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Moray Local
Development Plan

OPEN SPACE STRATEGY



moray
council



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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of document

The Open Space Strategy will provide a strategic vision for the provision, development, maintenance and management of open space within Moray (excluding the Cairngorms National Park). The Strategy will be used to inform decision making on existing open space and open space provision within new development. As Supplementary Guidance the Strategy will help to inform the planning application process and support Local Development Plan Policy E5 Open Spaces.

An audit process has been undertaken to help to understand the existing provision of open space which has enabled deficiencies and quality issues to be identified. An important part of this strategy will set out the Council's standards for open space, identifying the quality, accessibility and quantity of open space that new development should achieve. The Strategy focuses on publicly usable open space within or immediately adjacent to settlements and complements other plans and strategies such as the Core Path Plan, Active Travel Strategy and Forestry and Woodlands Strategy.

The Strategy will be **used by the Council** when making decisions which will impact on open space such as disposal of open space for alternative uses, the management of spaces and provision of open space within new development.

The Strategy will be **used by developers** to guide the provision of open space in new developments. Developers must consider the findings of the audit, new development site requirements set out in the Settlement Appendices and the standards and guidelines within the Strategy.

1.2 Why open space is important

Open space provision is important on many levels:

Health and Wellbeing – Green infrastructure and open space supports healthy and active lifestyles. Opportunities to access open space and engage in outdoor activities has associated health and wellbeing benefits. Open space provides a place for walking, cycling and other physical activities. Open space can strengthen mental health and wellbeing by providing space to relax, unwind, and take time out.

Sustainable Economic Growth – Quality open space can encourage people to live, invest in, and visit an area.

Climate Change - Open space can play a role in reducing flood impacts. Green infrastructure and open space provide important functions which can provide climate change related benefits, such as shelter, access and travel, sustainable drainage, pollution mitigation and resilience to climate change impacts.

Environment - Open space can enhance environmental quality by creating habitat networks/connections and supporting biodiversity. Open space can be managed to achieve the objectives of the River Basin Management Plan.

Placemaking – Green infrastructure and open space can help to create places with character, identity and sense of place contributing to quality of life. Open space can ensure new development fits into the natural environment and landscape.

1.3 Policy Context

National Planning Framework 3 recognises that improved quality and access to green infrastructure and open space can help to build stronger and healthier communities, are part of long-term environmental performance and climate resilience and can encourage investment and development.



Scottish Planning Policy states that Planning should protect, enhance and promote green infrastructure including open space as an integral component of successful placemaking. Scottish Planning Policy requires Local Development Plans to identify and protect open space identified in open space audits and strategies as valued and functional or capable of being brought into use to meet local needs.

The Moray Local Development Plan (MLDP) was adopted in 2015. The MLDP 2015 includes policies to protect open spaces designated within the plan and also in relation to the quantity and quality of open space provision within new developments. This is primarily through Policy E5: Open Spaces however other policies, including those relating to Placemaking, seek to help guide the location and quality of open space provision within new developments.

The provision of good quality and accessible open spaces can help to achieve the objectives of Moray Community Planning's "Moray 2026 – A Plan for the Future". Open space supports healthy and active lifestyles which can have both physical and mental health benefits. Attractive good quality spaces can contribute greatly to the attractiveness of places which can encourage people to live and invest in an area.

This strategy complements The Moray Council Active Travel Strategy, the Moray Core Paths Plan, and the Moray Forestry and Woodlands Strategy. Moray Council's Physical Activity, Sport and Health Strategy has a vision that physical activity and sport are embedded in the lives of the Moray community. Priority 2 Healthier Citizens XIII seeks to "Retain a sufficient level of provision of green space/playing fields in Moray". A review of the Moray Leisure Estate is currently ongoing (May 2017). This may result in changes to the operation and ownership of grass pitches/pavilions and synthetic pitches depending on the outcome of the review.



OUR VISION
MORAY HAS A NETWORK OF
QUALITY OPEN SPACES THAT
PROVIDE A RANGE OF
FUNCTIONS, ARE
ACCESSIBLE, AND
APPROPRIATELY SITED AND
DESIGNED MEETING
COMMUNITY NEEDS AND
SUPPORTING BIODIVERSITY.

2 OPEN SPACE STRATEGY OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

The Strategy is framed around a vision for our open spaces and eight objectives as follows

2.1 Vision

Moray has a network of quality open spaces that provide a range of functions, are accessible, and appropriately sited and designed to meet community needs and support biodiversity.

2.2 Objectives

To ensure public open spaces provide a diversity of functions, including ecological, cultural, visual, and sport and recreation.

Open space can perform a variety of functions which give multiple benefits to communities. It is important that the variety of functions open space performs does not become diluted, for example through a focus on one typology, as this could reduce the range of benefits derived from open space. Whilst it is acknowledged some sites have an important function, for example visual screening of development or environmental protection, opportunities to widen functionality for example by introducing a path network or including an educational function can widen the benefits derived from sites. Similarly, open space reserved for piperuns or infrastructure associated with district heating provision should seek to have wider open space functions.



Action

- Encourage and place greater emphasis on the provision of multifunctional space within the Local Development Plan policies and Urban Design Supplementary Guidance. Policy E5 Open Spaces currently requires new spaces to be multi-functional, this should include natural spaces of educational value.
- Reinforce support for biodiversity in the new Local Development Plan policy and in revised Quality Audit process.
- Identify new sites within the Local Development Plan where there are known deficiencies in provision.
- Use the information within the settlement appendices relating to gaps in provision and deficiencies to target available resources and support funding bids.

To ensure public open spaces in Moray are of sufficient quality and distribution to meet the needs of local communities and local biodiversity.

Good quality open spaces are fit for purpose and serve the needs of the community. The distribution of spaces is important to ensure sites are accessible to users and that provision is not concentrated in one area.

Action

- Apply the Open Space Standards and Guidelines to proposed open space provision within new developments.
- Consider impacts on quality, accessibility and quantity when making decisions that affect existing open space provision.
- Use the information within the settlement appendices relating to gaps in provision, quality issues and deficiencies to target available resources and support funding bids.



To address the importance of accessibility and walkability to public open space.

Public open spaces must be accessible to their users. The easier a space is to access the more likely it is to be used by a broad range of users. Accessibility not only relates to the distance and path provision but also the ease of access for older people, young children (including buggies and prams) and disabled people. The ease of walking to an open space is important in delivering health and wellbeing and environmental benefits and maximising social inclusion.

Action

- Apply the Accessibility Standards to proposed open space provision within new developments.
- Consider impacts on quality and accessibility when making decisions. Apply the Quality and Accessibility Standard to decision making that affects existing open space provision.
- Encourage and place greater emphasis on accessibility within the Local Development Plan policies and Urban Design Supplementary Guidance. Policy E5 Open Spaces currently requires new spaces to be easily accessible.
- Develop the data and mapping used in the audit analysis as toolkit that can be used as evidence to inform decision making, including the network routing analysis.
- Review gaps in provision identified in the Settlement appendices and investigate if improvements to access could improve access to existing provision and target resources to these areas.

To promote safe use and enjoyment of open space through appropriate siting and design.

The siting and design of open spaces greatly influences how people use open space and perceptions of safety. Open space should be the focal point for communities and have a clear function. Land should be used efficiently to avoid left over areas that lack function and become maintenance issues. Open spaces should be overlooked by buildings with active frontages to encourage natural surveillance.

Action

- Apply the Quality Standard to proposed open space provision within new developments. As well as applying the quality requirements in Policy E5 Open Space and guidance on Open Space within the Urban Design Supplementary Guidance.
- Continue the use of Quality Audits which includes specific consideration of open space within the design principles.

To establish a framework and standards to allow consistent decision making for the ongoing development and management of public open space.

A framework and standards can be used to improve the consistency of decision making in relation to open space. It can help ensure that the same framework is used across the Council when making decisions that impact on open space for example, by Planning, Lands and Parks, Estates. It can help to provide a framework for targeting investment.

Standards and Guidelines are set out in section 3 of the Strategy.

Action

- Promote and encourage the adoption of the Strategy, Standards and Guidelines across the Council when making decisions that impact upon open space.
- Develop the data and mapping used in the audit analysis as a toolkit that can be used as evidence to inform decision making.



To encourage community involvement in improving and managing open space.

Encouraging active participation in the provision, use and management of open space can extend the sense of ownership and responsibility and build stronger communities. A range of community organisations already champion open spaces and are actively involved in caring for them. Through the audit it was found that where the community were involved with the management of an open space this often enhanced the quality of the site e.g. Forres in Bloom at Grant Park, the Biblical Gardens in Elgin.

Action

- Build on positive examples by actively encouraging community engagement, partnership working and volunteering in the management and decision making relating to open spaces.

To protect public open space and proposed open spaces from inappropriate development.

Open space is an important asset for our communities and should be protected from inappropriate development. Policy E5 Open Spaces and the designation of sites as ENV seeks to protect open space from inappropriate development. A gap in protection of open space can occur due to the timescales of adopting new Local Development Plans. This has meant that open space within consented development is not given the protection status that ENV designations have until these are included within the next Local Development Plan review. This has the potential to erode open space through subsequent applications until these can be protected within the Local Development Plan.

Action

- Review and strengthen Policy E5 Open Spaces as part of the Local Development Plan Review.
- Consider replacing ENV categories and using PAN65 typologies used in Audit. This would separate out Green Corridors from Natural/Semi Natural and would mean foreshore is included with Natural/Semi Natural rather than having its own ENV.
- Clear links should be made to the Strategy and the Standards and Guidelines that should be used when making decisions that impact on open space i.e. these should be included/referred to within the criteria that are used to assess if development within an open space could be acceptable and to assess the provision of new open space.
- ENV sites that have not been audited should be reviewed and a description provided of their key qualities and what development opportunities may exist. Similar to the descriptions provided in the tables in the settlement appendices.
- Define "Public Use" to bring this in line with the triggers used for Policy H2 Long Term Housing Designations (LONG) i.e. when the land is required to deliver the key objectives of the Council and its Community Planning Partners.
- As part of preparation of the next Local Development Plan review ENV's designations in line with recommendations in the Settlement Appendices.
- Adverse impacts should be extended to include fragmenting green networks.
- Link policy to relevant Supplementary Guidance – Open Space Strategy, Urban Design Supplementary Guidance.
- Open space identified within planning applications/masterplans over 10 houses to be given interim protection equivalent to ENV status to prevent inappropriate development upon these.



Avoid fragmentation of existing open spaces and encourage creation of green network

Networks of green spaces can help to define the landscape, provide links to the countryside and allow movement of people and wildlife. They can enhance opportunities for physical activity and increase accessibility in and around settlements.

The fragmentation or breaking up of open spaces could break these important links and opportunities to maximise the potential of these networks could be lost.

Action

- Continue to promote connections to green and blue corridors from new open space provision through Policy E5 Open Spaces and Urban Design Supplementary Guidance.
- Develop mapping to identify potential and existing green networks. This information can be used in to develop a green network strategy within the next Open Space Strategy.

Public sector budget pressures have the potential to impact on some aspects of the Strategy. The Strategy and Standards should be used to target available resources to maximise benefits. The Strategy and Audit findings should be used as an evidence base to support external funding bids.



3 OPEN SPACE STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

Identifying and applying standards for open space provision can help to achieve the objectives of the open space strategy and guide provision of open space in new development. The standards set out below are minimum standards for the provision of new open space within settlements and new development. These should be used as a minimum standard and not as a hard and fast rule as other factors must be considered. Other factors such as the character of an area and the overall quality of a place play an important role in decisions relating to open space. Moray has a range of settlements and appropriate provision in one location may be different in another, however these standards provide guidance and a framework to consider provision. The Standards and Guidelines apply to new open space provision but can be used more generally to guide decisions relating to existing open spaces by assessing how decisions would impact on quality, accessibility and quantity.

Key considerations are the quality and accessibility of open space and therefore a standard has been set for these. A guideline has been given for quantity of open space as the accessibility and quality standard overrides the quantity of open space.

3.1 Quality Standard

Making the best use of open space is a key priority to ensure spaces meet their full potential. Quality plays an important role in ensuring spaces are fit for purpose and serving the needs of the community. The aim of the standard is to ensure that new development sites maximise their potential.

All publicly usable open spaces will score good or very good against the quality assessment criteria (see appendix 2)

It is acknowledged that through using the quality assessment it can be difficult to achieve a consistent evaluation as the diversity of space and different assessors make consistency difficult. It should therefore be recognised that the quality assessment is not an absolute measure but should be used to provide an informed common sense approach upon which judgements on the quality of open space can be made.

It should be recognised that quality is not just about a site being well maintained or having good quality equipment but also relates to aspects such as accessibility, biodiversity, functionality, and the community benefits a site offers. Spaces should, wherever possible, be multi-functional to maximise their contribution to quality of place and the benefits they provide to the local community.

The long term maintenance of open space is key to maintaining quality over time. Measures should be put in place to ensure the long term quality of sites so these continue to meet the needs of local communities.

3.2 Accessibility Standard

Open space must be accessible to all users. Accessibility is particularly important in realising the health and wellbeing benefits of open space. The easier a space is to access the more likely it is to be used.

Everyone will live within a five minute walk of a publicly usable space of at least 0.2ha

Generally in urban design, a five minute walk is considered to equate to a distance of 400 metres i.e. from front door to open space. Accessibility is assessed by applying a 400m buffer to network routing using GIS. The size 0.2ha has been used as this size is big enough to accommodate a small kickabout pitch and play equipment. Publicly usable sites are those that are open to the public with free access.



3.3 Quantity Guideline including Playing field Standard

Local Development Plan Policy E5 Open Space sets out the requirements for the quantity of open space within new development. This policy requirement must be met in all new developments. The guideline and standards below will be used to guide the type of provision within the policy requirement. Open space provision is calculated by taking account of all green/open spaces within a development including parks, landscaped areas, SUDS, grass verges etc. Private gardens and roads/streets do not contribute to open space provisions.

Quantity is a consideration in ensuring appropriate provision of open space, although this should not over-ride the importance of good quality or accessible sites. The quantity of open space provision is a useful guide in relation to provision within settlements and to see if there is broad equity across settlements and neighbourhoods. The towns audited in Moray generally had generous amounts of open space overall and this was not generally a limiting factor however it is recognised that within some neighbourhoods/settlements there is less open space or this is restricted to certain typologies.

To arrive at a guideline the audit analysis and the Fields in Trust "six acre standard" have been used.

All settlements should have 2.4ha of publicly usable Public Parks and Gardens, Playspace and Sports Areas per 1,000 people

In addition to the above a standard is set for playing field provision. The standard used reflects that in the Fields in Trust "Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play" published in January 2017.

All settlements must have 1.2ha of playing field provision per 1,000 people.

The Quantity Guideline is restricted to only three typologies but this does not mean that provision is not required for other typologies. The provision of other typologies (Natural/Semi Natural, Green Corridor, Civic, and Amenity) should be driven by the character and identity of a settlement/development, the layout and design of a settlement/development, and the connections that can be made to other open spaces and the countryside.

3.4 Park Hierarchy Guideline

A hierarchy has been developed primarily for the Public Parks and Gardens and Playspace typology.

The hierarchy definitions have been used to classify existing sites and the classification is shown within the tables in the Settlement appendices. Classifying sites into the hierarchy definitions helps to define their role in a settlement and can help to direct funding.

The hierarchy can help to guide provision of open space within new developments. When identifying new provision an assessment should be made of existing provision within neighbouring developments and the settlement (including its accessibility). The information should be used to inform open space provision within new sites and what role this has within the settlement. When applying the definitions consideration should also be given to factors such as location, accessibility, the character of a town or neighbourhood and the size of the settlement.

The definitions within the "Hierarchy" are set out below. A common sense approach should be used to the application of the definitions as consideration is given to the form and function of the space, the contribution it makes to the setting of a development or a town and not just the site size. Definitions have also been provided for Public Gardens and Sports Area and whilst not fitting into the hierarchy these have a role within open space provision of a settlement.



When considering the design, layout, facilities and equipment within parks particular regard must be had to maximising health and wellbeing benefits both physical and mental. This should include consideration of creating opportunities for physical activity and recreation through playingfield provision, providing opportunities for play by providing play equipment and providing areas for relaxation and to take time out for example through providing landscaped areas to sit or sensory gardens.

Public Park

A major parkland with a diverse range of facilities and functions. Mix of formal and informal spaces. Play equipment for a range of ages and facilities for teenagers. Accessible by public transport and path networks. Often accommodating facilities such as toilets, pavilions, and parking. Potential location for community and public events. A distinct destination. More extensive areas but ranging in size from 1.5ha to 25ha. Most settlements, and all settlements with a population over 1,500 should have at least one space performing this function.

In new developments Public Parks should be planned through the preparation of masterplans and should be highly accessible destinations and ideally close to community facilities. They should cater for a range of functions and activities and include both formal and informal areas.

Neighbourhood Park

Parkland area with several functions accessible to a neighbourhood. Variety of play equipment for a range of ages. Opportunities for informal and formal recreation and activities. Ranging in size from over 0.5 ha up to 5ha.

In new development a neighbourhood park must include, as minimum, play equipment for a range of ages, a playing field (60mX40m), formal and informal landscaped areas with seating, and be accessible to the neighbourhood. The park must be a minimum of 1ha.

Pocket Parks

Small parks easily accessible to immediate residential population. Small range of play equipment, usually for younger children. Opportunities for informal recreational and physical activities. Up to 1ha in size. In new development a pocket park must include a minimum of a playspace, a kickabout area (30mX20m) benches and landscaping/planting. The park must be between 0.2 ha and 1ha.

Public Gardens

Formal landscaped gardens which provide places to sit outdoors.

Sports Area

Sole function is for sports /physical activity.



4 HOW THE STRATEGY, STANDARDS & GUIDELINES SHOULD BE USED

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4.1 When making decisions that impact on existing open space including in respect of disposal of open space for alternative uses, new management proposals or proposals to change the function of a space. The following should be considered:

- a) Will the decision impact on site quality?
Use the quality assessment, as if the change had been made, does this alter the quality scoring? Does this reduce quality to a level it would fail the Quality Standard i.e. a poor score?
- b) Will the decision create a gap in open space provision or make an existing gap worse in terms of accessibility?
Use the GIS toolkit to assess the impact on accessibility to open spaces. Does this result in new gaps in provision appearing? Can these be mitigated by improving access to other sites?
- c) Will the decision adversely impact on green corridors and networks and if so how will this be mitigated?"
- d) Will the decision reduce the quantity of open space?
Are there any deficiencies identified within the Settlement Appendix? Will the decision result in provision not meeting the quantity guideline for Public Parks and Gardens, Playspace and Sports Area (or where this is already below reducing if further)? Will the decision result in playing field provision not meeting the quantity standard for playing fields? Will it result in a reduction in other typologies that will impact on the character of an area, placemaking or connections between spaces.
- e) Will the decision alter the role of a site within the Park Hierarchy?
Will the decision diminish the role a site has in the settlement?
- f) Will the decision adversely impact on the key qualities and features of a site as identified in the Audited Sites Summary in the Settlement Appendix?

- g) Consider any site constraints that may restrict the suitability of the site for certain open space functions e.g. Sports pitches in areas of flooding. Take into account relevant planning policies including Policy EP7 Control of Development in Flood Risk Areas.

4.2 When assessing open space provision in new development Applicants, Officers and other decision making bodies must consider the following:

- a) Score the proposed spaces against the quality assessment based on the information available. Is the proposed open space likely to achieve the quality standards and meet planning policy requirements? Has provision been made to ensure the long term maintenance of these spaces?
- b) Does the new development layout mean residents will be within a five minute walk of a publicly usable open space of at least 0.2ha?
Use GIS toolkit to assess accessibility. What % of proposed households would be within a five minute walk of a publicly usable open space of at least 0.2ha?
- c) Is there sufficient quantity of open space?
Does the open space quantity meet the requirement of Policy E5 Open Spaces? Is the quantity guideline for Public Parks and Gardens, Playspace and Sports Areas achieved based on an estimate of the likely increase of the population resulting from the development? Is there sufficient quantity of other typologies proposed to ensure the development reflects the character of the area, sits well within the landscape and makes connections to other open spaces?
- d) What role will the open space provision have within the neighbourhood and settlement?
Does the provision reflect the hierarchy definitions?
- e) Consider any site constraints that may restrict the suitability of the site for certain open space functions e.g. Sports pitches in areas of flooding. Take into account relevant planning policies including Policy EP7 Control of Development in Flood Risk Areas.



4.3 Identifying open space requirements in new developments. Developers and Planning Officers must consider the following:

- a) Establish what the minimum requirements are in terms of the proportion of site that should be open space in line with Policy E5 Open Space. I.e. what percentage of the site must be open space to meet the policy requirements?
- b) Consider existing provision within the neighbourhood and settlement, including accessibility and quality. This assessment should be used to inform open space provision in the new development including the location of open space and its role within the hierarchy taking into account the size and location of the proposed development.
- c) Consider any landscaping or screening requirements either set out within the Local Development Plan or to ensure the development reflects the character of the area and fits into the landscape.
- d) Consider guidance in relation to quality within Policy E5 Open Space and within the Urban Design Supplementary Guidance. Ensure open space meets criteria and would be likely to meet the quality standard.
- e) Ensure access to open space is maximised and meets the Accessibility Standard i.e. all of the new households must be within a five minute walk of an open space of 0.2ha or over.



5 SUMMARY OF OPEN SPACE AUDIT

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5.1 Process

An audit of open space was carried out in summer 2016. An audit of sites was undertaken in Elgin, Forres, Buckie, Keith, Lossiemouth, Aberlour, and Dufftown. Open spaces within these towns were selected for audit purposes based on the following criteria

1. Local Development Plan ENV designations which are publicly usable with free access OR
2. Other sites/areas over 0.2ha identified using Greenspace Scotland mapping within a 500m buffer of the settlement boundary.

Publicly usable sites are those which are open to the public with free access i.e. no restrictions to access are in place. Therefore, fenced off pitches, allotments, bowling greens, most school grounds and sites where entry requires payment are not audited. The following typologies, from Planning Advice Note 65 Planning and Open Space (PAN65), were used to classify each site into a primary typology i.e. the dominant or main uses a site has.

1. Public Parks and Gardens
2. Playspace
3. Sports Area
4. Natural/Semi Natural
5. Green Corridor
6. Civic
7. Amenity

See appendix 1 for typology definitions.

The audit process included a site visit to review the physical aspects of the space and facilities as well as completion of a quality audit. The criteria used to assess quality are those within Greenspace Scotland's "Greenspace Quality – a guide to assessment, planning and strategic development." A copy of the data sheet is included at appendix 2. Quality scores are expressed as a percentage of the total criteria used. Quality is just one consideration when making decisions about open space and the value of a space to the local community and wider landscape is another aspect that must be considered. A poor quality site may be of high value due to other benefits it delivers for example breaking up dense development, connecting to the wider landscape, or making up an important connection to other green infrastructure.

The information collected was then inputted into a database and analysed on both a settlement and overall level. A more detailed summary of the audit findings for each settlement can be found in the appendices.

The accessibility of sites was also analysed using Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Accessibility was assessed by applying a 400m buffer to network routing. The network routing was prepared using existing road and core path data. This gave an indication of the likely 5min walking distance to audited sites and highlighted gaps in provision. Using routing data provide a realistic indication of a 5min walk by taking account of barriers e.g. railway lines, rivers. However, there are gaps in data, particularly in the path network, which may mean a site is more accessible than it appears.

There are limitations to the audit

- Only designated ENV sites or sites over 0.2ha were audited. Therefore, the audit addresses only a limited part of the total open space.
- The audit did not include some pitches or sites which are not readily accessible e.g. fenced off or restricted opening. Therefore, judgements regarding deficits in Sports Area provision are difficult to make.
- It is difficult to achieve consistency across the Quality Assessment due to the range of different sites and the subjectivity of officers. Whilst a review of all assessments has been made to improve consistency it is difficult to provide absolute figures for quality.
- Assessment completed on one day and therefore changes may occur over time. Assessments were generally completed on weekdays within office hours over the summer which could mean there are evening, weekend or seasonal variations have not been taken into consideration.
- The audit only covers seven settlements and has not been a Moray wide assessment due to time constraints.





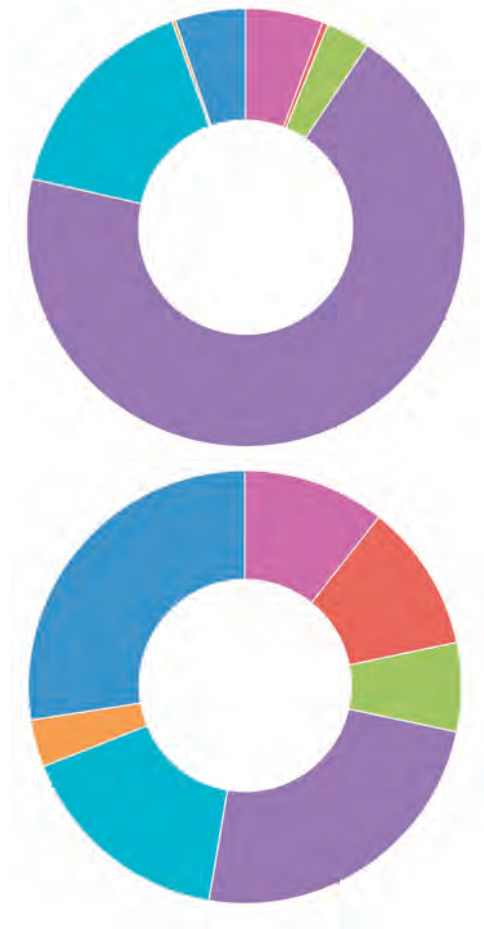
5.2 Audit Findings

The summary of findings below relates to all the sites audited. A summary on a settlement level is contained within the individual settlement appendix. A table summarising some of the findings of all settlements in section 5.3.

5.2.1 Quantity of Open Space and Diversity of Function

The total open space audited was approximately 1632ha over 226 sites. A large proportion of this is woodland and Natural/Semi Natural spaces which lie on the edge of settlements. A primary typology was identified for each site and the analysis below has been completed on primary typology to avoid double counting. Where a site includes a playspace or playingfields this has been identified and measured to allow analysis of these features.

Overall the towns audited have large areas of Natural/Semi Natural open space with this making up almost 70% of the open space in terms of area; however, this only makes up around 25% of the number of sites audited. In terms of area, playspace and civic spaces are low in area but these make a more significant contribution in terms of site numbers.



Area (ha)

- Public Parks and Gardens 93
- Playspace* 7
- Sports Area* 53
- Natural/Semi Natural 1128
- Green Corridor 261
- Civic 4
- Amenity 85
- TOTAL Area (ha) 1633**

Number of sites

- Public Parks and Gardens 24
- Playspace* 25
- Sports Area* 15
- Natural/Semi Natural 55
- Green Corridor 37
- Civic 8
- Amenity 62
- TOTAL Number of sites 226**

*Playspace and playingfields may be found in other typologies, see table overleaf.



Sites may have more than one function and therefore playspaces and playingfields are also found within other typologies. The table below indicates the total number and area of these.

PLAYSPACE

59
Sites

13.51
ha

90%
Sites

**Good or Very Good
quality sites (number)**

PLAYING FIELDS

25
Sites

54.01
ha

83%
Sites

**Good or Very Good
quality sites (number)**

This demonstrates that more sites are used for playspace and playing field than analysis of primary typologies suggests. The area of playingfields appears lower than the overall "Sports Area" typology because in the overall figures the whole site area has been used and not just the playing field. It should be noted that the quality of the sites relates to the whole site and may not be representative of the condition of individual playingfields or play equipment.

The open space per household /per 1,000 people has been calculated by dividing the open space provision by the number of households in a town or by its population. Household numbers were identified using address data and the population figures are based on the census figures. A figure that excludes the Natural/Semi Natural typology has been provided as the high level of space in this typology skew the figures. However, this typology is key to providing the character and setting to many towns as well as providing opportunities for walking and cycling.

	Total land audited	Audited land excluding Natural /Semi Natural
Open Space per household	584.48 m ²	180.63 m ²
Open Space per 1,000 people	28.89 ha	8.93 ha

It is difficult to bench mark the quantity of open space against other authorities particularly as many of the Moray towns audited are blessed with large woodlands on their boundary. Reviewing the Open Space Strategies of other authorities the standards set vary generally between 4ha and 6 ha per 1,000 people and applying this standard to Moray the amount of open space audited would exceed these standards. Whilst this would give the impression of a surplus of open space consideration has to be given to the value the sites provide to the character and identity of Moray. In particular our Natural/Semi Natural spaces, which include woodland and coastal sites, which are an important part of the identity of Moray and what make it an attractive place to live, work and visit.

Fields in Trust, formerly operating as the National Playing Field Association made recommendations on planning for outdoor sport and children's play. This became known as the "6 acre standard". Fields in Trust recommends a minimum standard for outdoor playing space of *2.4 hectares (6 acres) for 1,000 people*. This standard only applies to Public Parks and Gardens, Playspace and Sports Area. Comparing the audit data for these typologies shows that overall Moray is achieving the standard but not exceeding it excessively.

Breaking down by typology highlights that there are relatively healthy levels of provision across typologies with the exception of the playspace which is relatively low. The Sports Areas/Playing fields also appears low but it should be noted that this may not be representative as some sites were not audited as they were not accessible either due to booking requirements or within school grounds.



Type of Open Space	Ha per 1,000		Six Acre Standard
Public Parks and Gardens	1.65 ha	2.72ha	2.42 ha
Playspace	0.13 ha		
(Playspace in other typologies)	(13.51)		
Sports Area	0.94 ha		
(Playing fields)	0.62 ha		
Natural/Semi Natural	19.96 ha		
Green Corridor	4.63 ha		
Civic	0.07 ha		
Amenity	1.51 ha		

5.2.2 Quality

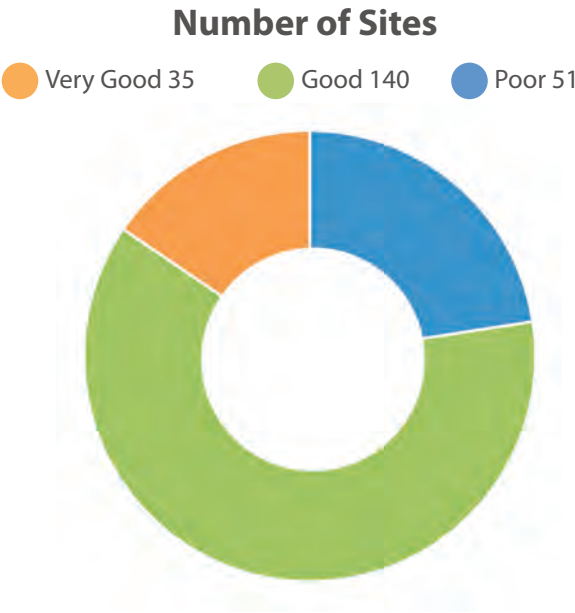
The quality of each site audited was assessed using the criteria set out within Greenspace Scotland’s guidance “Greenspace Quality – a guide to assessment, planning and strategic development.” This scored each site with the overall score expressed as a percentage of the maximum score that could be achieved. The scoring was then banded as follows:-

- Very Good - Over 75%
- Good - 50% to 74%
- Poor - Under 50%

Quality should not be confused with the value of a site. The quality assessment considers how accessible and well-connected a site is, how attractive and appealing a site is, how the biodiversity supports ecological networks, the extent to which the space supports health and wellbeing and the levels of community support/involvement. However, the value of the site relates to the context of the site, its value to the community and its importance to the wider environment and landscape. Therefore, a low quality site could have a high value for example if it is a strategic connection between open space and development, it is an important setting for development or it used by the community for events.

As discussed in section 5.1 it is difficult to achieve consistency across the quality assessment due to the large variety of sites audited and the subjectivity of different officers. Therefore, the quality scoring should be seen as an informed evaluation of quality against defined criteria and a common sense approach should be used to the assessment.

Analysis of the audit findings show that over 77% of the sites audited are of good quality or above.

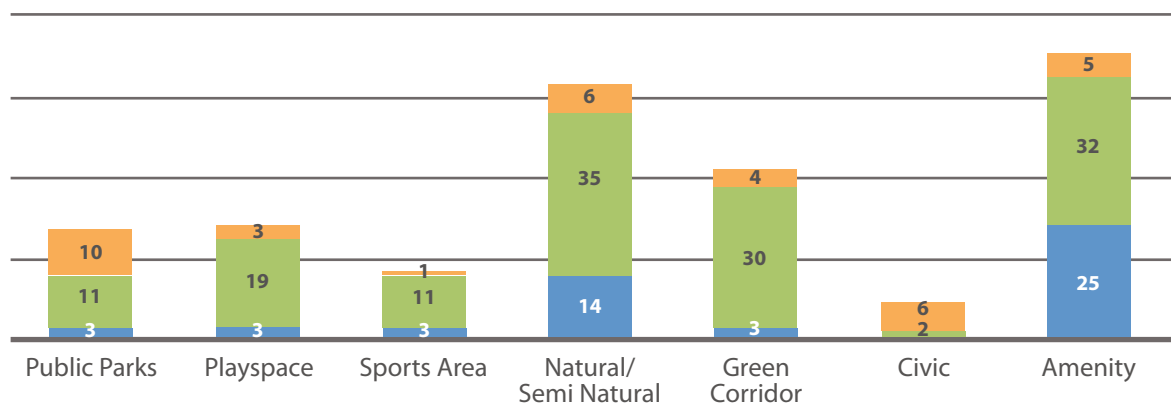


This can be broken down by typology, which shows that the proportion of poor sites within the Amenity and Natural/Semi Natural typology are the greatest. Review of assessments show these sites tended to score poorly when they lacked any clear function or where poor accessibility limited their use.

Public Parks and Gardens tended to score more highly due to their multi functionality and good accessibility. Green Corridors which offered good active travel and path connections also tended to score well.

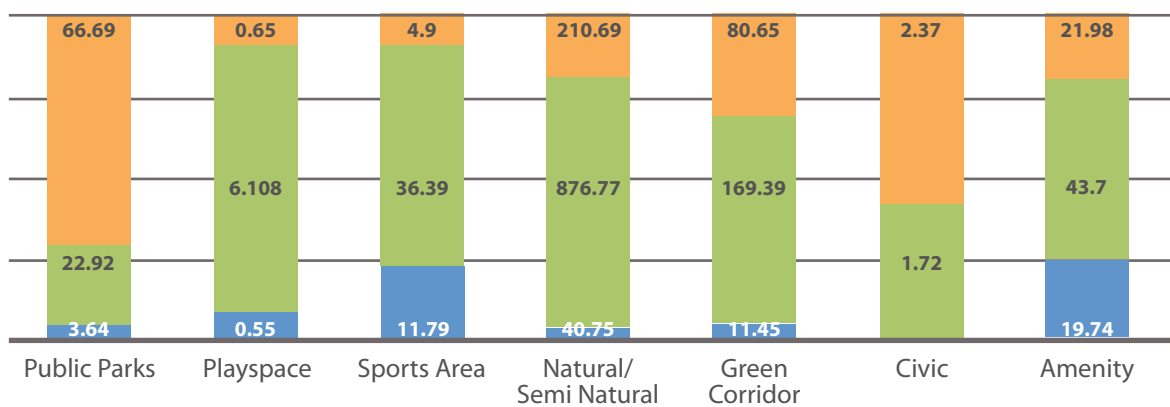


Quality by Typology - Site Numbers



Whilst the proportion of the number of poor sites is relatively high, 22%, the area that is classed as poor makes up only 5% of the total audited area. This can be seen in the figure below.

Quality by Typology - Area (ha)



● Very Good
 ● Good
 ● Poor



Proportionally the poor sites make up the least amount of area in each typology. Generally “good” sites make up the greatest area of each typology. Public Parks and Gardens tended to score very well due to their multi functionality and good accessibility. Similarly Civic spaces tended to score well due to their high accessibility and the contribution these make to the identity and character of a settlement. More detailed consideration is given to the poor sites and potential actions to improve them within the Settlement Appendices.

5.2.3 Accessibility

The accessibility of sites was assessed using GIS by applying a 400m buffer to network routing using GIS and calculating the number of households within the buffer area. The network routing was prepared using existing roads and core path data to give an indication of the likely five minute walking distance to audited sites.

Overall 94% of households in all the towns audited were within 400m of an audited site. Similarly 92% of households in all the towns audited were within 400m of a good or very good quality site.

Approximately 75% of households are within 400m of a Public Park and Garden, Playspace or Sports Area (or other site containing these functions). Approximately 71% of households are within 400m of a good or very good Public Park and Garden, Playspace or Sports Area (or other sites containing these functions).

The gaps in provision are identified and discussed in more detail in the individual settlement appendices.

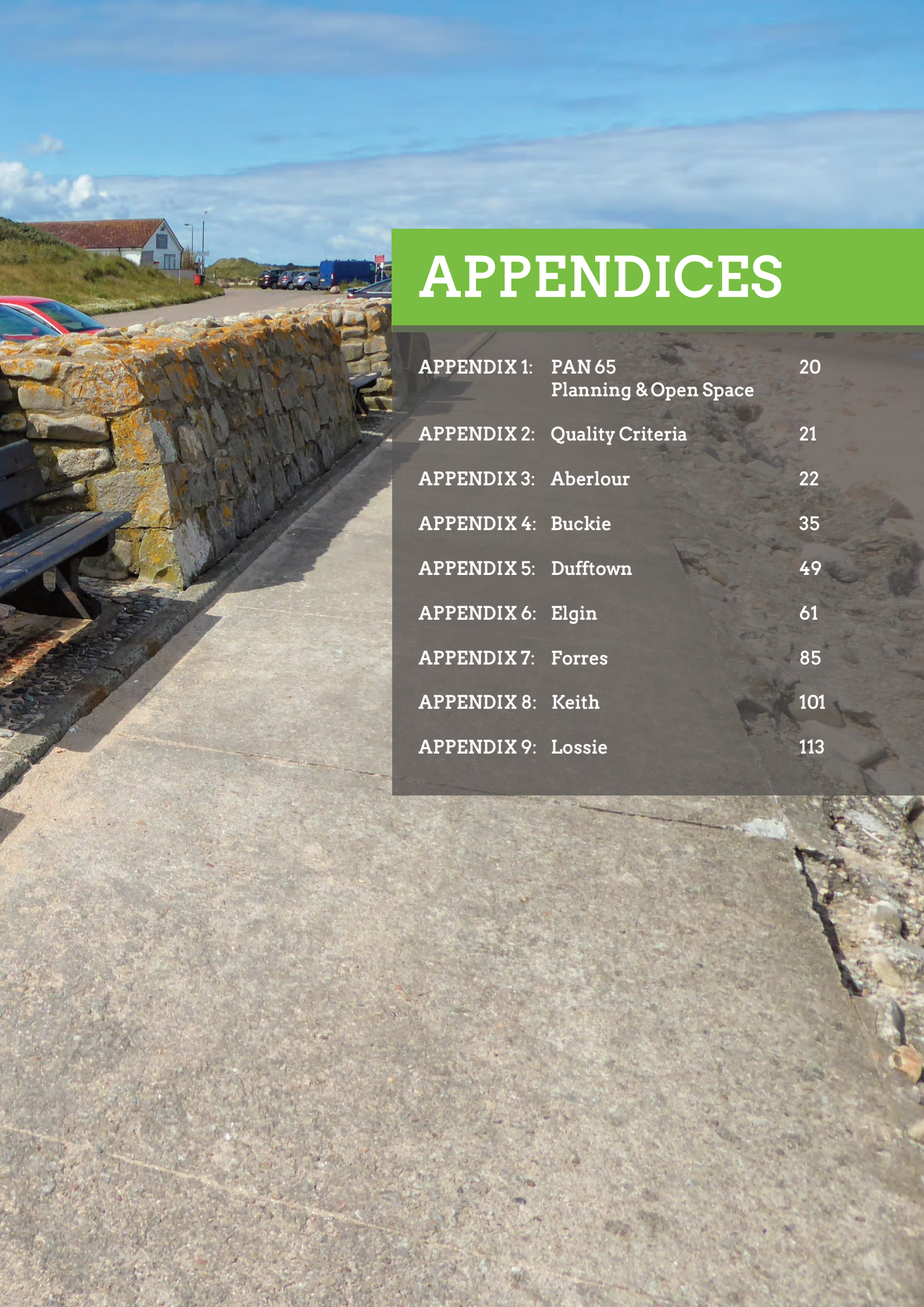


5.3 Settlement Summary

The table below provides a summary of audit findings across settlements. A more detailed analysis can be found in the Settlement Appendices.

		Moray	Aberlour	Buckie	Dufftown	Elgin	Forres	Keith	Lossiemouth
Quantity of space per 1,000 (ha)	Overall	28.89	45.82	11.43	17.47	35.46	35.08	20.16	25
	Public Parks	1.65	3.03	1.65	1.41	1.54	3.3	1.49	0.26
	Playspace	0.13	0.15	0.24	0.10	0.27	0.12	0.17	0.12
	Sports Area	0.94	2.04	0.94	0.49	0.89	0.53	1.46	1.51
	Natural/Semi Natural	19.96	34.03	19.96	14.07	26.05	22.74	9.88	21.35
	Green Corridor	4.63	2.34	4.63	0	5.84	4.77	6.25	0.71
	Civic	0.07	0.09	0.07	0.44	0.03	0	0.02	0.26
Quality	Amenity	1.51	4.26	1.51	1.55	0.92	3.63	1.05	0.84
	% of good and very good sites (Numbers)	77%	79%	86%	67%	82%	62%	78%	79%
	% of good and very good site (Area)	95%	97.5%	98%	78%	96%	93%	95%	91%
Accessibility	% of household within 400m of an open space over 0.2ha	94%	92%	97%	96%	92%	98%	89%	96%
	% of household within 400m of a Public Park, Playspace or Sports Area of good or very good quality	71%	85%	51%	76%	71%	81%	67%	84%





APPENDICES

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APPENDIX 1 - PAN 65 PLANNING & OPEN SPACE

Type of open space with description as set out in PAN 65 Planning and Open Space.

Type	Description
Public parks and gardens	Areas of land normally enclosed, designed, constructed, managed and maintained as a public park or garden. These may be owned or managed by community groups.
Amenity greenspace	Landscaped areas providing visual amenity or separating different buildings or land uses for environmental, visual or safety reasons and used for a variety of informal or social activities such as sunbathing, picnics or kickabouts.
Playspace for children and teenagers	Areas providing safe and accessible opportunities for children's play, usually linked to housing areas.
Sports areas	Large and generally flat areas of grassland or specially designed surfaces, used primarily for designated sports (including playing fields, golf courses, tennis courts and bowling greens) and which are generally bookable.
Green corridors	Routes including canals, river corridors and old railway lines, linking different areas within a town or city as part of a designated and managed network and used for walking, cycling or horse riding, or linking towns and cities to their surrounding countryside or country parks. These may link green spaces together.
Natural/semi-natural greenspaces	Areas of undeveloped or previously developed land with residual natural habitats or which have been planted or colonised by vegetation and wildlife, including woodland and wetland areas.
Civic space	Squares, streets and waterfront promenades, predominantly of hard landscaping that provide a focus for pedestrian activity and can make connections for people and for wildlife.



APPENDIX 2 QUALITY CRITERIA

The criteria below were used to assess site quality. Each criterion relevant to the site was scored out of 5 with overall scores expressed as a percentage of the total criteria used.

Accessible and Well Connected

- Well located close to a community
- Meets DDA requirements and disabled user needs
- Provide surfaced, high quality paths
- Connects with other transport modes
- Allows movement in and between places
- Accessible entrances in the right places
- Offers connecting path network and signage

Attractive and Appealing Places

- Attractive with positive image
- Attractive setting for urban areas
- Quality materials, equipment and furniture
- Attractive plants and landscape elements
- Welcoming boundaries and entrance areas
- Facilities in clean safe usable condition
- Low levels of litter and adequate bins
- Well maintained

Biodiverse supporting ecological networks

- Contribute positively to biodiversity
- Large enough to sustain wildlife populations
- Offers a diversity of habitats
- Part of wider landscape structure and setting
- Connects with wider green networks
- Balance between habitat protection and access
- Resource efficient

Active supporting health and well being

- Provides places for a range of outdoor activities
- Diverse play, sport, and recreational opportunities
- Providing places for social interaction
- Appropriate high quality facilities meeting needs
- Appropriate facilities for location and size
- Carefully sited facilities for a range of ages
- Adaptable to changing needs

Community Supported

- Safe and welcoming
- Good levels of natural surveillance
- No evidence of anti-social behaviour
- Appropriate lighting levels
- Sense of local identity and place
- Good routes to wider community facilities
- Distinctive and memorable places
- Catering for a range of functions and activities
- Community involvement in management

Policy E5 Open Space – Quality

The following quality criteria are set out in Policy E5 Open Space and are highlighted here for reference.

- New green spaces should be overlooked by buildings with active frontages
- Well positioned, multi functional and easily accessible
- Well connected to adjacent green and blue corridors, public transport and neighbourhood facilities
- Safe, inclusive and welcoming
- Well maintained and performing an identified function
- Support the principles of Placemaking policy PP3.

