

### **Parks and gardens**

#### **Definition and context**

- 4.1 “Parks and gardens” is a wide-ranging typology that includes urban parks, formal gardens and country parks. Parks provide opportunities for various informal recreation and community events, within neighbourhoods.
- 4.2 The benefits of the provision of parks extend far wider than recreational benefits. Parks provide a sense of place for the local community, help to address social inclusion issues within wider society and also provide structural and landscaping benefits to the surrounding local area. They also frequently offer ecological benefits, particularly in more urban areas. The provision of sports pitches in public parks further enhances the importance of these sites to a wide variety of residents.
- 4.3 The provision of high quality parks can be instrumental in the achievement of increased participation targets, ensuring that all residents are able to access local facilities for informal recreation – particularly walking. The recent Active People Survey reveals that walking is the most popular recreational activity for people in England. Over 8 million adults aged 16 and over (20% of the population) had done a recreational walk for at least 30 minutes in the previous four weeks. Parks therefore provide key opportunities for residents to participate in informal physical activity.
- 4.4 Parks often contain a mix of facilities that may fall within different categories of open space, eg children’s play facilities and sports pitches. Residents may choose to visit parks because of the vast array of facilities available and the different experiences that parks offer as a result.

#### **Parks in Bexley**

- 4.5 The parks in Bexley are a defining characteristic of the Borough and the parks and open spaces are wildlife havens acting as a focal point for healthy exercise and community interaction. The high quality of parks across the Borough is emphasised by the recent award of London’s best park for Danson Park for a second year and the silver Gilt award for the provision of high quality parks. Five of our parks have also won the prestigious green flag award (2008), specifically Lesnes Abbey, Hall Place Gardens (in partnership with Bexley Heritage Trust), Danson Park, East Wickham Open space and Footscray Meadows. Open spaces awarded Green Flag status represent almost half the publicly-accessible space in the Borough.
- 4.6 The Parks Strategy highlights three specific objectives for the development and enhancement of parks in the Borough to:
- plan develop and promote diverse and balanced leisure use
  - achieve best use and maximum benefit for park and open space users with resources available
  - take account of the sustainable needs of the environment and wider community.
- 4.7 The Council seeks to ensure that parks within Bexley are multi faceted, providing a range of formal areas combined with semi natural areas and other specific facilities. Parks across the Borough are diverse and each provides a different experience for the user. People’s experience of Bexley’s parks is enhanced by their important role for nature conservation.

- 4.8 For classification purposes within the scope of this study, facilities located within parks in Bexley but classified under separate categories of PPG17 are discussed within the relevant sections and considered as part of the standards for these types of open space. This relates specifically to facilities for children and young people and outdoor sports facilities. This approach recognises the importance of the opportunities that the parks provide but ensures that all facilities are recognised and included within the audit and application of standards.
- 4.9 In light of the multi faceted nature of parks in Bexley and the similar function of parks and natural areas, sites considered to offer a primary function of a park are considered under the parks typology even if they contain areas which contribute towards the provision of natural and semi natural open space. In recognition of this, the provision of natural and semi natural open space and parks will be considered in the context of each other in both this Section and Section 5.
- 4.10 The London Plan sets out criteria for analysis of public open space, providing a hierarchy of sites. This considers all types of public open space, regardless of the type of space and is based on the size of the site. The application of the public open space hierarchy is detailed in Section 12. In short, the plan sets out the following hierarchy:
- Metropolitan Park – 60-400 hectares
  - District Park – 20-60 hectares
  - Local park – 2-20 hectares
  - Small local park – below 2 hectares
- 4.11 In order to ensure consistency with the London Plan, as well as compliance with PPG17, for the purposes of this study parks have been divided as recommended in the London Plan. Sites smaller than two hectares and of local value only are considered separately under the amenity green space category in Section 6.
- 4.12 Larger facilities tend to attract users from a wider catchment than the smaller parks and tend to have a higher local profile. The main strategic and publicly-accessible park within Bexley is Danson Park, located in the Welling Cluster. The household survey reveals that this park is extremely well used.

**Figure 4.1 – Danson Park**



### **Strategic context and consultation**

#### **Strategic context - national**

- 4.13 A national survey commissioned by Sport England, the Countryside Agency and English Heritage was undertaken during 2003, studying the provision of parks within England. The aims of the survey were to establish:
- how many adults in England use parks
  - what activities people take part in when visiting parks
  - the reasons why people visit particular parks
  - the levels of satisfaction with the amenities on offer
  - why non-users do not use parks
- 4.14 The definition of a park used in the survey was very broad and included both formal provision such as town parks, country parks, recreation grounds and also less formal provision such as village greens and common land.
- 4.15 The findings of the survey were:
- just under two thirds of adults in England had visited a public park during the previous 12 months
  - there is a distinct bias in the use of parks by social groups, with almost three quarters of adults from higher social groups visiting a park compared with only half of those from lower social groups
  - people from black and ethnic minority communities have relatively low participation, as do adults with a disability
  - over 8 in 10 adults who had used a park in the previous 12 months did so at least once a month during the spring and summer with almost two thirds visiting a park at least once a week, and women tended to visit parks more often than men
  - it is estimated that the 24.3 million adults who use parks make approximately 1.2 billion visits during the spring and summer months and 600 million visits during the autumn and winter months – a total of 1.8 billion visits a year
  - the most popular type of park visited was an urban or city park.
- 4.16 There are a number of regional and local documents that refer to the importance of parks and gardens. The key issues arising from these documents and the links with this study are set out in Table 4.1 overleaf.

**Table 4.1 –Strategic context – regional and local**

Document Reviewed	Summary of key strategic drivers	Links to open space, sport and recreation study
Bexley Parks Strategy	<p>The aims for parks and open spaces are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• plan develop and promote diverse and balanced leisure use</li> <li>• achieve best use and maximum benefit for park and open space users within resources available</li> <li>• take account of the sustainable needs of the environment and wider community.</li> </ul> <p>Public consultation identified a number of issues. The parks strategy has a clear commitment to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• keeping heritage landscapes</li> <li>• sports provision</li> <li>• open consultation about development and change</li> <li>• wildlife protection</li> <li>• community involvement in planning and managing our parks and open spaces</li> <li>• dealing with issues such as litter, dog fouling and vandalism</li> <li>• improving attractions, visitor events and information.</li> </ul>	<p>Evidence contained within this document will inform a review and update of the existing parks strategy.</p> <p>Consultation undertaken as part of this study will identify local needs and help achieve maximum benefit for current and potential open space users from the parks stock.</p> <p>Local consultation will ensure community involvement in the development and change and planning and management of open spaces in the Borough.</p> <p>Assessments of quality, quantity and access will target improvements in areas where they are most needed.</p>
	<p>The eight key aims of the parks strategy are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improve the quality of parks</li> <li>• increase and broaden the community use of parks</li> <li>• encourage community involvement in planning and managing parks</li> <li>• understand and respond to the present day user requirements of parks</li> <li>• understand and respond to issues of public safety and community concern that relate to parks</li> <li>• significantly increase public awareness of the value of parks</li> <li>• conserve and enhance the natural environment and ecological balance in parks</li> <li>• maximise support for parks development and maintenance through external funding opportunities and ensure that new resources are directed to benefit users of parks.</li> </ul>	

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Document Reviewed	Summary of key strategic drivers	Links to open space, sport and recreation study
Bexley Parks Survey (1998)	<p>The Bexley parks survey assessed public opinion on existing parks in Bexley. Key findings included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>95% of respondents visit parks and open spaces in Bexley</li> <li>the most frequently used sites were Danson Park (31%) and Hall Place (29%)</li> <li>of those who do not visit parks (5%) the main reasons were lack of transport and parks being too far away</li> <li>49% use the car or motorcycle and 48% walk to parks</li> <li>the most popular reasons for visiting parks and open spaces in Bexley were walking (45%), relaxation (43%) and children's play (30%)</li> <li>22% of respondents visit parks once a week and 20% over three times a week</li> <li>84% of respondents feel safe at parks. Of those who do not the main reasons are a lack of park staff (65%) and fear of crime (42%)</li> <li>the essential features for a park are grassy open space (79%), toilets (73%) and seating (64%)</li> <li>high satisfaction was shown with the provision of open grass, ornamental planting and access for families at parks</li> <li>the lowest levels of satisfaction were shown with the provision of toilets, on site supervision and cleanliness of toilets.</li> </ul>	The findings of the Bexley Parks Survey will be considered when setting standards and making recommendations. The findings of consultations undertaken as part of this study will provide an updated assessment of local need.
Bexley Biodiversity Action Plan	<p>The plan supports the Council's six key corporate aims and has a number of habitat action plans relating to open space:</p> <p>The plan aims to encourage the public to get involved in their Local park, encourage a greater diversity and abundance of flora and fauna within parks and to provide local people and schools with regular contact with nature.</p>	The study will provide evidence for the conservation, enhancement and protection of biodiversity.
East London Green Grid Framework: Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance to the London Plan.	<p>The strategy identifies areas deficient in open space and targets reductions in these areas by defining and delivering new open spaces and linkages through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the expansion of an existing park/open space</li> <li>improving the quality and facilities of a park/open space</li> <li>improving the accessibility of a park/open space</li> <li>improving the linkages between parks and the provision of new parks and open spaces.</li> </ul>	The quantity, quality and accessibility of parks in the Borough will be assessed and aid the Council in the delivery of the regional priorities set out in the East London Green Grid.

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Document Reviewed	Summary of key strategic drivers	Links to open space, sport and recreation study
<p>Bexley Talk Back Survey 2006 – Parks and Open Space</p>	<p>71% of respondents to the survey identified they use parks and open spaces.</p> <p>When asked whether they visit parks and gardens and how often they use them in the summer months responses were split between at least once a month (28%), less than monthly (28%) and at least once a week (19%).</p> <p>The main reasons for visiting a park were to visit flower gardens (40%), to visit local historical sites (29%) and to attend events (23%).</p> <p>The majority of respondents to the survey rated their experience of using parks and gardens in the Borough as good (44%). 29% stated excellent.</p> <p>81% of respondents felt the provision of parks and gardens is about right.</p> <p>With regards to the quality of parks and gardens, 48% of respondents were fairly satisfied and 36% were very satisfied.</p> <p>58% of respondents regarded parks and gardens to be very important to family members.</p> <p>Wildlife enjoyment at parks and gardens was considered very important to 64% of respondents.</p> <p>Accessibility around parks and gardens was perceived to be very important by 64% of respondents to the survey.</p> <p>30% of respondents to the survey stated they walk to parks and gardens. 28% of residents also indicated they drive.</p> <p>The most common travel times experienced when accessing a park or garden indicated by respondents were split between 10 minutes (31%), 5 minutes (21%) and 15 minutes (20%).</p>	

### Assessing local needs - consultation

4.17 Consultation undertaken as part of the study highlighted the following key issues relating to parks:

- respondents to the household survey expressed an overall satisfaction with the quantity of **Metropolitan parks**. 66% of residents were satisfied and only 30% indicated provision was insufficient. Although Lesnes Abbey and Foots Cray Meadows are considered within this parks and gardens section, in light of large elements of natural and semi natural open spaces within these sites, it is important to consider these findings in the context of viewpoints outlined in Section 5, natural and semi natural open space
- residents at drop in sessions highlighted the value and strategic importance of the larger parks in the Borough (Danson Park, Hall Place Gardens)
- in general, Metropolitan parks were considered to be of good quality. 45% of household survey respondents rated them as good, while a further 33% suggested that they are very good
- drop in sessions typically confirmed the positive responses about the quality of parks in Bexley. It was noted that much has been done to maintain and improve open spaces in the Borough, contributing to the five parks awarded Green Flag status in 2008.
- the household survey reveals that 45% of people would **expect** to walk to parks and gardens in Bexley, as opposed to 42% who would expect to drive. Of those users (who visit parks and gardens more often than any other typology in the study) 49% **currently** walk and 42% use cars
- the majority of respondents to the household survey indicated that the quantity of **District parks** is about right (56%). However, 20% of residents also perceived the provision to be insufficient
- like Metropolitan parks, District parks were also perceived to be of high quality, and 48% suggested that they are good overall
- 67% of regular users of District parks **currently** walk to this type of park. Similar to the patterns exhibited by regular users, the majority of respondents to the household survey said they would **expect** to walk to a District park (64%). 27% said they would prefer to travel by car. This highlights that residents expect District parks to be located closer to their homes
- findings from the household survey highlight a split in opinion regarding the provision of **Local parks**. 50% of respondents felt the quantity of provision was about right while 42% had contrasting views
- the quality of Local parks is also perceived to be lower than the larger sites, although 40% still rated them to be good
- despite the positive response to the quality of Local parks, comments from the household survey revealed some issues with safety and security, vandalism and a lack of ancillary facilities
- of those people who **currently** use Local parks, the most common travel method is by foot (88%). Consistent with the patterns exhibited by regular users, respondents to the household survey said they **expect** to walk to a Local park (89%). This reinforces the perception that these sites should be found close to residents' homes
- workshop attendees highlighted the positive work done by 'friends groups' in improving access to parks, notably access for people with disabilities (Friends of

Danson Park). This is reinforced by responses of residents at drop in sessions who acknowledge the improvement in accessibility to the Borough's open spaces.

### Assessing the current provision of parks in Bexley

- 4.18 Bexley has over 100 parks and open spaces covering over 600 hectares, placing Bexley as the tenth highest of all London Boroughs in terms of the overall quantity of land dedicated to recreational open space. Some parks are particularly important in terms of biodiversity as well as recreation, with some sites (eg Lesnes Abbey) of Metropolitan importance. The Access to Nature Report (Greater London Authority, 2008) highlights the role that parks and other large open spaces can have in reducing access deficiencies to sites of nature conservation through the creation of natural habitats within these sites.
- 4.19 Bexley's parks and open spaces service manages the majority of parks and open spaces in the Borough. Some open space sites (particularly in Thamesmead) fall under the ownership of Housing Associations and/or private ownership.

### Quantity of provision

- 4.20 As already highlighted, for the purposes of analysis in this study, parks have been subdivided into three categories. The distribution of parks and gardens in Bexley is therefore summarised in quantitative terms in Tables 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4.
- 4.21 Although analysis has been undertaken separately, the interrelationship between the different sizes of parks will also be explored during the application of standards.

**Table 4.2 – Provision of Metropolitan Parks across London Borough of Bexley**

Cluster	Current provision (ha)	Number of sites	Provision per 1000 of the current population	Scenario 1 Provision per 1000	Scenario 2a Provision per 1000	Scenario 2b Provision per 1000	Scenario 3a Provision per 1000	Scenario 3 b Provision per 1000
Bexleyheath	0.00	0	3.10	1.84	1.87	1.92	1.79	1.92
Crayford	0.00	0	2.04	2.24	2.35	2.35	2.35	2.28
Erith	0.00	0	1.25	1.43	1.44	1.47	1.38	1.47
Sidcup	96.24	1	1.13	1.02	1.02	0.98	0.99	0.95
Thamesmead	85.52	1	3.10	1.84	1.87	1.92	1.79	1.92
Welling	63.93	1	2.04	2.24	2.35	2.35	2.35	2.28
Overall	245	3	1.25	1.43	1.44	1.47	1.38	1.47

- 4.22 As evident in Table 4.2, the key issues relating to the quantity of Metropolitan parks in the Borough include:
- as may be expected in light of the size of these sites, Metropolitan parks are unevenly distributed across the Borough. Of the total 245 hectares, the highest quantity of provision is located within the Sidcup cluster

- access to these sites extends far beyond their immediate catchment and application of the accessibility standard will therefore provide a clearer distribution as to the adequacy of provision in the area and the interrelationships with other open spaces
- the greatest level of satisfaction can be found in the Crayford cluster, where 75% of residents feel the provision of Metropolitan parks is about right and only 19% feel provision is insufficient – this reinforces that the catchments extend far wider, as there are no parks of Metropolitan size within this area
- residents in the Erith cluster portrayed the lowest level of satisfaction; with 48% of respondents indicating the area is deficient in the provision of Metropolitan parks – there are no sites of Metropolitan park size within this area of the Borough.

4.23 Table 4.3 summarises the issues arising from the analysis of the quantity of District parks across London Borough of Bexley.

**Table 4.3 – Provision of District Parks across London Borough of Bexley**

Cluster	Current provision	Number of sites	Provision per 1000 of the current population	Scenario 1 Provision per 1000	Scenario 2a Provision per 1000	Scenario 2b Provision per 1000	Scenario 3a Provision per 1000	Scenario 3 b Provision per 1000
Bexleyheath	26.5	1	0.82	0.79	0.80	0.80	0.77	0.80
Crayford	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Erith	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Sidcup	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Thamesmead	26.97	1	0.64	0.71	0.74	0.74	0.74	0.72
Welling	28.77	1	0.56	0.64	0.65	0.66	0.62	0.66
Overall	82.24	3	0.38	0.34	0.34	0.33	0.33	0.32

4.24 The key issues emerging from Table 4.3 and consultations relating to the quantity of provision of District parks across the Borough include:

- the three existing District parks located in the Borough are Hall Place Gardens (Bexleyheath cluster), Southmere Park and Lake (Thamesmead) and East Wickham Open Space (Welling)
- this is reflected in the findings of the consultation, where higher satisfaction is displayed in areas where provision of District Parks is higher. Similar to the findings for Metropolitan parks, the greatest dissatisfaction is located in the Erith cluster, where 44% of residents stated the provision of District parks is insufficient.

4.25 It is clear that due to the size of Metropolitan and District parks, even distribution of these facilities across the Borough is not possible. Analysis of Tables 4.2 and 4.3 indicates that the Thamesmead, Welling and Sidcup clusters are particularly fortunate with regards the amount of land dedicated to open space provision. No sites of District

or Metropolitan park size are located within the Erith cluster and provision is limited in the Bexleyheath cluster. Although no Metropolitan and District parks are located in the Crayford cluster, the Crayford Marshes and access to other nearby sites influence the relatively positive opinions of residents in this area.

- 4.26 Table 4.4 below summarises the distribution of Local parks across the London Borough of Bexley.

**Table 4.4 – Provision of Local parks across London Borough of Bexley**

Cluster	Current provision	Number of sites	Provision per 1000 of the current population	Scenario 1 Provision per 1000	Scenario 2a Provision per 1000	Scenario 2 b Provision per 1000	Scenario 3a Provision per 1000	Scenario 3 b Provision per 1000
Bexleyheath	57.15	7	1.76	1.71	1.72	1.72	1.67	1.72
Crayford	13.8	4	0.68	0.59	0.55	0.56	0.51	0.56
Erith	44.25	8	1.07	0.91	0.89	0.72	0.86	0.65
Sidcup	56.33	14	1.81	1.08	1.09	1.12	1.05	1.12
Thamesmead	12.89	1	0.31	0.34	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.34
Welling	3.55	1	0.07	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.08
Overall	187.97	35	0.86	0.78	0.78	0.75	0.76	0.73

- 4.27 The key issues emerging from Table 4.4 and consultations relating to the quantity of provision of Local parks across the Borough include:
- of the total 35 local parks, 14 are located in the Sidcup cluster, which is also an area of high provision of District and Metropolitan size sites. This is reinforced through the consultation, with 58% of residents indicating that the level of provision of Local parks is about right. In terms of number of sites, provision in the Sidcup cluster is significantly higher than in all other areas
  - provision is notably lower in the Welling cluster, both in terms of number of sites (1) and also the area dedicated to Local parks (3.55 hectares). Although there is also one site in the Thamesmead cluster, this totals 12.89 hectares in total. Interestingly, the highest dissatisfaction was shown in the Thamesmead cluster, where 48% of residents stated that provision was insufficient
  - there are eight local parks in the Erith cluster covering a total of 44.25 hectares. These are the only parks in this area of the Borough and the importance of these local parks to residents is perhaps greater than in other areas.
- 4.28 In addition to the local parks detailed above, there are six small parks, specifically:
- Abbey Wood Recreation Ground - Thamesmead
  - Belvedere Recreation Ground - Thamesmead
  - Hurst Road/Parkhill Road - Crayford
  - Riverside Gardens - Erith
  - Town Park – Bexleyheath.
  - West Heath Recreation Ground - Thamesmead

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- 4.29 These sites total 6.12 hectares and are considered within the amenity space section of this report.

### Setting provision standards – quantity

- 4.30 The recommended local quantity standards for parks and gardens have been summarised overleaf. Full justification for the local standard is provided within Appendix E.
- 4.31 While quantity standards have been subdivided according to the type of park in question, the application of standards will consider the links between the different types of parks as well as their distribution in isolation.

### Quantity Standard (see Appendices E and F – standards and justification, worksheet and calculator)

Existing level of provision	Recommended standard - Metropolitan Parks
1.12ha per 1000	1.12ha per 1000
Justification	
<p>The multifunctional value of Metropolitan parks to residents was reinforced throughout consultation. The majority of respondents to the household survey regard the provision of Metropolitan parks to be sufficient (60%) and this perception is reflected across all areas of the Borough, with over 44% of respondents in each area indicating provision is sufficient.</p> <p>The quality of Metropolitan parks was stated as being good by respondents to the household survey and regularly commended throughout drop in sessions. Therefore the local standard has been set at the existing level of provision placing an emphasis on the continuous qualitative improvements of this typology, thus maintaining the current high quality provision and also the protection of Metropolitan parks. This standard will also enable the identification of any locational deficiencies and combined with the application of the accessibility standard will ensure that residents have access to a Metropolitan park within the recommended distance of their homes.</p>	

Existing level of provision	Recommended standard – District Parks
0.38ha per 1000	0.38ha per 1000
Justification	
<p>Similar to the findings for Metropolitan parks, the general perception gathered from consultation is that the provision of District parks is sufficient. This is reflected within all clusters, where the majority of residents indicate the provision of parks is adequate.</p> <p>The majority of respondents to the household survey rated the quantity of District parks as about right (56%), highlighting satisfaction with current levels of provision. To maintain the current high standard of District parks the local standard has been set at the existing level of provision. This will protect the existing level of provision as a value local resource to the community and also allow for qualitative enhancements to District parks across the Borough.</p>	

Existing level of provision	Recommended standard – Local Parks
0.86ha per 1000	0.88ha per 1000
Justification	
<p>Consultation highlighted a split in opinion regarding the provision of Local parks, with 50% of residents indicating provision is sufficient and 42% insufficient. This perception was reflected across all clusters.</p> <p>Attendees at drop in sessions expressed an overall satisfaction with the provision of Local parks, however there was a desire for more 'pocket parks' suggesting the need for more localised provision of parks, within close proximity to resident's homes.</p> <p>In light of the above evidence, it is recommended the local standard is set marginally above the current level of provision. While there is overall satisfaction with the provision of Local parks through the various elements of consultation, a degree of dissatisfaction with the current provision of Local parks was portrayed by respondents to the household survey, particularly in the Thamesmead cluster. A slight increase in the overall provision standard will allow the Council to address these deficiencies and also ensure Local parks are provided as an accessible local resource to the community. The application of the quantity standard combined with the local accessibility standard, adopted from the Mayor of London's Open Space Strategy guidance, will identify locational deficiencies.</p>	

### Quality of provision

- 4.32 The quality of existing parks and gardens in the Borough was assessed through site visits and is set out in Table 4.5 below. It is important to note that site assessments are conducted as a snapshot in time and are therefore reflective of the quality of the site on one specific day.
- 4.33 The Green Flag Award is a national standard for parks and greenspace. Five parks in Bexley achieved Green Flag status in 2007/08; Danson Park, Hall Place, Lesnes Abbey, East Wickham Open Space and Foots Cray Meadows highlighting their overall quality, as well as the achievement of wider objectives such as community involvement.

**Table 4.5 – Quality of Metropolitan Parks across London Borough of Bexley**

Cluster	Number of sites	Range of quality scores (%)	Average quality scores (%)	Lowest quality sites	Highest quality sites
Bexleyheath	0	-	-	-	-
Crayford	0	-	-	-	-
Erith	0	-	-	-	-
Sidcup	1	-	89%	-	Foots Cray Meadows
Thamesmead	1	-	89%	-	Lesnes Abbey Woods
Welling	1	-	95%	-	Danson Park

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Overall	3	89% - 95%	91%	Lesnes Abbey Woods and Foots Cray Meadows	Danson Park
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4.34 The key issues emerging from Table 4.5 and the consultation relating to the quality of Metropolitan parks are:

- levels of satisfaction are similar across all areas of the Borough and the highest level of satisfaction is found in the Bexleyheath cluster where 51% of respondents feel that the quality of provision is very good
- site visits reinforced the high quality scores achieved by parks and parks appeared to be effectively managed and maintained
- the average quality score of Metropolitan parks in the Borough is 91%, indicating Metropolitan parks are of a high quality standard
- the highest quality scoring site is Danson Park (95%). This is unsurprising given that this park has achieved Green Flag status and was awarded London's Best Park
- vegetation and cleanliness and maintenance were perceived to be the most critical elements of good quality park provision across all three types of parks
- sites were perceived to be of significant value to the local community, and also in terms of the opportunities they provide for habitats, wildlife and biodiversity.

**Table 4.6 – Quality of District Parks across London Borough of Bexley**

Cluster	Number of sites	Range of quality scores (%)	Average quality scores (%)	Lowest quality sites	Highest quality sites
Bexleyheath	1	-	89%	-	Hall Place Gardens
Crayford	0	-	-	-	-
Erith	0	-	-	-	-
Sidcup	0	-	-	-	-
Thamesmead	1	-	64%	-	Southmere Park and Lake
Welling	1	-	85%	-	East Wickham Open Space
Overall	3	64% - 89%	79%	Southmere Park and Lake	Hall Place Gardens

4.35 The key issues emerging from Table 4.6 and the consultation relating to the quality of District parks are:

- consultation suggests the highest levels of satisfaction are found in the Welling cluster where 56% of respondents feel that the quality of provision is good. The lowest levels of satisfaction are found in the Thamesmead cluster where 40% of respondents feel that the quality of provision is good

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- as highlighted, vegetation and cleanliness and maintenance were perceived to be the most important elements of high quality park provision
- site visits reinforced the high quality scores achieved by parks as they appeared to be effectively managed and maintained
- the quality of District parks in the Borough is good, with the average quality score of a site being 79%
- Southmere Park and Lake, managed by Gallions Housing, is the lowest quality District park within London Borough of Bexley, achieving a quality score of 64%
- in contrast to the views of residents, there is little evidence of vandalism/graffiti or anti social behaviour during site visits
- there is perceived to be adequate provision of litter bins
- sites were perceived to be of significant value to the local community, and in terms of the opportunities they provide for habitats, wildlife and biodiversity.

**Table 4.7 – Quality of Local parks across London Borough of Bexley**

Geographical area	Number of sites	Range of quality scores (%)	Average quality scores (%)	Lowest quality sites	Highest quality sites
Bexleyheath	7	56% - 75%	65%	Mayplace Open Space	Hall Place North
Crayford	4	61% - 67%	64%	Jolly Farmers Open Space	Shenstone Park
Erith	8	63% - 79%	70%	Craydene Open Space	Franks Park
Sidcup	14	58% - 77%	68%	The Glade – Lamorbey Open Space	The Green (Sidcup Place)
Thamesmead	1	65%	65%		Cross Way Park
Welling	1	-	65%	-	Stevens Park
Overall	35	56% - 79%	66%	Mayplace Open Space	Franks Park

4.36 The key issues emerging from Table 4.7 and the consultation relating to the quality of Local parks are:

- the highest levels of satisfaction are found in the Crayford cluster where 50% of respondents feel that the quality of provision is good. The lowest levels of satisfaction are again found in the Thamesmead cluster where 34% of respondents feel that the quality of provision is good
- when asked about the quality of Local parks, of those people who gave an opinion, mis-use of the site (41%) was rated as a significant problem. Vandalism and graffiti (43%) and dog fouling (44%) were rated as minor problems. Site visits found little evidence of dog fouling or vandalism
- workshop and drop in sessions highlighted the importance of perceived security and safety at smaller parks and the role of wardens was discussed. The importance of perceived safety is not reflected to the same extent within the findings of the household survey

- the poor diversity of facilities in Local parks was criticised in both the household survey and drop in sessions
- while larger parks are signed and contain well defined entrances, improvements could be made to the signage and gates at smaller sites – this is reflective of views expressed by the public and volunteer groups. Information boards are also minimal at smaller sites
- the average quality score of Local parks is 66%. This reflects the average quality of local parks across the Borough.
- the quality of Local parks within each cluster is similar, with average scores ranging from 64-70%
- site visits reinforced the need for increased investment at some Local parks.

### Setting provision standards – quality

- 4.37 The recommended local quality vision for parks and gardens has been summarised below and overleaf. Full justification for the local standard is provided within Appendix G.
- 4.38 Given the distinctly different nature of Metropolitan Parks, District Parks and Local parks it is recommended that separate quality visions be supported as proposed above. This reflects the different level of facilities that can realistically be expected in smaller parks as opposed to larger parks.

### Quality Standard (see Appendix G)

Recommended standard – METROPOLITAN PARKS	
The quality of Metropolitan parks is excellent, with the average quality score of a site being 91%. The Council should aim to maintain and enhance this current high quality standard.	
Local consultation, national guidance and best practice therefore suggest that the following features are essential and desirable to local residents:	
Essential	Desirable
Clean/Litter Free	Well laid out
Flowers/Trees	Good Access
Well Kept Grass	Nature Features

Recommended standard – DISTRICT PARKS	
The quality of District parks is good, with the average quality score of a site being 79%. The Council should aim to maintain and enhance this current high quality standard.	
Local consultation, national guidance and best practice therefore suggest that the following features are essential and desirable to local residents:	
Essential	Desirable
Flowers/Trees	Footpaths
Clean/Litter Free	Well laid out
Well Kept Grass	Good Access

Recommended standard – LOCAL PARKS	
Based on the calculated quality scores from detailed site assessments all Local parks should aspire to achieve a quality score of 72%	
Local consultation, national guidance and best practice therefore suggest that the following features are essential and desirable to local residents:	
Essential	Desirable
Good Access	Footpaths
Clean/Litter Free	Dog Bins
Well Kept Grass	Flowers/Trees

### The quality of existing sites

- 4.39 The quality of Local parks has been divided into quartiles. The calculation of the upper quartile quality score (71% on the site assessment for Local parks) provides an indication of the desired level of quality at each site and enables a comparison of sites across the Borough. Sites falling into the top quartile are set out in Table 4.8 overleaf. Benchmarking scores can be found in appendix J, enabling comparisons against other types of open space. A full list of site scores can be found in Appendix I.
- 4.40 Metropolitan and District parks have not been divided into quartiles due to the small numbers of parks in these categories. However, the current quality of both metropolitan and District parks is good, with the average quality score for a Metropolitan park being 91% and for a District park 79%. This reinforces the perception that larger parks are of higher quality than smaller sites.

**Table 4.8 – Selection of quality assessment results for Local parks provision**

Above upper quartile	71% +	(79%) Franks Park – Site ID 44 (77%) Penhill Park – Site ID 9 (76%) The Green (Sidcup Place) – Site ID 74 (76%) Waring Park – Site ID 71 (75%) Hall Place North – Site ID 76 (72%) Burstled Woods – Site ID 33 (72%) Hollyoak Wood Park – Site ID 78
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- 4.41 The key issues emerging from the analysis of Local parks included:
- seven Local parks achieved the upper quartile quality score of 72%
  - the average score for all sites is 66% indicating the need for qualitative improvements to Local parks in London Borough of Bexley when compared to parks of other sizes
  - providers should aspire to achieve the upper quartile level.

### Setting provision standards – accessibility

- 4.42 The accessibility of sites is paramount in maximising usage as well as providing an opportunity for all people to use the site. The recommended local standard is set in the

form of a distance threshold and is derived directly from the findings of the local consultations.

- 4.43 Site specific accessibility issues were also analysed as part of the site visits where information and signage, transport and general access issues were assessed.
- 4.44 Consultation and analysis has shown that the key issues with regards to accessibility were common to the majority of parks. These included:
- there were some concerns over access to smaller parks with a number of older residents at drop in sessions suggesting that number of sites are surrounded by housing or other development. Links with the community and other open spaces are therefore limited
  - there is a need to increase access within parks for pushchairs and wheelchairs through the provision of appropriate paths
  - many residents highlighted the importance of appropriate pathways to ensure access to all sectors of the community and reinforced the value of signage and the provision of information
  - despite many positive comments about access to the Borough's parks, some residents at drop in sessions felt that a number of sites are surrounded by housing or other development. It was felt this makes entrances hard to find, and leads to concerns over safety due to enclosed spaces
  - it was commented by residents that the only park with a wide range of facilities (Danson Park) is too far away from the outer edges of the Borough.
- 4.45 The recommended local accessibility standards for parks and gardens have been summarised below. Full justification for the local standard is provided within Appendix H. These standards are based on local consultation and are also in line with the standards recommended in the London Plan.

### **Accessibility Standard**

<b>Recommended standard – METROPOLITAN PARKS</b>
<b>3.2km Walk</b>
<b>Justification</b>
<p>When setting an appropriate accessibility standard, a greater emphasis has been placed on expectations rather than current travel patterns, however the split in opinion between those that prefer to walk and drive highlights a difference in expectations between both a local facility and a District-wide catchment and reinforces the dual purpose of this type of open space.</p> <p>It is important to reflect on the strategic nature of Metropolitan parks within the context of other open spaces in Bexley and therefore recommend a distance threshold to encompass all users expectations. Furthermore, the consultation findings serve to illustrate that they attract a high number of users from across the Borough. As the household survey suggests, Metropolitan parks are the most frequently visited type of open space and of all respondents, 60% feel that the level of current provision is about right.</p> <p>Travel expectations across the Borough are split, with 45% of residents stating walking and 42% driving. Furthermore, there is a divide in terms of time expectations for those who would expect to walk (36% for 5–10 minutes and 28% 11–15 minutes). For those who would prefer to travel by car, 50% would expect a</p>

journey time of 5-10 minutes.

Current national guidance taken from the Mayor of London's Guide to Preparing Open Space Strategies - Best Practice Guidance (March 2004) suggests the distance from homes to a Metropolitan park should be 3.2km. Due to the nature of the typology consideration should also be given to the use of public transport, with an expected bus journey of 4.8km (15 minutes).

Although the accessibility recommendation has been set above the expectations of some residents, it is in line with both national and regional guidance and takes into account residents views across Bexley who are willing to travel to access Metropolitan parks. Setting a smaller accessibility catchment could provide unrealistic expectations in terms of delivering further provision in areas outside of the distance threshold, furthermore, given that 60% of residents think that current provision is about right it is unlikely that an increase in provision will be required.

Emphasis should be on enhancing the quality of provision, seeking to improve the accessibility of all Metropolitan Parks – for example by promoting new entrance points or better routes to them. In terms of investigating the spatial distribution of unmet demand, the proposed Metropolitan park standard should not be considered in isolation but rather in the context of District and Local parks, as those living within the Local park distance threshold of a Metropolitan park will have no need for a Local park as well. As such, it is important to provide an overall network of provision.

<b>Recommended standard – DISTRICT PARKS</b>
<b>1.2km Walk</b>
<b>Justification</b>
<p>Results from the consultation show a variety of views relating to travel methods and expectations. Whilst the household survey indicates a slight preference towards walking to District parks, the journey time varies from 5 – 10 minutes to 11 – 16 minutes, with different results evident across the cluster. 27% of respondents also indicated a preference towards driving when accessing District parks, further emphasising the differing expectations of residents. Moreover, drop in session attendees displayed an acceptance that due to their nature, larger more strategic parks may in reality take longer to access, but that this should be offset with smaller parks being more readily accessible.</p> <p>Current national guidance taken from the Mayor of London's Guide to Preparing Open Space Strategies - Best Practice Guidance (March 2004) suggests the distance from homes to a District park should be 1.2km. Due to the nature of the typology consideration should also be given to the use of public transport, with an expected bus journey of 3.2km.</p> <p>As discussed within the Metropolitan parks justification, setting a low accessibility catchment for District parks would present unrealistic expectations in terms of delivering additional provision in areas which fall outside of the accessibility catchment. Moreover, when investigating the spatial distribution, the District parks catchment should be discussed in the context of Metropolitan and Local parks in order to establish an overall network of parks provision.</p> <p>The accessibility recommendation has been set in line with current guidance with an emphasis on maintaining and improving the quality of current provision, whilst helping to highlight areas of deficiency in the context of other open space provision.</p>

<b>Recommended standard – LOCAL PARKS</b>
<b>400 metres walk</b>
<b>Justification</b>
<p>There is a clear emphasis in favour of walking in terms of current travel patterns and expectations, with 88% of regular users currently walking. Moreover, given the more local nature of these facilities compared to Metropolitan and District parks, it is considered appropriate to focus on access on foot.</p> <p>The standard has been set at a 10 minute walk time as this is the distance that 75% of respondents (across all cluster) would be willing to walk. This is largely consistent across all the cluster, with only Crayford and Erith clusters showing a variation, in these cases the 75% threshold level was calculated as 14 and 11 minutes respectively.</p> <p>Based on calculations using NPFA criteria for distance walked, a 10 minute walk time is equivalent to approximately a 480 metre threshold. This is broadly comparable to the existing policy approach relating to Local parks that is based on a walking distance of 400 metres. In order to ensure consistency across London Boroughs and to maximise opportunities to access local provision, it is recommended that the standard is set at 400m.</p> <p>This lower accessibility standard is also justified on the basis of current users travel patterns – with a large proportion of users travelling less than 5 minutes to access a Local park.</p>

### **Applying provision standards**

- 4.46 The application of the recommended quantity, quality and accessibility standards is essential in understanding the existing distribution of parks and publicly accessible open spaces and identifying areas where provision is insufficient to meet local need.
- 4.47 The quantity standards enable the identification of areas that do not meet the minimum provision standards, while the accessibility standards will help determine where those deficiencies are of high importance. Applying the standards together is a more meaningful method of analysis than applying the standards separately.
- 4.48 As highlighted, the application of standards for Metropolitan and District parks provides an indication only, as it would not be expected that sites of this size would be provided in every area of the Borough.

### **Quantity**

- 4.49 The application of the local standard for Metropolitan Parks is seen in Table 4.9 below.

**Table 4.9 – Application of quantity standard Metropolitan Parks**

Cluster	Current provision balanced against local standard (1.12 hectares per 1000 population)	Scenario 1 Future balanced against local standard (1.12 hectares per 1000 population)	Scenario 2a Future balanced against local standard (1.12 hectares per 1000 population)	Scenario 2b Future balanced against local standard (1.12 hectares per 1000 population)	Scenario 3a Future balanced against local standard (1.12 hectares per 1000 population)	Scenario 3b Future balanced against local standard (1.12 hectares per 1000 population)
Bexleyheath	-36.39	-37.47	-37.14	-37.14	-38.38	-37.14
Crayford	-22.77	-26.18	-28.08	-27.80	-30.02	-27.80
Erith	-46.32	-54.25	-55.54	-68.96	-57.57	-76.65
Sidcup	61.46	37.79	38.47	40.05	36.18	40.05
Thamesmead	38.59	42.72	44.78	44.78	44.78	43.51
Welling	6.62	13.87	14.20	15.21	11.91	15.21
Overall	1.20	-23.51	-23.31	-33.86	-33.10	-42.82

- Green = above the standard, Red = below the standard overall, application of the local standard to the Borough wide total provision indicates that the quantity of Metropolitan parks is sufficient to satisfy demand
- as anticipated, provision in areas where Metropolitan parks are located fall significantly above the recommended minimum standard. This is particularly evident in the Sidcup cluster where provision is 65 hectares above the minimum standard
- of the areas where there are no Metropolitan parks, the greatest shortfall is in the Erith cluster. Shortfalls in all three areas with no provision do not exceed the minimum size criteria for the development of a Metropolitan park
- based on future population projections there will be a shortfall in the provision of Metropolitan parks by 2026. Scenario 1 projections indicate a shortfall of –23.51 hectares is expected by 2026
- in the event of the high population growth scenario (3a) shortfalls will exceed 33 hectares. Shortfalls will be highest in Scenario 3b, where there is an overall deficit of 42.82 hectares. The need for additional provision is evident in the Erith cluster however, in this scenario in light of the anticipated location of the new population, shortfalls are anticipated to reach 76 hectares.

4.50 The application of the local standard for District parks is summarised in Table 4.10 below.

**Table 4.10 – Application of quantity standard District Parks**

Cluster	Current provision balanced against local standard (0.38 hectares per 1000 population)	Scenario 1 Future balanced against local standard (0.38 hectares per 1000 population)	Scenario 2a Future balanced against local standard (0.38 hectares per 1000 population)	Scenario 2b Future balanced against local standard (0.38 hectares per 1000 population)	Scenario 3a Future balanced against local standard (0.38 hectares per 1000 population)	Scenario 3b Future balanced against local standard (0.38 hectares per 1000 population)
Bexleyheath	14.15	13.79	13.90	13.90	13.48	13.90
Crayford	-7.73	-8.88	-9.53	-9.43	-10.18	-9.43
Erith	-15.71	-18.41	-18.84	-23.40	-19.53	-26.00
Sidcup	-11.80	-19.83	-19.60	-19.07	-20.38	-19.07
Thamesmead	11.05	12.45	13.15	13.15	13.15	12.72
Welling	9.32	11.78	11.89	12.24	11.12	12.24
Overall	0.72	-9.10	-9.03	-12.61	-12.35	-15.65

- overall, the quantity of District parks is sufficient to meet the minimum level required by the local standard
- provision in areas where Metropolitan parks are located falls significantly above the recommended minimum standard. Provision in Bexleyheath and Thamesmead is over 10ha above the minimum standard
- of the areas where there are no District parks, the greatest shortfall is in the Erith cluster
- when combining the provision of Metropolitan and District parks only the Sidcup, Thamesmead and Welling clusters have sufficient provision to meet current demand. The greatest undersupply is located in the Erith cluster
- all five future population scenarios indicate there will be insufficient provision of District parks by 2026, ranging from – 9.10 ha in scenario 1 to –15.65 ha in scenario 3b. The undersupplies in the Erith cluster are particularly exacerbated in Scenario 3b
- across the Borough only the Bexleyheath, Thamesmead and Welling clusters will have sufficient provision to meet future demand.

**Table 4.11 – Application of quantity standard Local parks**

Cluster	Current provision balanced against local standard (0.88 hectares per 1000 population)	Scenario 1 Future balanced against local standard (0.88 hectares per 1000 population)	Scenario 2a Future balanced against local standard (0.88 hectares per 1000 population)	Scenario 2b Future balanced against local standard (0.88 hectares per 1000 population)	Scenario 3a Future balanced against local standard (0.88 hectares per 1000 population)	Scenario 3b Future balanced against local standard (0.88 hectares per 1000 population)
Bexleyheath	28.56	27.71	27.97	27.97	27.00	27.97
Crayford	-4.09	-6.77	-8.26	-8.04	-9.78	-8.04
Erith	7.86	1.63	0.61	-9.93	-0.99	-15.97
Sidcup	29.00	10.40	10.94	12.17	9.14	12.17
Thamesmead	-23.99	-20.74	-19.12	-19.12	-19.12	-20.12
Welling	-41.48	-35.78	-35.53	-34.73	-37.33	-34.73
Overall	-4.14	-23.55	-23.39	-31.68	-31.09	-38.72

- application of the quantity standard reveals that overall the supply of Local parks is insufficient to meet current demand
- only provision in the Bexleyheath, Erith and Sidcup clusters is sufficient to meet the recommended minimum standard
- the greatest shortfall in the provision of Local parks is found in the Welling cluster (-41.48 ha). Despite this, the Welling cluster was one of the areas containing sufficient provision of Metropolitan and District parks. Likewise, despite shortfalls of Local parks in the Thamesmead cluster, overall, provision of District and Metropolitan parks are sufficient to meet local needs
- future population projections indicate that the current undersupply of Local parks is set to increase significantly by 2026. Scenario 1 indicates that there could be a need for at least 23.55 hectares in the future
- only provision in the Bexleyheath and Sidcup clusters will be sufficient to meet future demand caused by population growth in the Borough. In the event of population growth, provision of local parks in Erith will no longer be sufficient to meet demand.

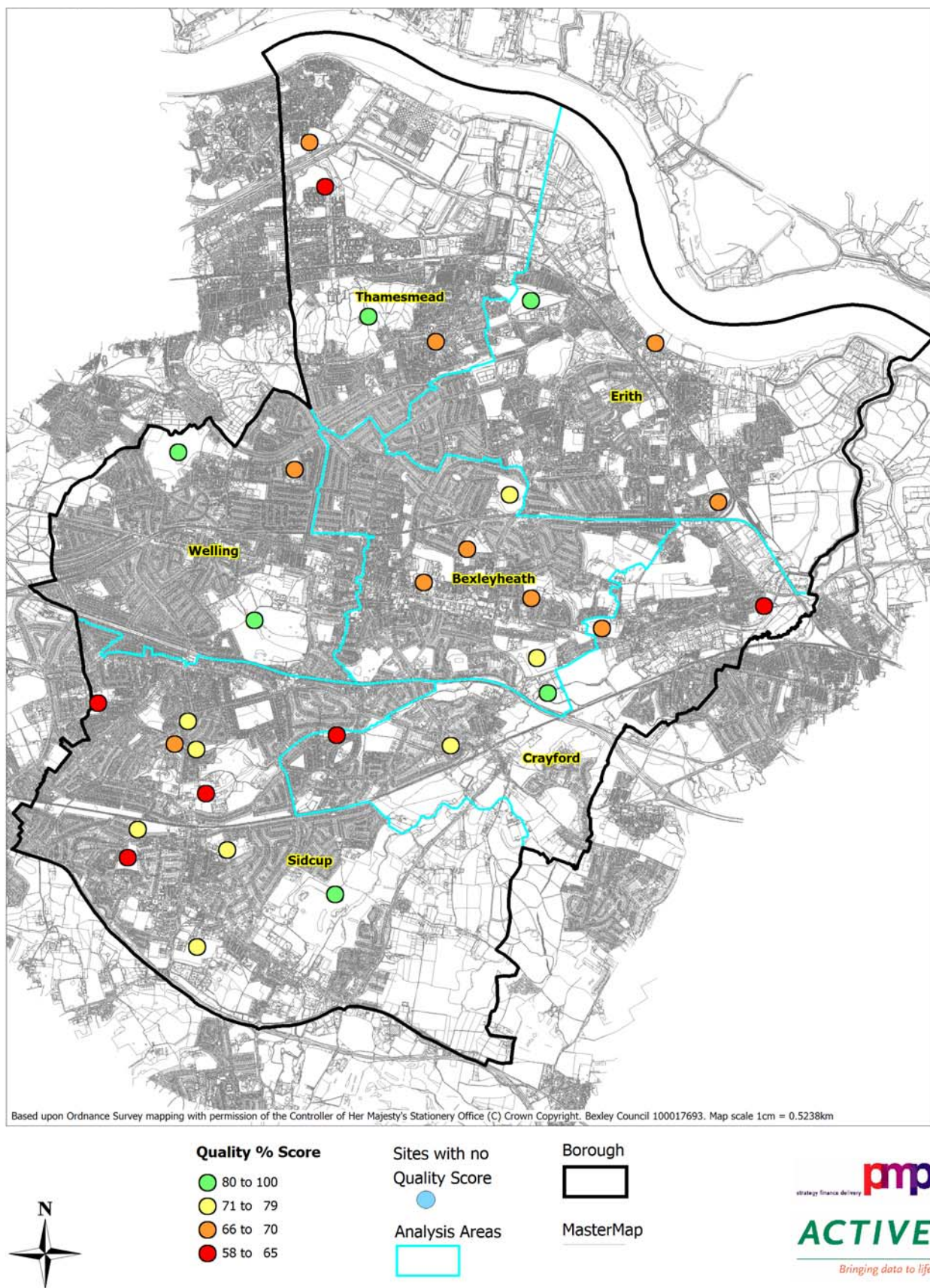
### **Applying the quantity, quality and accessibility standards**

#### **The quality of parks and gardens**

- 4.51 In light of the interrelationship between the three different sizes of park, the quality of sites is considered first. The current quality of parks, particularly the larger sites, is good, with an average score of 72%. The Borough is nationally and regionally recognised as providing high quality parks, with five Green Flag awards obtained and Danson Park being twice awarded London's Best Park and the silver Gilt award. Residents at local consultation identified parks as being of good quality and stated they are highly valued. The quality of parks is illustrated on Map 4.1 overleaf, entitled Bexley Open Space Strategy (OSS) – Quality Scores, Parks and Gardens

## SECTION 4 – PARKS AND GARDENS

Map 4.1 – Quality scores of Metropolitan, District and Local parks in London Borough of Bexley



- 4.52 The quality of sites was of particular importance to local residents and it was highlighted that there are greater opportunities for improvement in Local Parks than in the larger scale facilities. Crossway Park and Martens Grove Park are prominent facilities scoring below average for the Borough and would therefore benefit from investment. Site by site scores and analysis can be found in Appendix I. As suggested through consultation, it is evident that the majority of sites considered to be of poorer quality are smaller sites. These sites have traditionally received less investment, have a limited variety of facilities and do not offer the same high quality environment that larger sites offer. The key opportunity for improvements to parks in the Borough was seen to be the enhancement of smaller local parks, Small Local Parks and Amenity Areas.

<b>PG1</b>	<p>Seek to implement the recommended quality vision at all sites across the Borough and target improvements at sites where quality does not reach this level. The current diversity and individual character of parks should be maintained.</p> <p>In light of priorities highlighted by residents, while ongoing improvements should continue at larger sites, efforts should begin to target smaller Local parks, improving the quality of sites and the range of facilities provided.</p>
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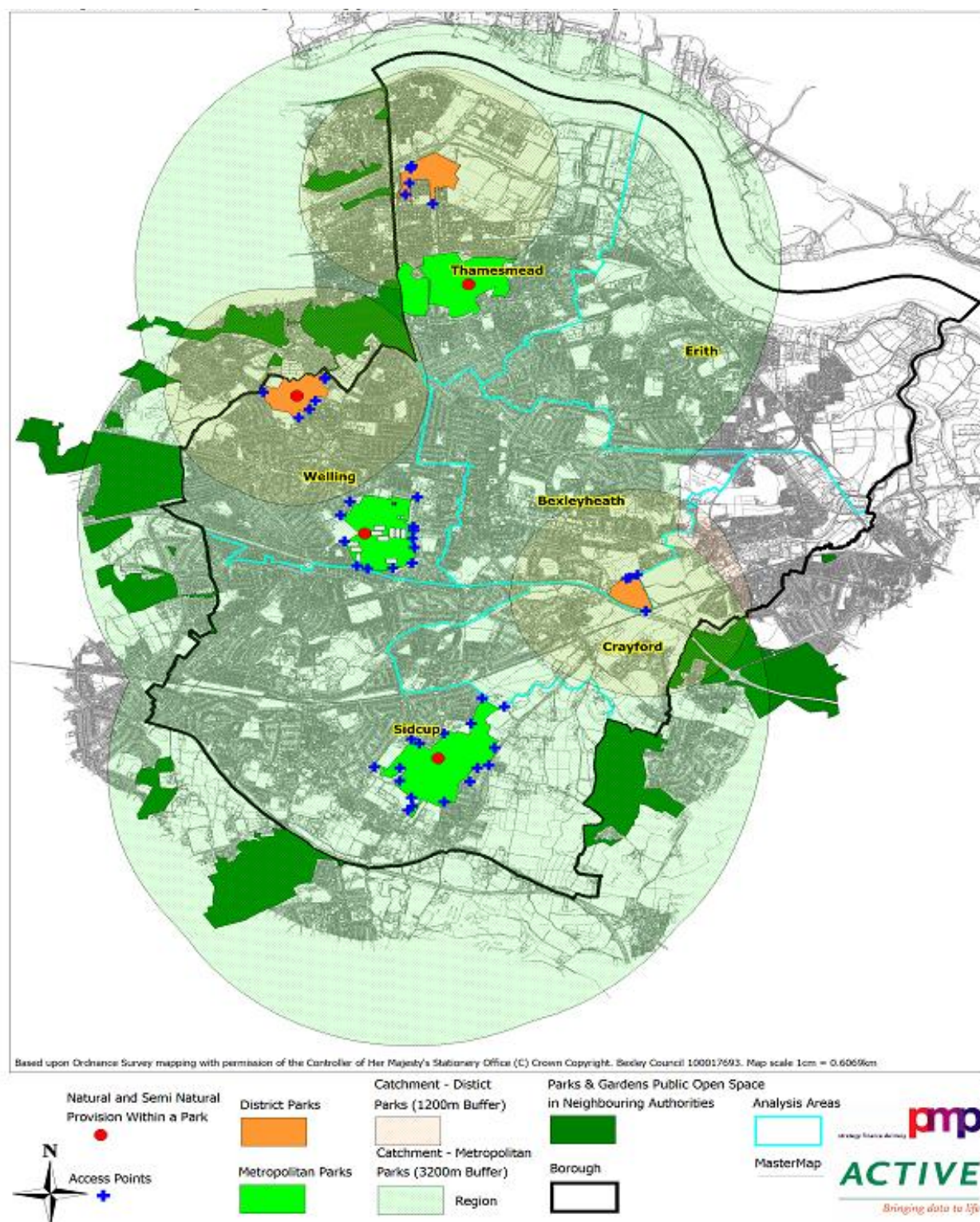
- 4.53 Improvements should focus on sites of particular importance to local residents and in strategic locations across the Borough. Provision of at least one high quality facility in each of the areas of the Borough should be targeted. This will be instrumental in establishing a network of parks across the Borough that can be linked together through the provision of well-located smaller parks, amenity and natural spaces. Site assessments and consultations revealed that many parks and open spaces are perceived to be isolated and surrounding by housing. Linkages are therefore limited. In addition to focusing on the improvement of the existing network, design for new sites should consider the value of openness and opportunities for linking with other open spaces in terms of both wildlife and human use. This is also a key priority of the Draft Public Rights of Way Access and Improvement Plan.
- 4.54 In addition to considering the improvements required from a recreational amenity perspective, improvements to the nature conservation value of sites should be considered. This will be particularly important in areas identified as deficient in access to nature.
- 4.55 The site visits should be used to determine the key issues for each park and to understand the opportunities for improvement. Key issues arising through site visits included:
- security and safety (implementation of wardens programmes is probably only viable at larger sites)
  - improvements to entrances
  - enhanced cleanliness and maintenance
  - increased diversity of facilities
  - provision of information boards.

<b>PG2</b>	<p>Use the findings of the site visits to determine the need for quality enhancements, focusing particularly on Local parks. Detailed management plans should be developed in order to maximise and balance the role of the site in terms of biodiversity and recreation.</p>
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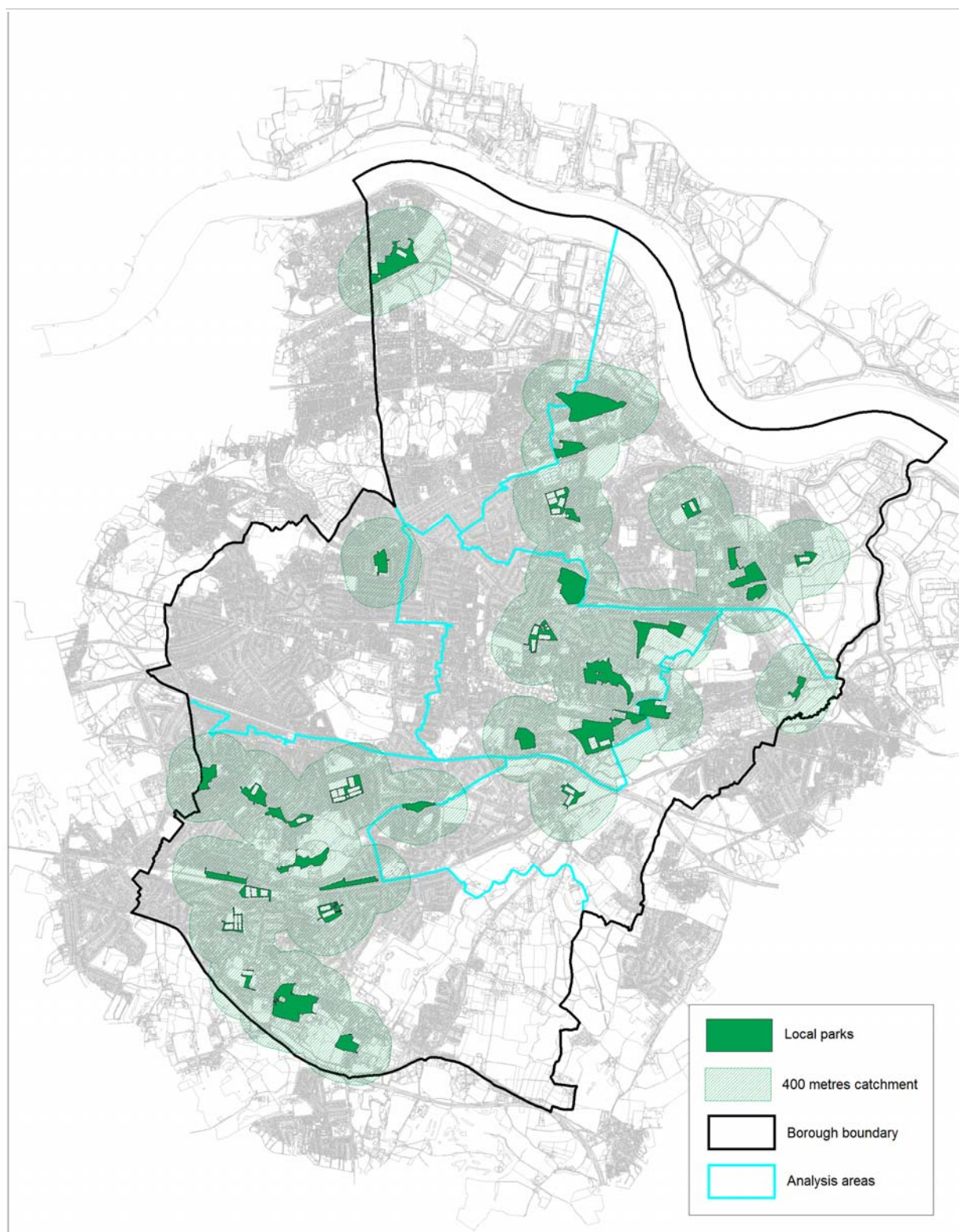
### **Accessibility and quantity**

- 4.56 The application of the local accessibility standards for Metropolitan, District and Local parks set out overleaf in Maps 4.2-4.5 overleaf. Map 4.2 displays accessibility catchments for District and Metropolitan parks while Map 4.3 illustrates similar information for Local parks.
- 4.57 In addition to the catchment areas of each park, Maps 4.2 and 4.3 also illustrate the access points for each park and garden. This is in recognition that in some instances, residents may need to travel along the perimeter of a site in order to access it. This highlights issues where a park is in close proximity to the home but residents still have to travel to reach the site.
- 4.58 Amenity green space fulfils many of the same roles as parks where parks are provided within a 10-minute catchment (the recommended distance threshold for amenity space – set in Section 6). To this extent, parks may negate the need for further provision of amenity space (as a higher order facility they provide a greater range of facilities). Moreover, the same principle applies for Local parks as they will not be required to serve residents who live within 10 minutes of a District or Metropolitan park.
- 4.59 Map 4.4 therefore combines the provision of all types of parks using the catchment of 400m (that assigned to local parks). This enables consideration of the interrelationship between parks in different hierarchies and the identification of real areas of deficiency (ie where residents cannot access any type of park within the 10 minute catchment).
- 4.60 Open spaces in neighbouring authorities are also considered. These sites are illustrated outside the Borough boundary.
- 4.61 Some parks also provide significant areas of natural and semi natural open space, reflecting the secondary purpose of some types of open space.. The interrelationship between parks and natural areas will be considered as part of the analysis in Section 5. Many parks are particularly important in terms of nature conservation and biodiversity. Lesnes Abbey for example is of metropolitan importance in terms of wildlife and conservation. There are opportunities to further increase the value of several other parks and open spaces across the Borough in terms of nature conservation and biodiversity.

Map 4.2 – Provision of Metropolitan and District parks in London Borough of Bexley



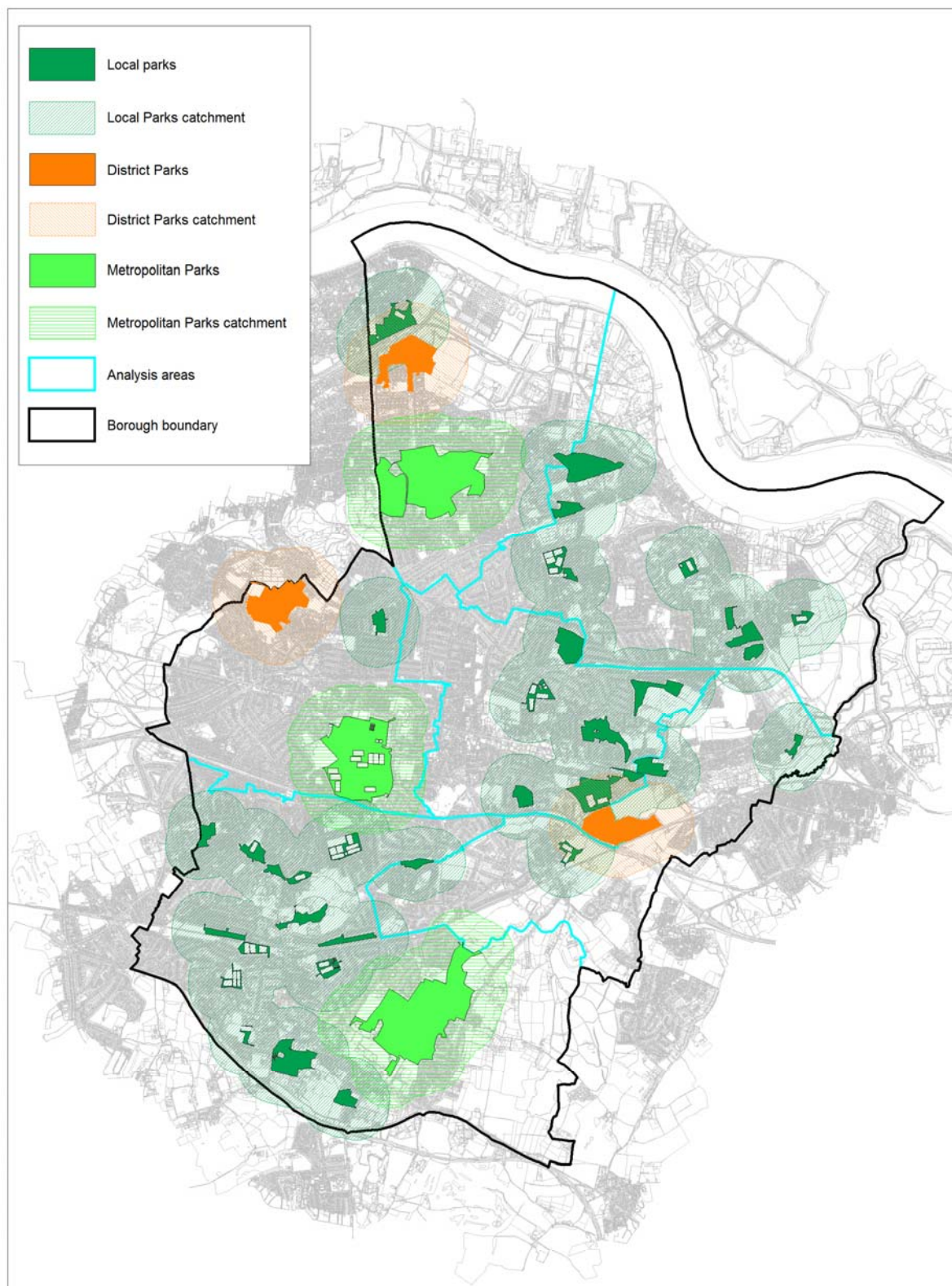
**Map 4.3 – Provision of Local parks in London Borough of Bexley**



## Local parks

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**Map 4.4 – Provision of Metropolitan, District and Local parks in London Borough of Bexley – localised catchments**

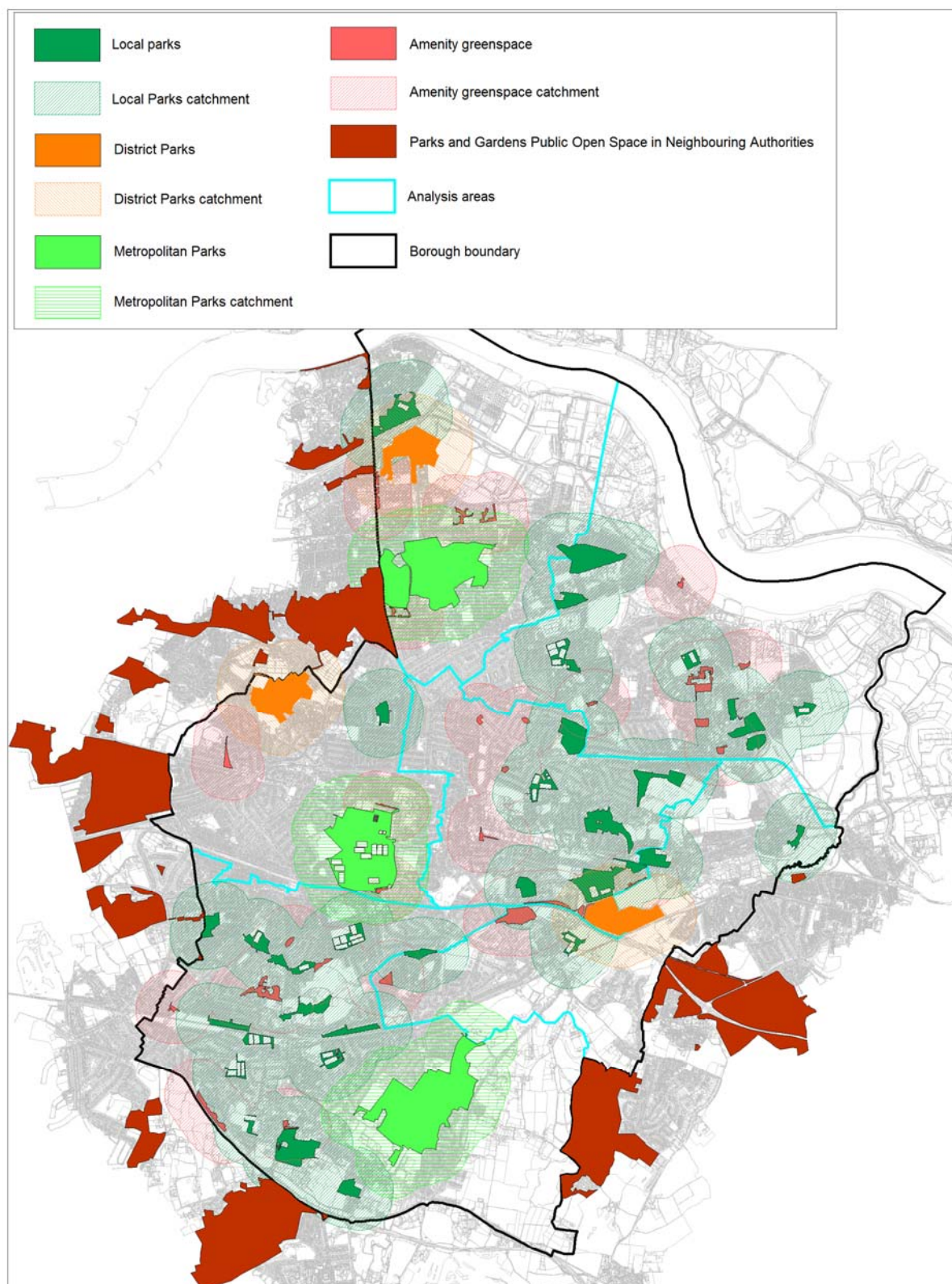


Local, district and metropolitan park

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**Map 4.5 – Access to metropolitan, District and Local parks in London Borough of Bexley**



Local, district and metropolitan park

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### The interrelationship between metropolitan, District and Local Parks

- 4.62 In order to identify areas of deficiency in the provision of parks, it is essential to consider firstly the provision of parks in each hierarchy and secondly the interrelationship between the different parks. This will highlight areas of real accessibility deficiency. This is illustrated on Map 4.5.

### Metropolitan and District Parks

- 4.63 The current supply of Metropolitan parks and District parks is above the recommended local standard of 1.12 hectares per 1000 population (Metropolitan parks) and 0.38 hectares per 1000 (District parks). This reflects local aspirations for a continuing focus on quality rather than increases in the quantity of provision.

#### PG3

In light of the expressed value of larger parks in the Borough from both a recreation and conservation perspective, protect all Metropolitan and District parks through policies in the Local Development Framework.

- 4.64 Application of the accessibility catchment reflects the good provision of Metropolitan and District parks with the majority of residents able to access one of these parks within the recommended accessibility catchment. Analysis of the access points to the varying sites across the Borough concludes that almost all have multiple access points enabling residents to easily enter the park. This is essential to facilitate usage and clear and well-maintained boundaries and entrances as they are an essential feature of the park.
- 4.65 Although on the whole sites are evenly distributed, Metropolitan and District parks are concentrated in the west and south of the Borough, with only one District park, Hall Place Gardens, located in the east.
- 4.66 Considering just the provision of Metropolitan and District parks within the boundaries of Bexley Borough, there are two areas of deficiency, specifically in the north of the Crayford cluster and east of the Erith cluster (Figures 4.2 and 4.3). All residents should have access to larger parks regardless of the level of local provision. The deficiency in the Erith cluster will be of particular significance if an uneven growth scenario was to occur and the majority of population growth occurred in the Erith area.

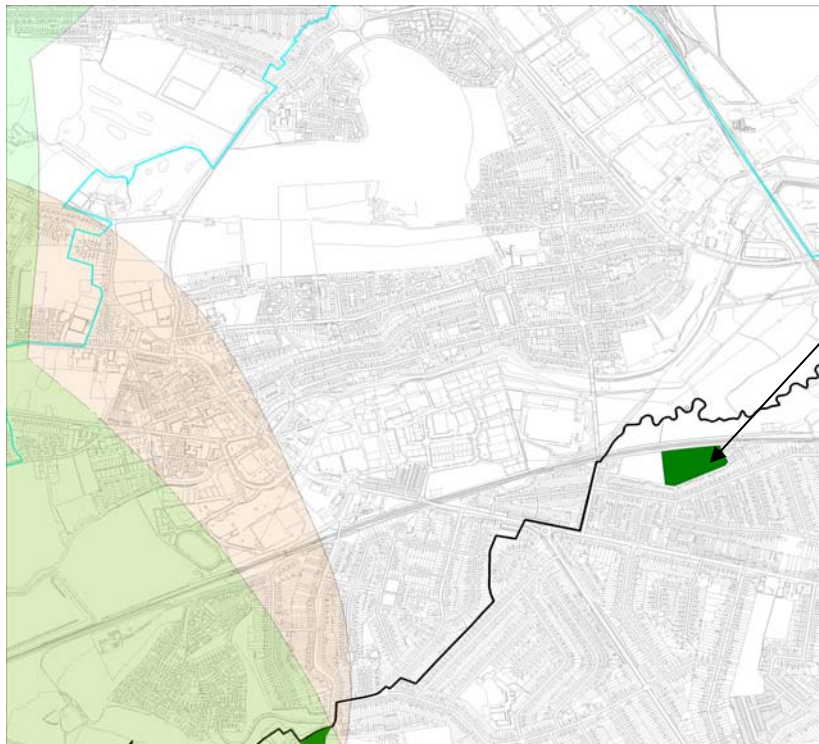
### Local Parks

- 4.67 Maps 4.2 and 4.3 indicate that distribution of Local parks is uneven across the Borough and there are a few areas where residents are outside of the appropriate catchment for a facility most notably in Welling cluster and to the west of the Bexleyheath cluster. This is based upon the analysis of the spread of parks using the Local parks catchment area.
- 4.68 Map 4.6 overleaf illustrates the provision of parks in the context of amenity space in the area. The presence of amenity space in areas deficient of parks provide an opportunity to formalise these spaces and better meet the needs of local residents. This would in effect upgrade the amenity space to the function of a park.
- 4.69 In order to maximise the benefit of new parks, new facilities should be targeted in locations that are currently lacking in provision. Moreover, in order to ensure that the maximum number of residents are within the accessibility catchment of parks and

gardens, any new site should be located so that there is no overlap with the catchment of existing parks.

4.70

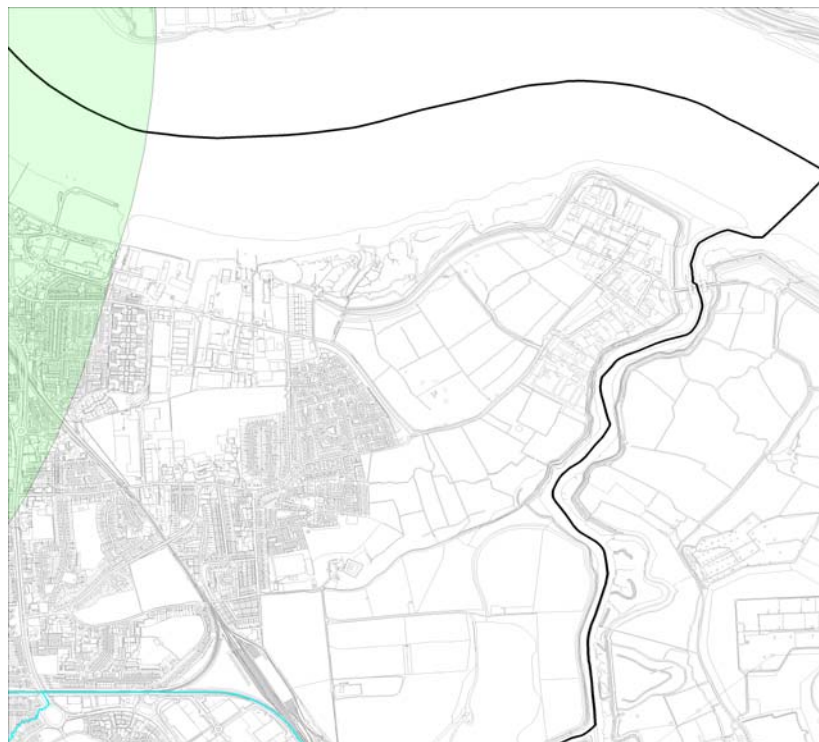
**Figure 4.2 – Deficiencies in the north of the Crayford cluster**



Small park outside the Borough boundary offsets unmet demand to an extent

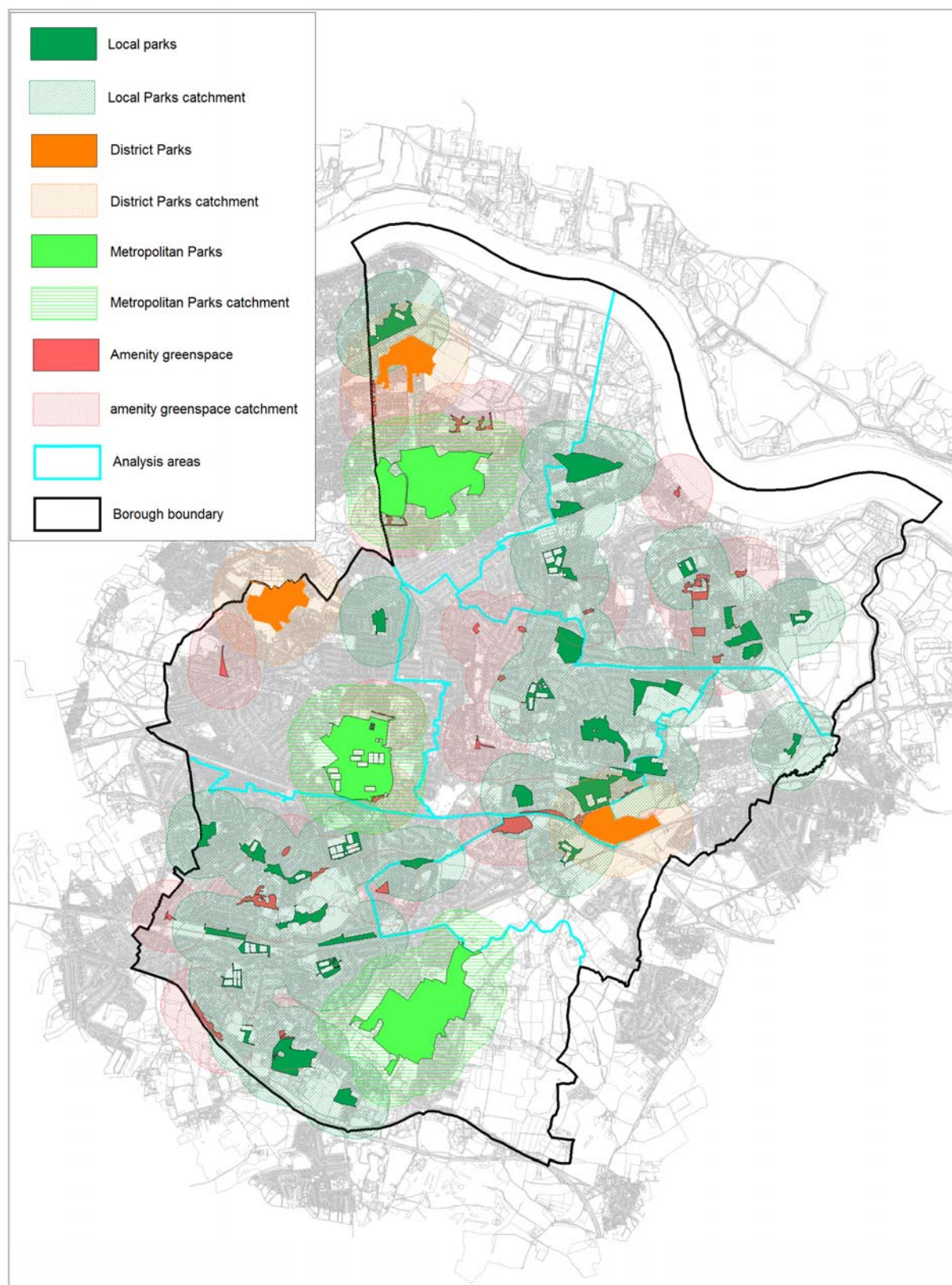
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**Figure 4.3 – Deficiencies in the east of the Erith cluster**



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**Map 4.6 – Provision of amenity green space and parks in London Borough of Bexley**



**Local, district and metropolitan park  
with amenity greenspace**

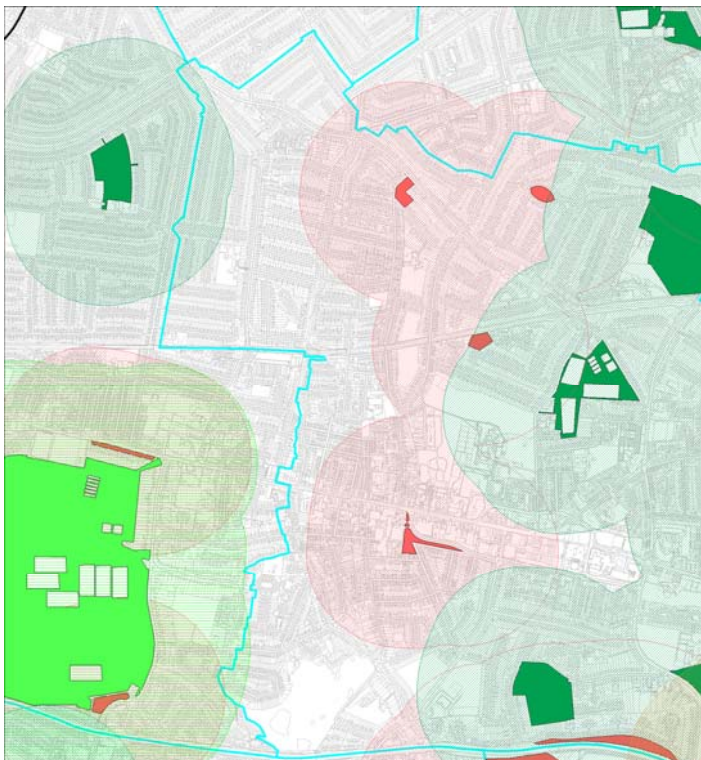
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### Bexleyheath Cluster

- 4.71 Accessibility mapping illustrates that all residents in the Bexleyheath cluster are within the recommended catchment of a Metropolitan park. In quantitative terms, there are sufficient District parks to meet current and future demand. However, the location of Hall Place Gardens in the southern border of the area means a significant proportion of the population are not within the catchment of this facility.
- 4.72 Local parks are therefore of particular importance to residents in the Bexleyheath cluster. Application of the quantity standard highlights that there is adequate provision of Local parks in Bexleyheath to meet current and future demand. Although application of the accessibility standard illustrates that the majority of residents have access to a Local park, due to their location in close proximity to one another, small areas of deficiency exist in the east of Brampton ward. Deficiencies to the south of Christchurch ward also exist, however residents in this area are in close proximity to Danson Park (although not within a 10 minute catchment). (Figure 4.4).

**Figure 4.4 – Deficiencies in the Bexleyheath cluster**



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- 4.73 When combining the provision of all three hierarchies of parks in the Bexleyheath cluster, the majority of residents have access to a park within the recommended accessibility standard. Only residents in the area illustrated in Figure 4.4 are outside of the catchment for any provision of parks. These residents also have limited supply of amenity green space. Residents to the west of the Brampton ward are also out of the catchment for amenity space.
- 4.74 In light of the good provision of parks and gardens and amenity green space in the Bexleyheath cluster there should be a focus on maintaining the current high quality standard and increasing access to parks and gardens in the east of Brampton ward and south of Christchurch ward (either through new provision or linkages). Green

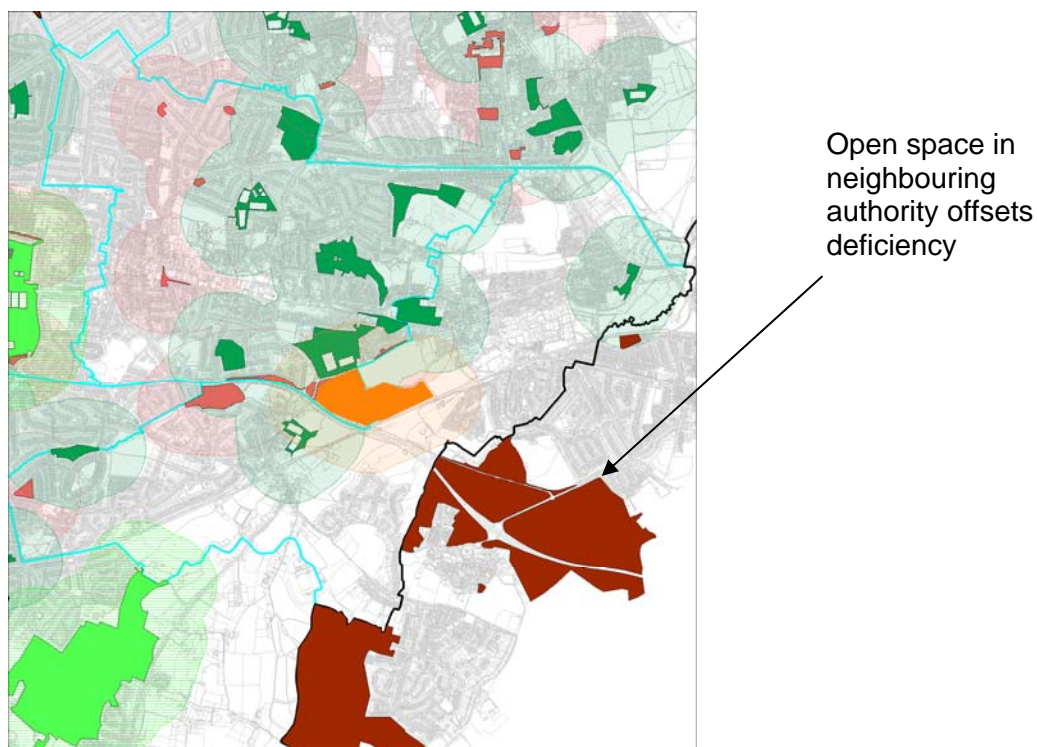
corridors can play a key role in linking open spaces and the opportunities offered through the East London Green Grid and the South East London Green Chain projects should be maximised to enhance the linking of open space in the area.

<b>PG4</b>	Maintain and enhance the quality of parks and gardens in the Bexleyheath cluster, prioritising poor quality sites for improvement. Address the key areas of deficiency either through the provision of new local open space or by enhancing links to existing open space. The ELGG and South East London Green Chain could offer significant opportunities to enhance linkages.
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### Crayford Cluster

- 4.75 As highlighted, the Crayford cluster contains significant quantitative shortfalls of parks compared to other areas in the Borough. Despite this, most residents are within the catchment of parks of Metropolitan size (Footscray Meadows and Danson Park). [Also Hall Pace? MG]
- 4.76 There is currently a small undersupply of Local parks in the area and access to local amenities is still required for those residents outside of the 10-minute catchment area to any park. Future population projections indicate that shortfalls of Local parks will increase to up to -4 hectares by 2026 based on scenario 1.
- 4.77 Despite a relatively even distribution of existing parks, residents in the southwest and north east of the Crayford cluster are unable to access a Local park (Figure 4.5). The park in the neighbouring authority does however offset demand for new provision.

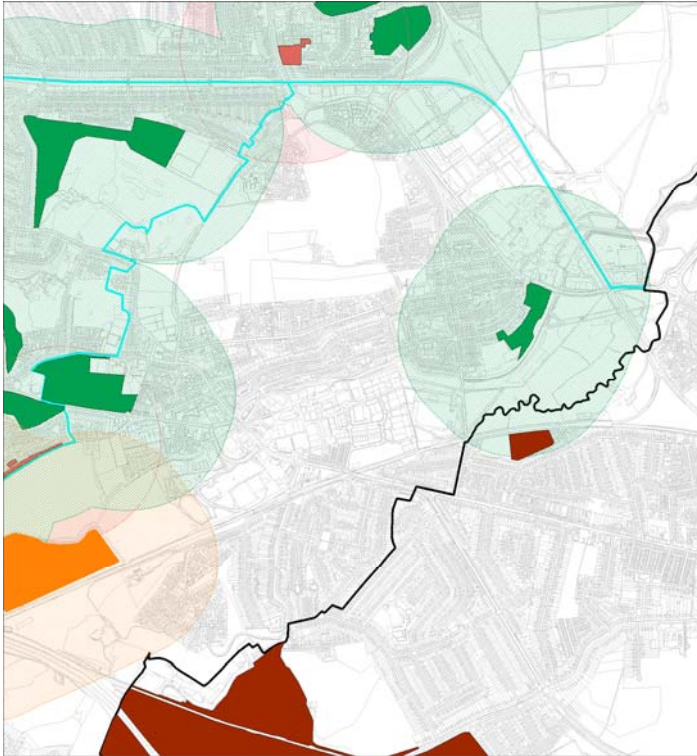
**Figure 4.5 – Deficiencies in Crayford**



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- 4.78 Similar to Local parks in the Crayford cluster, the provision of amenity green space in the area is also insufficient to meet current and future demand. In contrast, provision of natural and semi natural open space is the highest in the Borough.
- 4.79 When amalgamating the provision of parks and gardens and amenity green space the majority of residents have access to one of these open spaces. Despite this residents in the north of Crayford ward do not have access to a park or amenity green space (Figure 4.6). It can however be seen that there are other open space types within this area, which provide a secondary function of informal recreation.

**Figure 4.6 – Deficiencies in north of Crayford ward**



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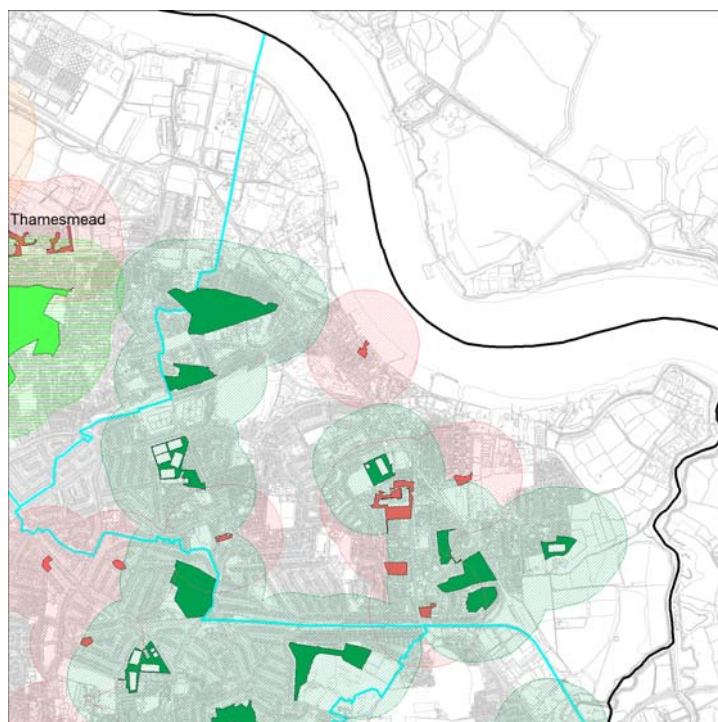
- 4.80 Hall Place Gardens, located on the border of the Crayford cluster serves residents in this cluster and is the largest park in the area. This site is therefore of particular value to local residents. While provision of parks is lower when compared to the remaining five clusters, other recreational open spaces are located in the area.
- 4.81 Given that there are insufficient residents outside of the catchment area of an existing park to justify prioritisation of a new facility, it is essential to maximise linkages to existing sites and maintain high quality. This will ensure the provision of high quality parks and other open space opportunities that are of value to local residents in Crayford. This links with access improvements to the Crayford Marshes and River Cray strategy identified within the East London Green Grid project. This is also a key priority of the Draft Public Rights of Way Access and Improvement Plan

<b>PG5</b>	Seek to implement the recommended quality vision at all sites within the Crayford cluster and target improvements at sites where quality does not reach this level. Enhance linkages to and between existing open spaces in the area maximising opportunities arising from natural resources including the River Cray and the marshes.
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### Erith Cluster

- 4.82 Analysis of the distribution of existing parks and gardens suggests that there are fewer large facilities to the east of the Borough. Quantitative shortfalls in the provision of Metropolitan and District parks exist in the Erith cluster. However, the location of Lesnes Abbey Wood in the Thamesmead cluster ensures the majority of residents have access to a Metropolitan park within the recommended local standard.
- 4.83 The Erith cluster currently has insufficient provision of Local parks and accessibility mapping supports this to an extent, with a small section of residents outside of the catchment area for a facility, highlighting deficiencies in the provision of Local parks in the area. Figure 4.7 below illustrates the distribution of parks in Erith.
- 4.84 Deficiencies in the Erith cluster will increase if uneven population growth takes place across the Borough (Scenarios 2b and 3b) and the majority of development occurs in the Thames Gateway.

**Figure 4.7 – Deficiencies in Erith cluster**



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- 4.85 In the absence of Local parks in the area, amenity space takes on a greater importance to local residents. Analysis of amenity green space reveals there is adequate provision of amenity green space in the Erith cluster. Application of the accessibility standard illustrates there is a good distribution of amenity green space, with the majority of

residents able to access this typology within the recommended catchment. Despite a good distribution of amenity green space there is a small area deficient in the provision of both Local parks and amenity green space.

- 4.86 Linkages between open spaces in this area will therefore be critical in providing local open space for residents. In recognition of the gaps in provision in this area, the East London Green Grid project highlights the regeneration of the Erith Waterfront and creation of western linkages to Franks Park and the South East London Green chain as critical. Franks Park suffered earlier this decade from a lack of investment and poor access. Recent improvements have ensured that the site has improved although further attention is essential. This is also a key priority of the Draft Public Rights of Way Access and Improvement Plan
- 4.87 In light of the even distribution of the remaining facilities and the fact that the majority of residents are within a 10 minute catchment of a park, the enhancement of current provision will be of particular importance to local residents. Given that there are no larger parks in this area, it is essential that the diversity of existing sites is maximised. A key criticism of Local parks and amenity spaces across the Borough was the lack of facilities available.

<b>PG6</b>	<p>Prioritise investment towards Local parks in order to maximise the value of the existing sites. Any qualitative improvements should take into account the recommended quality vision and should ensure a range of facilities is provided. Franks Park is a particularly important site in this area.</p> <p>Enhance links and access to the Erith Marshes for the general public as well as providing green links to the parks and open spaces located to the west of this cluster. The Erith Area Action plan may provide an opportunity to improve provision in the area.</p> <p>Improve access to facilities in the Erith cluster.</p>
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### Sidcup Cluster

- 4.88 Foots Cray Meadows, a large Metropolitan park (which also provides an extensive natural area) is situated in the Sidcup cluster and provides an important resource for residents. All residents in this area are within the catchment of this site. There are no District parks located within the Sidcup cluster.
- 4.89 The location of Foots Cray Meadows means that the park serves a particularly important function for residents in North Cray as these residents do not have access to any other park or amenity green space. Foots Cray Meadows therefore alleviates deficiencies in the east of the Sidcup cluster and provides a valuable function for residents in the area. Joydens Wood, located just outside the Borough boundary also provides further opportunities for informal recreation for residents in the east of the Sidcup cluster.

<b>PG7</b>	<p>In light of the importance of Foots Cray Meadows of meeting the needs of residents in the Sidcup cluster, investment should be targeted at this park to increase the quality of the site and maximise the benefits to users.</p>
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- 4.90 As discussed, as well as accessing large sites, local provision is equally important. The Sidcup cluster has the greatest provision of Local parks in the Borough and application of the quantity standard indicates there is sufficient provision to meet current and future demand in all growth scenarios. Accessibility mapping supports this with the majority of

residents in the area able to access a Local park within the recommended distance threshold.

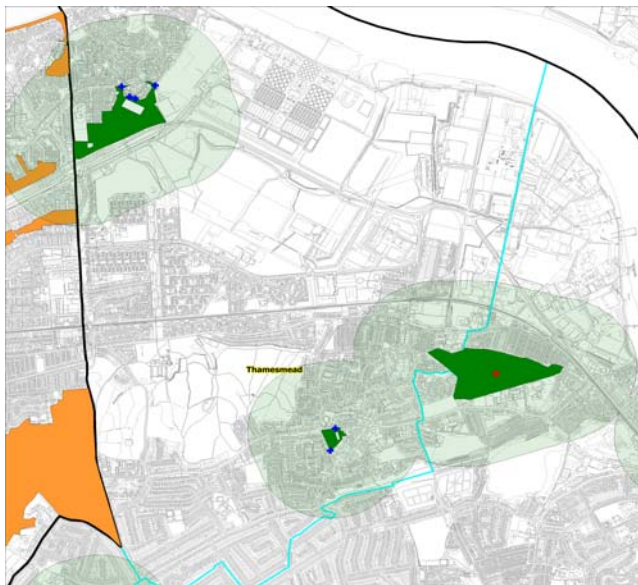
- 4.91 Local parks are however concentrated in the west of the Sidcup cluster. While provision of Local parks, to the east of the Sidcup cluster is limited, the area outside of the catchment has few residents. Those residents outside of the catchment for a Local park in the Cray Meadows ward are located close to Footscray Meadows and this therefore fulfils this role.
- 4.92 Analysis of the provision of amenity green space in the Borough reveals the Sidcup cluster has adequate provision to meet current and future demand. The distribution of amenity green space is good and provides access for the majority of residents in the Sidcup cluster. The provision of amenity space is more comprehensive in Sidcup than in any other area.
- 4.93 There are therefore few deficiencies in the Sidcup cluster and consequently limited demand for additional provision. Given that the quality of facilities was perceived to be particularly varying in this area, qualitative improvements will be of more important than quantitative increases.

<b>PG8</b>	Prioritise quality improvements and green space linkages over new provision in the Sidcup cluster.
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### Thamesmead Cluster

- 4.94 The provision of Metropolitan and District parks in the Thamesmead cluster is sufficient to meet current and future demand and application of the accessibility standards illustrates all residents have access to a Metropolitan or District park within the recommended catchment. This is due to the location of Lesnes Abbey within this area.
- 4.95 In contrast, application of the quantity standard highlights that there are significant deficiencies in the provision of Local parks within the Thamesmead cluster. Despite this, and the fact that parks are predominately situated in the boundaries of the cluster, the main area devoid of provision is an industrial estate, where Local parks are not required. This is illustrated in Figure 4.8.

**Figure 4.8 – Deficiencies in Thamesmead cluster**



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- 4.96 When combining the provision of all three hierarchies of parks and amenity green space, all residents of the Thamesmead cluster have access to at least one of these open spaces within a 400m catchment. The future focus should therefore be on enhancing the quality of existing provision in the area and ensuring that residents are provided with a diverse range of opportunities. This will improve access in the area and ensure residents have access to more localised provision.

<b>PG9</b>	Direct investment towards the enhancement of existing parks within the Thamesmead cluster, considering the quality standard and ensuring that residents have access to a diverse range of facilities.
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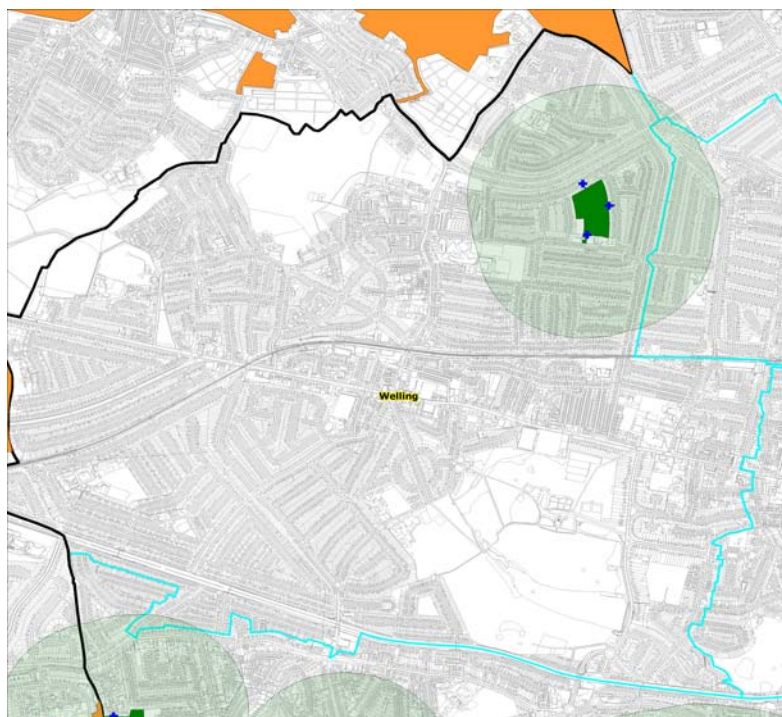
### Welling Cluster

- 4.97 Danson Park is located within the Welling cluster. This park is recognised as one of the flagship parks of the Borough and is of a high quality standard. The multi faceted nature of Danson Park means this site is of high value to residents in London Borough of Bexley and specifically local residents in the Welling cluster.

<b>PG10</b>	Continue to develop and enhance Danson Park to ensure that it meets both local and regional needs. Continue to promote the park as a resource for local people and an example of good practice regionally.
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- 4.98 The Welling cluster has the greatest deficiency in Local parks (-35 ha in scenario 1). Application of the accessibility standard exemplifies this deficiency, with the majority of residents unable to access a Local park (Figure 4.10). Danson Park and East Wickham open space do however fulfil the role of Local parks for some residents depicted within Figure 4.9.

**Figure 4.9 – Deficiencies in Welling cluster**



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- 4.99 The Welling cluster is surrounded by a large number of open spaces located just outside the Borough boundary. Sites such as Oxleas Wood and Bostall Woods provide an important function for residents in Welling and offset the need for further local open space provision. Consideration of these sites, alongside the presence of Danson Park and East Wickham open space highlights that there is only a small area of deficiency in the central area.
- 4.100 The Welling cluster has the lowest provision of amenity green space and application of the quantity standard reveals there is a large deficiency. Application of the accessibility standard further illustrates these deficiencies with the majority of residents outside of the local catchment for a park unable to access an amenity green space. The distribution of sites is also poor, with site located in the extremes of the area. This exacerbates deficiencies in the centre of Welling, although the number of residents in the area is unlikely to be sufficient to justify an additional facility.
- 4.101 While the Welling cluster has a high provision of larger sites, priority should be given to ensuring local access to parks. This should be delivered through a combination of enhancements to existing small sites (in terms of quality and the range of facilities provided) and increased access to larger sites through effective linkages. New provision may be required in areas outside of the catchment.

<b>PG11</b>	Focus on the enhancement of existing small parks in the Welling cluster. Low quality sites identified should be prioritised for improvement. Linkages to larger sites will be particularly important if access to improve for residents in this area.
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- 4.102 As highlighted, the network of parks and open spaces across the Borough is good and residents benefit from a significant variety of opportunity. Much of the work of the London Borough of Bexley Council to promote parks in the area is enhanced by contributions from a variety of Friends Groups, who work in partnership with the Council. While these groups have a positive impact on the provision at each specific site in the Borough, there is limited knowledge sharing across the friends groups. The development of an umbrella group to minimise bureaucracy (for example the registration of the Council to authorise CRB checks rather than each individual friends group) was also suggested.
- 4.103 The benefits from these partnerships are clear and several opportunities for the development of further partnerships were raised, including:
- schools
  - Primary Care Trust
  - British Trust of Conservation Volunteers
  - other open space organisations.

<b>PG12</b>	Facilitate the development of a Friends Group Forum, where members of friends groups can share their experiences and learn from each other and from good practice elsewhere. Continue to promote, encourage and support community involvement in the management and maintenance of parks across Bexley.
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### Summary

- 4.104 Parks and gardens are particularly highly valued across London Borough of Bexley, with residents and visitors to the Borough alike using them frequently. Danson Park is particularly valued by local residents and was regularly commended at local consultation and identified as an example of good practice.
- 4.105 While it is acknowledged that parks and gardens are of high quality, there was a particular emphasis on a desire for improvement of Local parks in terms of the quality, maintenance and range of facilities provided.
- 4.106 The wider benefits of parks are far reaching, and it is evident that many residents use parks for informal recreation and walks, reinforcing the health benefits that these spaces offer. Parks were seen as a focal point of the community, encouraging social interaction and acting as a meeting place for the old and the young. Larger parks in the Borough (eg Danson Park, Hall Place Gardens) were seen as key strategic sites which are integral to the character of the Borough. The diversity of parks across the Borough ensures that each park offers different opportunities for local residents.
- 4.107 The quality of parks is perceived to be consistently good across the Borough. Many residents throughout local consultation acknowledged recent improvements. The importance of park rangers and friends groups in maintaining this high standard was also identified during consultation. Despite general satisfaction with the quality of Local parks, residents did express safety concerns at sites across the Borough particularly relating to smaller sites. Maintaining and improving the quality and quantity of biodiversity in parks is also a key focus of the biodiversity action plan.
- 4.108 Application of the quantity and accessibility standards for parks indicates there are a number of areas deficient in the Borough. This is most notable to the east, in the Erith cluster. Although there are some accessibility deficiencies within London Borough of Bexley, accessibility mapping identifies that the majority of residents have access to at least one park within the recommended accessibility standards. The provision of amenity green space in the Borough also provides opportunities for informal recreation in areas deficient in the provision of parks.
- 4.109 Maintaining the current high quality standard of parks, particularly the larger strategic sites (eg Danson Park, Foots Cray Meadows) with multi functional facilities is particularly important in the Borough although future focus should also consider increased emphasis on Local parks.
- 4.110 Enhanced linkages across the Borough (through integration with the South East London Green Chain) will be essential in maximising the effectiveness of the parks network and increasing the number of residents visiting these spaces frequently. Increased access to existing sites, including the marshes and river valleys will further provide informal recreation opportunities. Many parks and open spaces are currently landlocked and linkages with other open spaces and the wider community are limited. This should be avoided in the future development of sites. Improvement of access is a key priority of the Draft Public Rights of Way Access and Improvement Plan
- 4.111 Partnership working has been an essential component of previous successes across the London Borough of Bexley. Further opportunities exist for the development and improvement of partnerships in the near future.