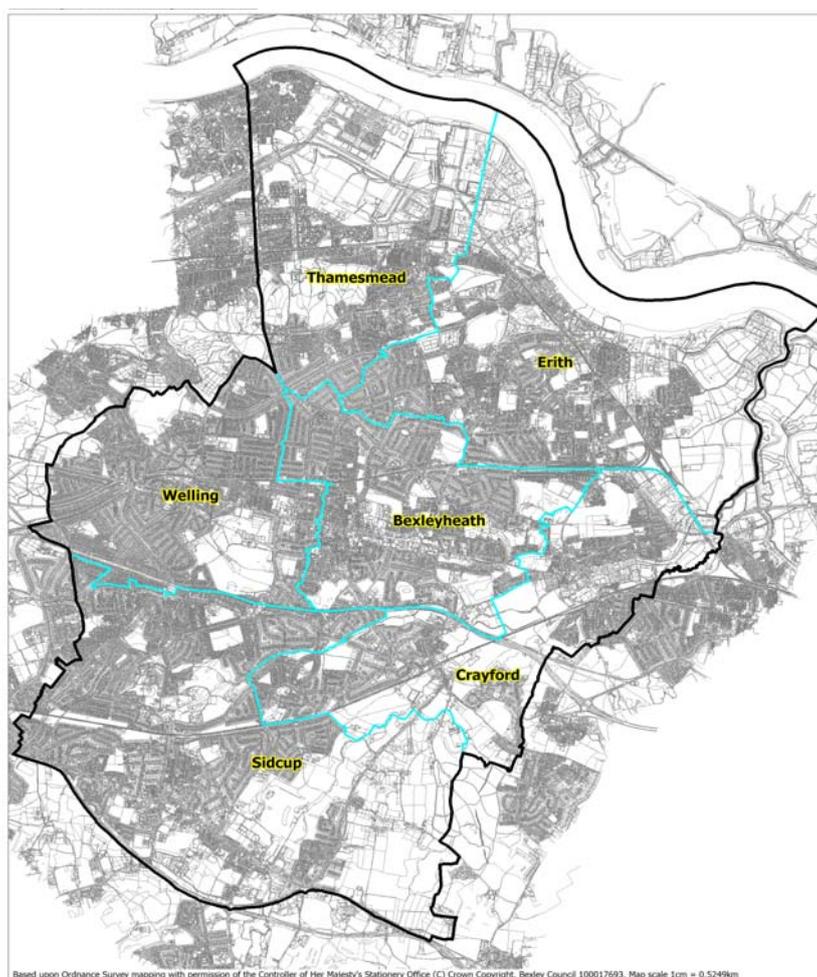
Table 2.2 – The geographical areas of London Borough of Bexley

Area name	Population	Wards included
Thamesmead	32,487	Belvedere, Lesnes Abbey, Thamesmead East
Erith	41,353	Colyers, Erith, North End, Northumberland Heath
Crayford	20,333	Crayford, St Marys
Bexleyheath	31,054	Barnehurst, Brampton, Christchurch
Welling	41,905	Danson Park, East Wickham, Falconwood and Welling, St Michaels
Sidcup	51,175	Blackfen and Lamorbey, Blendon and Penhill, Cray Meadows, Longlands, Sidcup

(Source: Bexley Census 2001)

2.17 In order to successfully anticipate the future need for open space, sport and recreation facilities across the Borough, this report considers the future demand based on projected population statistics. Appendix M summarises the demographic profile of each of the above areas.

Map 2.1 - The geographical areas of London Borough of Bexley



Based upon Ordnance Survey mapping with permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office (C) Crown Copyright. Bexley Council 100017693. Map scale 1cm = 0.5249km



Analysis Areas Borough MasterMap



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2.18 A study for the London Borough of Bexley in 2007² considered the impact of five potential growth scenarios up to March 2026. This report takes into account the likely amount of new dwellings and potential locations for these developments. The five scenarios considered are summarised in Table 2.3 below.

Table 2.3 – Population growth per annum up to 2026

Growth	Scenario	Additional housing units per annum	Rationale behind scenario
Low	1	383	Continuation of existing strategic policy and local development distributed across the whole Borough
Low	2a	519	Continuation of existing strategic policy and local development distributed across the whole Borough
Medium	2b	741	Development focused in the Thames Gateway town centres: Erith, Crayford & Bexleyheath.
Medium	3a	727	Development distributed across the whole Borough and focused in town centres: Bexleyheath, Erith, Crayford, Sidcup & Welling
High	3b	931	Development focused in the Thames Gateway town centres: Erith, Crayford & Bexleyheath and Abbey Wood

2.19 The growth scenarios imply population growth of between around 20,000 (9%) and 31,000 (14%) in the period from 2005 to 2026. The impact of all five scenarios will be considered within this report.

PPG 17 – Five step process

2.20 The PPG17 Companion Guide sets out a five step logical process for undertaking a local assessment of open space, sport and recreation facilities. Specifically:

- Step 1 - identifying local needs
- Step 2 - auditing local provision
- Step 3 - setting provision standards
- Step 4 - applying provision standards
- Step 5 - drafting policies - recommendations and strategic priorities.

2.21 The study for the London Borough of Bexley has been carried out in three stages, with stages 1 and 2 carried out simultaneously. Stage 3, the development of a strategic framework for the future delivery of open space, sport and recreation facilities in the Borough, encompasses steps 3, 4 and 5 of the methodology set out in the PPG17 Companion Guide.

Our process

2.22 The following steps indicate the process used to develop the open space, sport and recreation facilities strategy and local needs assessment.

² ERM Study “Testing the Service Requirement Impacts of Future Housing Growth in Bexley, final report 2007”

Step 1 - Identifying local needs

- 2.23 PPG17 states that community consultations are essential to identify local attitudes to existing provision and local expectations for additional or improved provision. The Mayor of London's Guidance also recognises the importance of undertaking detailed assessments of local needs.
- 2.24 The PPG17 guidance relies less on the implementation of national standards and places increased emphasis on local needs. The assessment of needs should result in qualitative visions and quantity and accessibility standards that reflect the type and amount of facilities that local communities want to see. It is essential that the local standards and the resulting strategy are directly reflective of local needs and expectations and a balance between the level of quantitative and qualitative consultations is essential.
- 2.25 In order to identify local needs, a series of consultations were carried out specifically:
- household questionnaires
 - neighbourhood 'drop in' sessions
 - internet survey for children and young people
 - Elected Member and Council officer consultation questionnaire
 - one-to-one consultations with Council officers
 - user group workshops
 - sports club questionnaire
 - questionnaires to external agencies
 - telephone consultations with neighbouring local authorities.
- 2.26 Background is provided on each of the key elements of the consultation in Table 2.4 overleaf. A full summary of the findings of the household survey is provided in Appendix N.

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Table 2.4 – Summary of Local Needs Assessment

	Consultation Method	Purpose	Response
Statistical Consultation	Household Survey	<p>The household survey provides an opportunity for randomly selected households to comment on the quality, quantity and accessibility of existing open space provision as well as identifying their aspirations for future provision.</p> <p>5000 questionnaires were distributed to households across the Borough to capture the views of both users and non-users of open spaces. Residents were randomly selected using the electoral register.</p> <p>Random distribution of questionnaires to a geographically representative sample (based on the populations living in each of the identified clusters) of households ensures that representatives from all age groups, ethnic groups and gender were given the opportunity to participate. In order to promote an even response rate across ages and gender, residents with the next birthday in each household were asked to complete the questionnaire. A copy of the household survey and accompanying covering letter can be found in Appendix B.</p>	492 postal surveys were returned by the deadline date, providing a statistically sound sample that can be used to assume responses for the remaining population across the Borough. Obtaining more than 400 responses means that the results are accurate to +/- 5% at the 95% confidence interval.
	Elected Member and Council Officer Consultation Survey	An internet survey was distributed to Council officers and elected members examining their views on open space, sport and recreation facilities from their perspective as residents and people who work within the Borough.	37 officers and 4 members responded to the survey. As residents, their views will contribute to the local standards, as informed council employees, their views have given a greater understanding of open space, sport and recreation facilities within Bexley. This has helped to facilitate discussions during the consultation process.
	Internet Survey for Young People	<p>Consultation with young people and children is traditionally difficult; however it is important to understand the views of this large sector of the community. Children are important users of open space, sport and recreation facilities.</p> <p>Two questionnaires were therefore posted on the internet: one for pupils of a primary school age and one for young people. All schools within the Council boundaries were notified of the website address and asked to encourage their pupils to complete the questionnaires.</p>	29 responses to the internet survey for children and young people were received. Key themes established through this consultation method have been fed directly into the standard setting process, particularly with regards to children and young peoples facilities.

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	Consultation Method	Purpose	Response
Qualitative Consultation	Neighbourhood Drop in Sessions	<p>Neighbourhood ‘drop in’ sessions were held in five locations across London Borough of Bexley, specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sidcup Library • Erith Library • Embassy Court, Welling • The Broadway, Bexleyheath • Waterside, Crayford <p>These sessions were advertised to the public via the local press and intended to provide an informal opportunity for residents to give their views on open space, sport and recreation issues. Local interest groups were also formally invited to the sessions.</p>	The drop in sessions were well attended and many residents made informed comments regarding the provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities and their aspirations for provision going forward.
	User Group Workshops	<p>In recognition of the importance of the opinions of users of different types of open space, sport and recreation facilities user group discussion sessions were held with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Allotments Federation • The Nature Conservation/Environmental Volunteers Group • sports clubs 	All sessions were well attended and interesting discussions were held. The key themes emerging from these consultations will feed directly into the local standards and the resulting framework for the future management of open space, sport and recreation facilities.
	Sport Club Survey	<p>Consultation with sports clubs was conducted at user group workshops. However, questionnaires were also distributed to gain further views from current users on sports facilities in the Borough. Sports club surveys are particularly important in identifying specific issues regarding sports facilities in the area.</p>	The response rate to the sports club survey was disappointing with less than 10% of clubs responding. The survey responses received will inform and feed directly into the local standards for outdoor and indoor sports.
	External Agencies Questionnaire	<p>Questionnaires were distributed to key regional and local agencies with the aim of obtaining their views and ensuring that local standards dovetail with local and regional priorities. These questionnaires were distributed to all those included within the London Borough of Bexley Statement of Community Involvement as well as those detailed within the Mayor of London’s Guidance for the preparation of open space strategies.</p>	
	Consultation with internal officers	<p>Internal consultations with Council officers were undertaken in order to understand the work, focus and key priorities of the Council and to provide a detailed strategic and practical overview.</p>	A full programme of consultations with representatives across a variety of departments has been completed.

Step 2 - Auditing local provision

- 2.27 PPG17 states that audits of provision should encompass all existing open space, sport and recreation irrespective of ownership and the extent of public access. The logic for this is that all forms of provision can contribute to meeting local needs. These principles are reinforced within the Mayor of London's Guidance to the preparation of open space strategies in London, which highlights the importance of taking into account all sites within the Borough boundaries.
- 2.28 Audits should consider both the quantitative and the qualitative elements of open space, sports and recreation facilities. Audits of quality are particularly important as they allow local authorities to identify potential for increased use through better design, management and maintenance.
- 2.29 The multi functionality of some types of open space presents a challenge in the audit. In order to address these issues, all spaces have been classified by their primary purpose. This ensures that all spaces are counted only once, but does not negate the need to consider the relationships between different types of open space as part of the study.
- 2.30 Additionally, some types of open space are located within a larger space. Where this occurs and the primary purpose is clearly defined, these sites are considered to be two separate sites and have been subdivided. A good example is the location of a children's play area within a park. It is important that these sites are considered separately as they have different roles and fall into different typologies.
- 2.31 The audit of open space, sport and recreation sites across London Borough of Bexley was undertaken using a partnership approach. All sites were recorded so they could be over layered onto an ordnance survey map (GIS layer). Site assessments were undertaken using matrices developed by Parks department.
- 2.32 The use of matrices to evaluate the quality of each site enables comparisons between sites in the same typology and across typologies. The matrices used for each type of open space can be found in Appendix C.
- 2.33 The key partners involved in the preparation of the audit of open space, sport and recreation facilities across the Borough include:
- London Borough of Bexley
 - Orbit Housing Association
 - Gallions Housing Association
 - L & Q Housing Association
 - PMP Consultancy Limited

The site assessment and audit process resulted in an overall quality and accessibility score for each site, in addition to ratings for each individual factor considered.

Step 3 - Developing a framework for the future planning and management of open space, sport and recreation facilities

- 2.34 The framework for open space, sport and recreation facilities for the London Borough of Bexley is derived from the findings of the local needs assessment and the audit of existing provision.
- 2.35 PPG17 states that open space standards should be set locally and recommends that national standards should not be used to assess local circumstances. PPG17

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recommends that local authorities use information gained from the assessment of needs and opportunities (stage 1) to set locally derived standards for the provision of open space, sport and recreational facilities.

- 2.36 These local standards should include:
- quantitative elements (how much new provision may be needed)
 - a qualitative component (against which to measure the need for enhancement of existing facilities)
 - accessibility (including distance thresholds and consideration of the cost of using a facility).
- 2.37 The local standards for quality, quantity and accessibility of open space, sport and recreation facilities should relate directly to the local consultation undertaken and should therefore be reflective of local needs. PMP has produced locally based standards using the findings of the household survey and other consultations undertaken where appropriate.
- 2.38 Additionally, the Mayor of London’s Guidance to the Preparation of Open Space Strategies in London details standards considered reasonable within the London Context. It suggests that these standards are applied across London Boroughs to ensure consistency. These standards are considered in the context of the recommended local standards and will be applied as part of the development of the framework for the future planning and management of open space, sport and recreation facilities. These standards relate to public open space as a whole and subdivide open space according to the size of the site as opposed to the primary purpose of the facility.
- 2.39 Table 2.5 overleaf briefly summarises the process adopted for setting local standards. More detail is provided in Appendices E - H.

Table 2.5 – The setting standards process

Process Stage	Methodology
National standards	Analysis of any existing national standards for each typology. These are usually provided by national organisations eg National Playing Fields Association for playing pitches. It is important to ensure that national standards are taken into account as part of the determination of local standards.
Existing local standards	Consideration of existing local standards for each typology that are currently applied by the Council. These include standards set out in the UDP and in other strategies and documents.
Current provision (quantity standards only)	Assessment of the current quantity of provision within the local authority area as a whole and within each cluster.
Benchmarking	Figures detailing local standards set by PMP for other open space projects to provide a benchmark when setting local standards.
Consultation (household survey)	Consideration of the findings of the household survey for each type of open space. This analysis provides a robust indication (at the Borough wide 95% confidence level) of public perception of the existing level of provision of all different types of open spaces.

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Consultation comments (quantity)	PPG 17 indicates that where local provision is regarded as inadequate it is important to establish why this is the case. A feeling of deficiency can sometimes be due to qualitative issues of existing open space sites rather than actual quantity issues. It is therefore important to assess findings of the household survey, the drop in sessions and other qualitative consultation to gain a thorough understanding of local community need.
PMP recommendation	PMP recommendation of a local standard. The standard is based on an assessment of the local community need and will be in the form of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• quantity – x hectares per 1,000 population• accessibility – a distance threshold in metres• quality – a list of essential and desirable features.
PMP justification	Full justifications for the recommended local standard based on qualitative and quantitative consultations are provided for each typology.

Quantity

- 2.40 The open space audit enables an understanding of the quantity of provision for each type of open space in each area of the Borough. This level of detail enables the calculation of the provision of each type of open space per 1,000 population. This information is provided within typology-specific sections 4 - 11.
- 2.41 The overall aim of the quantity assessment is to:
- provide an understanding of the adequacy of existing provision for each type of open space in the Borough
 - establish areas of the Borough suffering from deficiency of provision of each type of open space
 - provide a guide to developers as to the amount of open space expected in conjunction with new development.

Accessibility

- 2.42 Accessibility is a key criterion for open space sites. Without easy access to sites, the provision of good quality or sufficient quantity of open space would be of limited value. The overall aim of accessibility standards should be to identify:
- how accessible sites are
 - how far people are willing to travel to reach open space
 - areas of the Borough that are deficient in provision (identified through the application of local standards).
- 2.43 Similar to quantity standards, accessibility standards should be derived from an understanding of the community views, particularly with regards to the maximum distance that members of the public are willing to travel.
- 2.44 Distance thresholds (ie the maximum distance that typical users can reasonably be expected to travel to each type of provision using different modes of transport) are a very useful planning tool especially when used in association with a Geographic Information System (GIS). PPG17 encourages any new open space sites or enhancement of existing sites to be accessible by environmentally friendly forms of transport such as walking, cycling and public transport.

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- 2.45 The Mayor of London's Guidance to open space strategies in London highlights specific open space accessibility standards that are perceived to be appropriate in the London context. Consideration has been given to the appropriateness of these standards in Bexley and these will be applied within sections 4-11.
- 2.46 The draft Public Rights of Way Access and Improvement Plan also aims to improve access across the Borough. There are several synergies with this document.
- 2.47 Accessibility standards are set in the form of a distance in metres where walking is the most popular mode of travel, and a drive time where driving to the open space site is the most popular mode.

Quality

- 2.48 The quality and value of open space are fundamentally different and can sometimes be completely unrelated. Two examples of this are:
- a high quality open space is provided but is completely inaccessible. Its usage is therefore restricted and its value to the public limited
 - a low quality open space may be used every day by the public or have some significant wider benefit such as biodiversity or educational use and therefore has a relatively high value to the public.
- 2.49 The overall aim of a quality assessment should be to identify deficiencies in quality and key quality factors that need to be improved within:
- the geographical areas of the Borough
 - specific types of open space.

Developing the Strategy Framework

- 2.50 The application of the local standards enables the identification of deficiencies in terms of accessibility, quality and quantity and also the spatial distribution of unmet need.
- 2.51 The strategy framework considers the context of open space, sport and recreation facilities in Bexley and discusses the contribution that open spaces make to the wider priorities of the Council.
- 2.52 The strategy framework is derived from the analysis of the adequacy of existing provision and interpretation of the local needs assessment. The framework summarises:
- the current provision
 - aims and objectives
 - priorities for the future delivery of open space including spaces to be enhanced, protected, relocated and proposals for new provision.
- 2.53 Based on this analysis, strategic options can be devised based on existing provision to be protected, existing provision to be enhanced, existing provision to be relocated and proposals for new provision.
- 2.54 All recommendations contained within the report are based on the findings of the application of the local standards for each typology. An example is provided below:

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P&G1

Given the low number of sites within the Borough, all park and garden sites should be afforded protection.