

Swindon Open Space Assessment



(FINAL SEPTEMBER 2026)

Ecology | Green Space | Community | GIS

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Swindon Open Space Assessment (2026)

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Glossary of Terms

Term	Meaning
AGS	Accessible Green Space
ANGS	Accessible Natural Green Space
APIB	Areas of Particular Importance to Biodiversity (a LNRS designation)
BNG	Biodiversity Net Gain
CIL	Community Infrastructure Levy
COP	Conference of the Parties
EDP	Environmental Delivery Plan
EIP	Environmental Improvement Plan
FIT	Fields In Trust (originally known as the 'National Playing Fields Association')
GBF	Global Biodiversity Framework
GI	Green Infrastructure
GBI	Green and Blue Infrastructure
GIS	Geographic Information System
IMD	Index of Multiple Deprivation
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
LAP	Local Area for Play
LEAP	Local Equipped Area for Play
LNRS	Local Nature Recovery Strategy
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
LSOA	Lower-layer Super Output Areas
MENE	Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment
MUGA	Multi Use Games Area
NEAP	Neighbourhood Equipped Play Area
NEWP	Natural Environment White Paper
NGB	National Governing Body
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NPPG	National Planning Practice Guidance
NRN	Nature Recovery Network
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PPG17	Planning Policy Guidance Note 17
PPS	Playing Pitch Strategy
SAM	Scheduled Ancient Monument
SBC	Swindon Borough Council
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document
TPA	The Parks Alliance
UGF	Urban Greening Factor

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

This Open Space Assessment has been undertaken by Ethos Environmental Planning (Ethos) to provide Swindon Borough Council with a robust and up-to-date evidence base on open space, to inform the content and direction of the new Local Plan, planning decisions, and wider council priorities around biodiversity, health and climate. The assessment has been carried out in line with Planning Practice Guidance Note 17 (PPG17) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The focus of the assessment is on publicly accessible open space with a recreation function including parks and gardens, amenity green space, natural and semi-natural green space, play space (Local Areas of Play (LAP), Local Equipped Areas of Play (LEAP) and Neighbourhood Equipped Areas of Play (NEAP)) and allotments, orchards and community grow spaces. Playing pitches are excluded, as these are covered separately by the Playing Pitch Strategy (2025).

Methodology

The assessment follows the key steps set out in the former guidance provided in '*Planning Policy Guidance Note 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation*', and its Companion Guide '*Assessing Needs and Opportunities*', which is a tried and tested methodology and takes a consistent approach with many other local authorities¹.

- **Step 1:** Identify Local Needs – review of the council's resident survey and feedback map along with the policy/strategy review. (Sections 3 and 4).
- **Step 2:** Audit Local provision – desktop mapping of open space (categorised by primary typology) and site visits to assess quality (Section 5).
- **Step 3:** Set Provision Standards – quantity, quality and access standards have been justified, informed by steps 1 and 2 (Section 6).
- **Step 4:** Apply the Provision Standards – the recommended standards have been applied to highlight any areas of shortfall/deficiency. The results are presented in a series of tables and maps (Section 7).
- **Step 5:** Draft Policies/Recommendations – strategic policy recommendations to guide planning policy and decision making, including information on developer contributions (Section 8).

¹ Although Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG 17) has been omitted from the NPPF, it has not been replaced and there is still a clear reference made to the principles and ideology established within PPG17.

Identify local needs

The policy and strategy review highlights the importance of high quality and accessible open space in contributing to various priorities including health and wellbeing, biodiversity and nature recovery, and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Consultation was conducted by Swindon Borough Council between April - May 2025, comprising an online survey and a feedback map. A total of 574 residents responded, with one further response received by email. Findings are summarised in Section 4 of this report and have been used to inform the development of local standards in Section 6.

Audit of open space provision

In order to build up an accurate picture of current publicly accessible open space provision, sites were categorised into primary typologies aligned with Fields in Trust (FiT) guidance, building on the Council's own 2025 desktop GIS audit and updated through site visits by Ethos.

Typologies mapped with standards	Typologies mapped but no standards
- Allotments, orchards and community grow spaces - Amenity Green Space (>0.1ha) - Parks and Gardens - Play Space (LAP, LEAP and NEAP) - Natural and Semi Natural Green Space	- Outdoor Sport - Churchyards and Cemeteries - Green Corridors

Quality audits (site visits) were undertaken by Ethos in May 2026 at a sample of 226 open spaces, drawing on Green Flag Award criteria, which also allowed open space typologies and boundaries to be checked. The final mapping, signed off by the Council in June 2026, underpins this assessment, and has been provided to the Council as a GIS database (summary maps are also provided in Appendices 1-5 of this report).

The wider value of each open space has also been assessed using a number of desktop criteria.

Summary of recommended standards

Minimum standards have been developed to analyse existing provision, identify shortfalls or surpluses, and inform requirements from new development. As with the previous approach, the starting point for developments of a certain size (see Section 8.7 and Table 28) is on-site provision in line with the quantity standards below; however, the priority for new development is informed by the existing supply, access and quality of open space in the vicinity (see decision-making flow charts at Figures 27 and 28).

A quality assessment of 226 open spaces has also been completed, categorising sites into poor, fair, good or excellent, with quality recommendations made to guide future provision through new development.

The table below provides a summary of the recommended quantity and access standards.

Table 1 Summary of open space quantity and access standards

Typology	Quantity standards (ha/1000 population)	Access standard
Allotments, orchards and community grow spaces	0.3	15 minutes' walk time (720m straight line)
Amenity Green Space (sites above 0.1 ha)	0.7	10 minutes' walk time (480m straight line)
Parks and Gardens	0.8	15 minutes' walk time (720m straight line)
Play Space (LAP, LEAP and NEAP)	0.3	LAP – 5 minutes' walk time LEAP – 10 minutes' walk time NEAP – 15 minutes' walk time
Natural and Semi Natural Green Space	1.45	15 minutes' walk time (720m straight line) and Natural England's Accessible Green Space Standards.
Total for new provision (ha/1000 population)	3.55	

Application of standards

Quantity

At the study area level there is sufficient supply of amenity green space, parks and gardens and natural and semi-natural green space, but shortfalls in allotments, orchards and community grow spaces and play space. There is considerable variation at ward level with almost every ward, with the exception of South Marston, having a shortfall in play space, and natural and semi-natural green space ranges from surpluses of over 50ha in some wards to shortfalls of more than 10ha in others. This highlights the general need to protect and improve the provision of open space across the borough.

Access

The picture on access varies significantly by typology and ward. Access to amenity green space and Neighbourhood Equipped Areas of Play is generally good across urban Swindon, while access to Local Areas of Play is generally poor across the study area as a whole. Access to parks and gardens is good across most urban areas, and access across the rural parts of the borough is consistently poorer for parks, allotments and play space than in the urban area.

Quality

The majority of open spaces audited were assessed as being of excellent (39%) or good (41%) quality, with 17% assessed as fair and 3% as poor. However, a notable proportion of sites rated good or excellent still scored poorly against at least one individual criterion, particularly amenity green space, Local Areas of Play and Neighbourhood Equipped Areas of Play. This highlights a need to improve the quality of open space across the study area, in order to optimise the benefits provided to people, nature and the environment.

Policy Recommendations

The strategic options address the following key areas:

1. **Existing provision to be protected (Section 8.2)** - The starting point is that all open space will be protected, unless it can be demonstrated that it is surplus to requirements. With shortfalls identified in at least two typologies in every ward, priority is placed on protecting open spaces where there are existing shortfalls against the quantity and/or access standards, and those which have scored highly in the quality and/or value assessment.
 2. **Existing provision to be enhanced (Section 8.3)** - where new housing development is proposed and on-site open space is not required or practicable, priority should be given to improving existing open spaces nearby, particularly those identified as poor or fair in the quality audit.
 3. **Opportunities for re-location/re-designation of open space (Section 8.4)** - in some areas it may be possible to make better use of land by relocating or upgrading an open space, for example upgrading an amenity green space to a park and garden where there is a shortfall in parks but good supply of amenity green space.
 4. **Identification of areas for new provision (Section 8.5)** - New provision will be required where there is a new development and a planned increase in population, and/or an existing deficiency in supply or access to facilities exists. The decision-making flow chart at Figure 26 provides detailed guidance.
 5. **Facilities that may be surplus to requirement (Section 8.6)** - There are important issues to resolve in terms of striking the correct balance of open space across the study area before any disposal can be contemplated. The decision-making flow chart at Figure 27 provides detailed guidance.
 6. **Developer contributions (Section 8.7)** – this section sets out capital and maintenance costs for open space provision, eligible types of development for on-site provision, and thresholds for on-site/off-site provision.
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This Open Space Assessment has been undertaken by Ethos Environmental Planning (Ethos) to inform Swindon Borough Council's (SBC's) plan-making and decision-making processes in relation to open space provision. It provides an up-to-date and robust evidence base to inform the content and direction ahead of the new Local Plan. As well as informing planning decisions in relation to open space, it will also feed into and support wider council priorities around biodiversity, health, climate, and management of open space.

Access to high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation is important for the health and well-being of communities and can deliver wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires local planning authorities to set out local standards and policies to enable communities to access high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation. This assessment has been undertaken in accordance with the NPPF (December 2024) which requires that policies must be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate².

High quality, multifunctional open spaces play an important role in helping to tackle the current climate and ecological emergencies, responding to positive place-making and in supporting the health and wellbeing of Swindon's residents, as part of the city's green and blue infrastructure (GBI) network. The Covid 19 pandemic has further highlighted the importance of access to high-quality open spaces, and also the inequalities in access, which are linked to poor health outcomes.

Although Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17) has been withdrawn, its core principles continue to be reflected in national policy and guidance. Accordingly, this assessment adopts the established methodology set out in *Planning Policy Guidance Note 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation* and its companion guide, *Assessing Needs and Opportunities*, providing a robust and consistent approach that remains widely used by local planning authorities.

1.2 Purpose and scope of this report

²This report was produced before the current NPPF (August 2026) was published. The August 2026 NPPF places greater emphasis on developing locally appropriate standards informed by national standards, best practice and local evidence. Unlike the December 2024 NPPF, it does not explicitly require planning policies to be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of. Nevertheless, the requirement to tailor standards to local circumstances and evidence indicates that an appropriate evidence base remains necessary to inform policy.

The overall aims of the open space assessment are to provide a robust and up-to-date evidence base to support the new Local Plan and assist in the determination of planning applications and decision making in regard to open space planning and management.

The NPPF defines open space as ‘All open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity’.

The focus of the assessment is on publicly accessible open space which has a recreation function - parks and gardens, amenity green spaces, natural and semi natural green spaces, play spaces (LAP, LEAP and NEAP) and also allotments, orchards and community growing spaces³. The assessment does not include playing pitches, which is covered in a separately Playing Pitch Strategy (2025).

The Assessment meets the following requirements set out in the project brief:

- Review of existing open space policies and strategies.
- Assessing the existing open spaces in relation to their quantity, quality, value and accessibility.
- Making recommendations over future standards of provision within the Borough (in terms of quantity, quality, value and accessibility) in accordance with relevant guidance and consultation outcomes.
- Identifying deficiencies in existing provision in relation to quantity, quality, value and accessibility.

1.3 Structure of the report

The assessment follows five key stages as summarised below:

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

1.4 The Study Area

1.4.1 Overview

³ Although allotments are generally not freely accessible, they form an important part of open space provision.



Figure 1 Lydiard Country Park

Swindon is a unitary authority located in the north-east of Wiltshire, home to over 230,000 residents. The borough has experienced population growth that has outpaced the national average over the past decade, with people relocating to the area. Its origins as a major economic centre trace back to 1843, when Brunel's Great Western Railway transformed it from a small market town into what became the world's largest railway works; since then, the town has continued to diversify and was one of the fastest-growing towns in post-war Europe.

Today, Swindon benefits from strong transport links via the M4 corridor and rail connections, competitive house prices, and access to green spaces and surrounding countryside, all of which continue to attract new residents and businesses. The borough celebrates its diversity and is home to a range of ethnic and religious communities, with strong volunteering and community involvement. Prosperity is not evenly spread, however: some areas face notable disadvantage, disparities in life expectancy and education outcomes persist, and a shortage of higher-skilled recruits is seen as a barrier to further economic growth. The town centre, like many across the UK, is also adapting away from a retail-dominated model toward a mix of homes, workspace, and leisure.

Swindon Borough consists of a compact urban core with a landscape of considerable variety with eight Landscape Character Areas spanning the borough. This includes the flat, water meadow rich Thames Valley in the north, the chalk hills of the Downs in the south, and North Wessex Downs National Landscape which covers the majority of the urban area. This landscape supports a range of priority habitats including deciduous woodland, lowland calcareous grassland, fens, meadows and a range of protected sites including SSSIs and Local Nature Reserves. Blue infrastructure threads through this network via the River Ray, River

Cole and the former Wilts and Berks Canal which is being restored in the west of the borough.

In terms of open space, the borough has five Country Parks (Moulden Hill, Lydiard Park, Stanton Park, Coate Water and Barbury Castle), supplemented by woodlands, linear parks, recreation grounds and traditional formal parks

1.4.2 Administrative Boundaries

In order to analyse the current provision and future requirements for open space across the study area, the following geographical areas have been used (see Figure 2):

- The study area (the borough boundary); and
 - Ward boundaries (as of May 2026, provided by the Council)
-



Figure 2 Study area

1.4.3 Population Statistics

The Council provided population estimates⁴ for each of the wards, which align with new ward boundaries. These areas have been used as the basis for much of the current and future assessment of need for open space.

The population of the study area is 243,875. The breakdown by ward is provided in the table below.

Table 2 Population figures by ward

Ward	Population
Badbury Park, Eldene & Liden	11,625
Blunsdon	3,571
Broadgreen	8,704
Chiseldon & Ridgeway	5,925
Covingham & Nythe	8,458
Gorse Hill	4,912
Haydon Wick	12,330
Highworth	8,447
Kingshill	8,184
Lower Stratton	12,053
Lydiard, Freshbrook & Toothill	13,617
Old Town & Lawn	14,181
Parks	10,783
Penhill & Pinehurst	11,051
Priory Vale	13,128
Queen's Park	13,828
Rodbourne Cheney	8,423
Rodbourne Ferndale & Western	14,043
Shaw & Westlea	12,962
South Marston	934
St Andrews East	9,203
St Andrews West & Tadpole	12,183
Upper Stratton	8,121
Walcot	8,207
Wroughton & Wichelstowe	9,002

⁴ Produced internally by SBC

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 General

The Open Space Assessment has been undertaken in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), including the December 2024 version (Section 8) and the December 2025 Draft (Section 16). Although Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17) has been withdrawn, its core principles continue to be reflected in national policy and guidance. Accordingly, this assessment adopts the established methodology set out in *Planning Policy Guidance Note 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation* and its companion guide, *Assessing Needs and Opportunities*, providing a robust and consistent approach that remains widely used by local planning authorities.

PPG17 placed a requirement on local authorities to undertake assessments and audits of open space, sports and recreational facilities in order to:

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

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

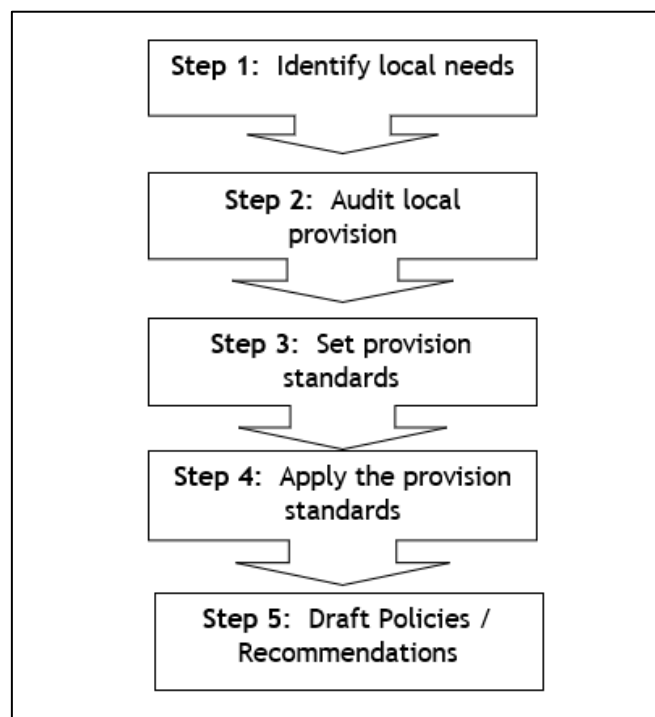


Figure 3 Summary of methodology

Within this overall approach the Companion Guide suggests a range of methods and techniques that might be adopted in helping the assessment process. Where appropriate,

these methods and techniques have been employed within this study and are explained at the relevant point in the report. In addition, they are summarised in the paragraphs below.

2.2 Identifying Local Need (Step 1)

Local need for open space and recreational opportunities has been identified through a resident's survey commissioned and undertaken by the council in April - May 2025 using an online survey platform. The survey examined resident's use of and satisfaction with open spaces. No further public consultation was carried out as part of this commission by Ethos. Key findings of the survey has been reviewed by Ethos and are summarised at Section 4.0 and have been used to inform the development of the standards set out in Section 6.

2.3 Audit of Existing Open Space Assets (Step 2)

2.3.1 Desk-Based GIS Mapping

In Autumn 2024, prior to this commission, Swindon Borough Council undertook a desk-based GIS audit of open space across the borough. This updated the Council's existing open space dataset including the addition of new open spaces and typologies not previously recognised as providing open space functionality, such as cemeteries. Open spaces were categorised in line with Fields in Trust (FiT) typologies drawing on Ordnance Survey mapping, Open Street Map sources and planning application data.

2.3.2 Quality Audits

Ethos undertook quality audits (site visits) during May 2026 at a sample of 254 sites⁵. The quality audit drew on criteria set out in the 'Green Flag Award'⁶. The audits were undertaken using a standardised methodology and consistent approach; however, audits of this nature can only ever be a snapshot in time and their main purpose is to provide a consistent and objective assessment of a site's existing quality rather than a full asset audit.

The site visits also allowed the open space typologies and boundaries to be checked and reviewed, and several amendments were made to the desktop mapping, which were signed off by the council in June 2026 (as the final mapping layer that underpins this assessment).

The wider value of each open space has also been assessed using a number of desktop criteria. Further detail regarding the methodology and the results of the quality and value assessment is provided in Section 7.4 and 7.5.

2.3.4 Approach to mapping

⁵ As not all sites were quality audited e.g. education sites, private sports grounds. There were also a small number of sites that were identified for a quality audit at the desktop mapping stage, but the site visit revealed the site not to be open space.

⁶ <http://www.greenflagaward.org.uk/judges/judging-criteria>

Following the quality audits, sites were mapped into their primary typologies using a multi-functional approach to mapping (explained in further detail in Section 5).

Where open spaces cross a ward boundary, in order to calculate the quantity of open space by ward, these have been split using the ward boundary. This means that there is no double counting of the quantity of sites that fall in more than one ward.

It should be noted that the typologies mapping is as accurate as possible (as of June 2026) following the site visits and liaison with the council.

The open space provision tables (in Section 5) and resulting supply and access maps (Section 7) are based on the mapping of open space which was signed off by the Council in June 2026. Open space provision maps by ward are provided in Appendix 1.

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

Local open space provision standards have been set for the borough (in agreement with the project team), with three components, embracing:

- quantity;
- accessibility; and
- quality.

Quantity

The GIS database and mapping has been used to assess the existing provision of open space across the borough. The existing levels of provision are considered alongside findings of previous studies, the local needs assessment and consideration of existing and national standards or benchmarks. The key to developing robust local quantity standards is that they are locally derived, based on evidence and most importantly, achievable. Typically, standards are expressed as hectares per 1,000 population. The recommended standards are then used to assess the supply of each type of open space across the borough.

Access

Evidence from previous studies, the needs assessment and consideration of national benchmarks are used to develop access standards for open space. A series of maps assessing access for different typologies are presented in this report. The maps are intended to be indicative, and more detailed maps by ward are provided in Appendix 2. The maps show walk time buffers and straight-line buffers, depending on the access standards set⁷.

Straight-line walking distances do not account for potential 'barriers', such as busy roads, rail lines, cul-de-sacs etc. So, the actual route walked (the pedestrian route) is generally further

⁷ Drive-time standards have not been proposed as these are normally only appropriate for strategic sites such as sports hub sites. Drive-time standards generally do not work well for analysing access to local facilities/open space, as they do not generally show where the gaps in access are.

i.e., straight-line distances are around 60% of actual distances. The standard walk-time and straight-line/pedestrian route distances are illustrated in the table below as a guide.

Table 3 Standard walk-times and distances

Walk-time (minutes)	Pedestrian Route (metres)	Straight-line (metres)
1	100	60
2	160	96
3	240	144
4	320	192
5	400	240
6	480	288
7	560	336
8	640	384
9	720	432
10	800	480
11	880	528
12	960	576
13	1040	624
14	1120	672
15	1200	720
16	1280	768
17	1360	816
18	1440	864
19	1520	912
20	1600	960

Quality

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

This section also considers the wider value of open space in the borough, using a number of measurable desktop criteria.

2.5 Drafting Policy Recommendations (Step 5)

This section outlines higher level strategic options which may be applicable at ward and borough-wide level. The strategic options address five key areas:

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

In addition, information on developer contributions and the methodology for calculating costs for the provision and maintenance of open space is provided in Section 8.

3.0 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

3.1 Introduction

This section sets out a brief review of the most relevant national, regional, and local policies, strategies, and legislation of relevance to the study which have been considered in developing the methodology and findings of the assessment. Policies and strategies are subject to regular change; therefore, the summary provided in this section was correct at the time of writing. Swindon Borough Council reserve the right to change and update this section as policies change.

It also provides important contextual information regarding health and deprivation.

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

3.2 Strategic Context

3.2.1 National Strategic Context

Tackling the climate and nature emergency

Climate change represents an urgent and potentially irreversible threat to human societies and the planet. In recognition of this, the overwhelming majority of countries around the world adopted the Paris Agreement in December 2015, the central aim of which includes pursuing efforts to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C. The **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) Synthesis Report (2023)** provides the most up-to-date scientific consensus on this threat, concluding that global warming is very likely to exceed 1.5°C during the twenty-first century on current emissions trajectories, and that keeping the Paris Agreement goal within reach requires deep, rapid, and sustained cuts to emissions across all sectors this decade. The IPCC has set out that the world needs to peak greenhouse gas emissions before 2025 at the very latest, reduce emissions by close to half by 2030, and reach net-zero CO2 emissions around mid-century.

The State of Nature Report (2019 and 2023) and **The Global Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Report (2019)** show the degradation and deterioration of natural environments and ecosystems which all life depends, the loss of biodiversity and a knock-on impact on human existence. Climate change, agricultural management, hydrological change, urbanisation, pollution, woodland

management, and invasive non-native species as among the most significant of pressures on our wildlife.

The climate and nature emergency are inextricably linked. Biodiversity underpins healthy ecosystems that are able to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change, however climate change is driving declines in biodiversity, and the degradation of our ecosystems, which means we are less able to adapt to change.

The **UK government declaration of an environment and climate emergency** in May 2019 has put climate and the environment at the centre of government policy. The government has since made a legally binding commitment to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 (through the Climate Change Act 2008, as amended in 2019), and has committed to planting 30,000 hectares of trees annually by 2025 (through the England Tree Strategy), helping to form part of the green recovery from Covid-19 and support the transition to net zero. At the 2022 Biodiversity Conference of the Parties (COP 15) the Government joined the international commitment to protecting 30 per cent of land and sea for nature by 2030 (the '30 by 30' target). The protected sites network and emerging local nature recovery networks are key to achieving this ambitious target.

Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025

The proposals in the *Planning Reform Working Paper: Development and Nature Recovery* (December 2024) have since been enacted. The Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 received Royal Assent on 18 December 2025 and came into force the same day.

Part 3 of the Act puts the working paper's approach into law through two mechanisms: Environmental Delivery Plans (EDPs), prepared by Natural England, which identify and deliver conservation measures for development's impacts on protected sites or species at a strategic, landscape scale rather than project by project; and a Nature Restoration Levy, paid into a Nature Restoration Fund, which developers can use instead of providing their own site-specific mitigation for issues an EDP covers. This does not create new environmental requirements, only an alternative route to meeting existing ones.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024)

The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how they should be applied. The NPPF must be adhered to in the preparation of local and neighbourhood plans and is a material consideration in planning decisions.

The NPPF contains the following references that relate to green infrastructure and open spaces:

- **Para 7** - The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- **Para 103** - Access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities and

can deliver wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change. Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport, and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate.

- **Para 104** - Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:
 - a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
 - b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
 - c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.
 - **Para 105** - Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails.
 - **Para 131** - The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities....
 - **Para 161** - The planning system should support the transition to net zero by 2050 and take full account of all climate impacts including overheating, water scarcity, storm and flood risks and coastal change....
 - **Para 162** - Plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes, and the risk of overheating and drought from rising temperatures. Policies should support appropriate measures to ensure the future health and resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change impacts.....
 - **Para 187** - Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment....
 - **Para 188** - Plans should distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in the NPPF; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.
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This is supported by the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) website, which includes guidance on key areas such as Design. The National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code and Guidance Notes for Design Codes illustrate how well-designed places that are beautiful, healthy, greener, enduring, and successful can be achieved in practice.

It should be noted at the time of writing this report, the updated NPPF is due for release in summer 2026.

Green Infrastructure (GI)

The concept of GI is firmly embedded within the NPPF, which requires local planning authorities to set out a strategic approach in their Local Plans, to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure. It defines green infrastructure as ‘A network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity’.

The study area has a range of existing green infrastructure assets such as open spaces, allotments, playing fields, woodlands, grassland street trees, fields, hedgerows, canals, lakes, ponds, rivers, footpaths, and cycleways.

GI takes many different forms and can be delivered at multiple scales. It provides multiple functions, which in turn provide significant environmental, social, and economic benefits (also known as ecosystem services). The key benefits provided by GI are set out in the table below.

Table 4 Benefits provided by GI

Environmental
• Supports and provides biodiversity (which underpins healthy and resilient ecosystems) and species movement/dispersal including through providing habitat, wildlife corridors and stepping-stones. • Provides climate change mitigation and adaptation e.g., through providing flood and soil erosion protection, carbon sequestration and storage, and urban cooling. • Improves air and water quality (pollution absorption and removal). • Enables food production and supports pollination. • Supports and creates attractive and sustainable places and landscapes i.e., quality placemaking and place keeping.
Social/health and wellbeing
• Provides opportunities for outdoor recreation, exercise, play and access to nature. • Provides attractive and safe spaces for people to enjoy and improve social contacts – a key component of ‘liveable’ towns and cities where people want to live. • Supports the development of skills and capabilities. • Improves air and water quality, provides urban cooling and shade, reduces noise pollution. • Provides green active travel routes.
Economic
• Provides attractive places to live and work, attracting inward investment and tourism. • Increased land and property values. • Supports sustainable homes and communities e.g., through providing local food and building materials, encouraging low carbon lifestyles e.g., through well connected and attractive walking and cycling routes.

- Provides health and wellbeing benefits that result in avoided healthcare costs.
- Provides local food, energy, and timber production.
- Climate change mitigation and adaption.

Nature-based Solutions

The terms green infrastructure and nature-based solutions are overlapping and are often used interchangeably, with GI falling under the umbrella of nature-based solutions.

Nature-based solutions are defined as ‘*actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits*’⁸. They have huge potential to help cities and urban areas become more resilient to climate change, and benefit people’s health and the economy.

Nature-based solutions tend to be focused on six key areas⁹:

- Urban trees – found in parks, gardens, and along streets, trees can help to regulate urban temperatures, reduce flood risk, and clean the air
- Parks and green spaces – natural or planted green spaces are used for recreation and exercise, as well as being rich habitats for wildlife
- Green buildings – walls and roofs covered with vegetation act like sound and heat insulation for buildings, and absorb rainwater, so reducing flood risk
- Riverbank vegetation – plants along riverbanks trap soil and sediment, improving water quality and reducing flood damage by slowing the flow of water
- Wetland and bioswales – natural wetlands and man-made bioswales (or ‘rain gardens’) help to purify water and reduce flooding
- Lakes and ponds – natural or artificial waterbodies in cities can hold water for irrigation or drinking and support a wide range of wildlife.

Green Infrastructure Standards

Natural England’s **National Green Infrastructure Framework**¹⁰ was launched in January 2023 and establishes national standards (voluntary) for GI in England and comprises the following:

- GI Principles – 15 principles which underpin the framework and cover why, what and how to do good GI.
- GI Mapping Database and Analysis – a freely available tool providing GI Mapping layers and analyses.
- GI Standards (5 headline standards – GI Strategy Standards, Accessible Greenspace Standards, Urban Nature Recovery Standard, Urban Greening Factor Standard and Urban Tree Canopy Cover Standard).

⁸ <https://www.iucn.org/our-work/nature-based-solutions>

⁹ <https://earthwatch.org.uk/working-with-business/climate-proof-cities>

¹⁰ <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/GIStandards.aspx>

- GI Planning and design guide (which complements existing guidance such as the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code).
- Process Journeys (to assist different audiences) are still to be published.

The 15 principles of GI (the 5 benefits of GI or ‘why’ (blue circle) principles, the 5 descriptive or ‘what’ (orange circles) principles (what good GI looks like), and the 5 process principles (‘how’ (green circles) to do good GI). These are summarised below:



The Framework does not seek to duplicate existing standards such as Building with Nature, but rather to learn from best practice and reinforce key messages, such as that green infrastructure and natural capital needs to be considered and incorporated at the earliest stages of development and treated like other types of essential infrastructure.

The 25-Year Environment Plan (25 YEP) and The Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP)

In 2018 the 25-YEP set out the governments goals for improving the environment, within a generation. The Nature Recovery Network (NRN) is a key policy commitment in the 25 YEP. The NRN will benefit people and wildlife by increasing, improving and joining-up wildlife-rich places across England. It will create or restore 500,000 hectares of wildlife habitat outside protected sites, more effectively linking existing protected sites and landscapes, as well as urban green infrastructure (such as trees, hedgerows, parks, fields, forests) and urban blue infrastructure (such as rainwater tanks, bioswales, rivers, canals, ponds, wetlands, and floodplains).

The 25 YEP has since been delivered through two successive statutory plans. The EIP 2023 was the first revision but was criticised for lacking the detail needed to drive meaningful delivery. Following an OEP-prompted "rapid review" announced in July 2024, Defra published a further revised **Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP 2025)** in December 2025, now the current statutory plan. It is structured across five chapters and ten goals, with updated interim targets for the next five years. Provisions of particular relevance to this strategy include:

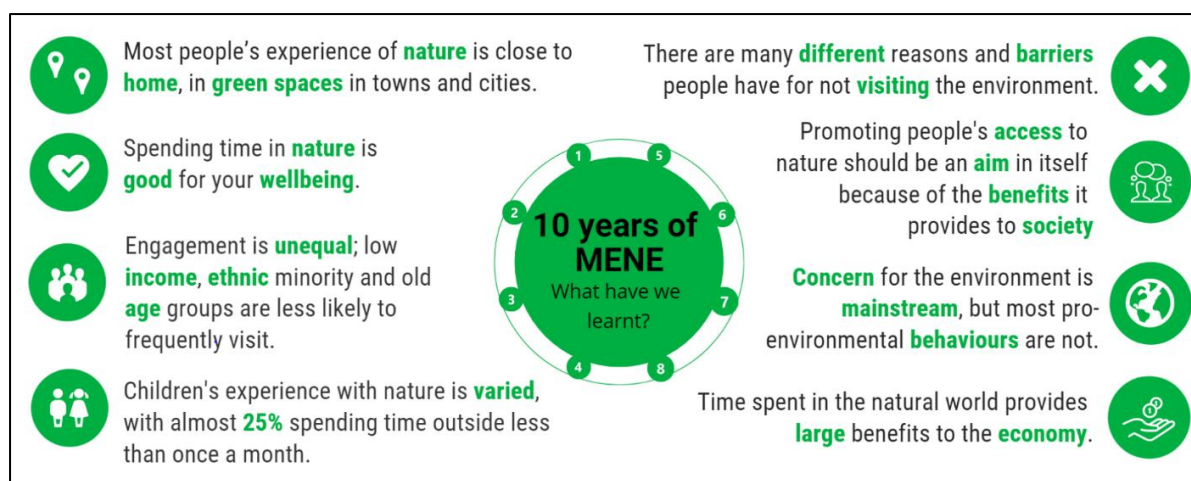
- A commitment for everyone to live within a 15-minute walk of a green or blue space.
- A revised habitat target of 140,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat restored or created by January 2028, with 250,000 hectares by 2030.
- A target for 50% of SSSIs to have actions on track for favourable condition by January 2028 which is brought forward from a 2030 deadline.
- A target to reduce the establishment rate of invasive non-native species by at least 50% by December 2030, compared to 2000 levels.
- £500 million for Landscape Recovery projects over 20 years, plus £85 million for peatland restoration.

The **Environment Act 2021** remains the primary legal framework for environmental governance in England and is still current, though several of its provisions have only recently been commenced and others continue to be refined through secondary legislation. Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) became mandatory for major developments in February 2024, for minor/small sites in April 2024, and will extend to nationally significant infrastructure projects from November 2026. The Act's other flagship mechanism, Local Nature Recovery Strategies, has been slower to deliver than intended: as of mid-2025 only a handful had been published, and the Office for Environmental Protection has warned that delays risk undermining the government's 2030 species abundance target.

Covid 19 and the impact on open spaces and green infrastructure

The value of green infrastructure has also been keenly recognised during the Covid 19 pandemic where access to green space played a key role in people's well-being; alongside a wider appreciation of nature.

From 2009 to 2019, Natural England ran the Monitor of Engagement of the Natural Environment (MENE) survey. It collected data about outdoor recreation and attitudes towards and engagement with the natural environment. It was estimated there were 4 billion visits to the natural environment in 2019, up from 2.9 billion over 10 years. The survey highlights the importance of access to nature for health and wellbeing, but also clear inequalities between different age, ethnic and socio-economic groups, and those with different states of health, in how they use and experience the natural environment.



MENE concluded in 2019 and has been superseded by The People and Nature Survey for England. This has also helped understand how adults and children in England have engaged with nature since the coronavirus pandemic.

The findings continue to demonstrate the importance of spending time in nature for people's wellbeing. During April 2020 (during lockdown restrictions) the survey polled 2000 people and key findings included:

- The most regular visits to green spaces were to urban green spaces such as parks and playing fields (41%), followed by fields, farmland, and countryside (25%), woodland and forests (24%) and rivers, lakes, and canals (21%).
- 86% of adults with access to a private garden or allotment felt that these spaces are important to them.
- 89% of adults agreed or strongly agreed that green and natural spaces should be good places for mental health and wellbeing.
- 87% of adults agreed that 'being in nature makes me happy'.

The **People and Nature Survey for England (Adults' Year 5 Annual Report, April 2024–March 2025)** provides the latest nationally representative evidence on how people engage with green and natural spaces in England.

Key findings:

- Around **two-thirds of adults** had visited a green or natural space within the previous **14 days**.
- Most visitors used green spaces **at least once a week**.
- Over half of visits lasted **one hour or less**, including travel time.
- Approximately **two-thirds of people travelled actively** (walking, cycling or using a mobility aid) to their most recent visit.
- The most frequently visited green spaces were urban parks and green spaces; woodlands and forests; rivers, lakes and canals; countryside and farmland; and coastal environments (where accessible).
- The principal motivations for visiting these spaces were:

- Exercise and physical activity;
- Fresh air;
- Relaxation;
- Walking (with or without a dog);
- Spending time with family and friends;
- Appreciating nature and wildlife.
- Respondents consistently reported that visits to nature: improved mental wellbeing; reduced stress; supported physical health; and provided opportunities to relax and recover from everyday pressures.
- The survey reinforces several planning priorities:
 - Accessible local green spaces are critical because most visits are short, frequent and made by walking or cycling.
 - Green spaces should be located close to residential areas to support everyday use rather than occasional destination visits.
 - High-quality, safe and well-maintained parks encourage regular use and contribute to improved physical and mental health.
 - Provision should focus not only on quantity but also on quality, accessibility and connectivity, supporting healthy lifestyles and reducing inequalities in access to nature.

UK National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) (2025)

Published in 2025, the NBSAP sets out how the UK will respond to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework agreed at COP15 in 2022 which aims to halt and reverse biodiversity loss globally by 2030. The NBSAP commits the UK to achieving all 23 GBF targets at home. The UK submitted its National Targets to the Convention on Biological Diversity on 1 August 2024, committing the UK to each of the 23 GBF targets domestically. England's specific obligations include:

- The Environment Act 2021 sets legally binding biodiversity targets for England, which contribute to meeting the UK's international obligations under the GBF.
- These targets are supported by interim targets to 2028, set out in the Environmental Improvement Plan.
- England's contribution to the 30by30 target (protecting 30% of land and sea by 2030) requires ensuring the country's most important and wildlife-rich habitats benefit from effective, long-term conservation and management. New contributions to 30by30 in England are made on a voluntary basis, with no obligation on landowners or managers to participate.
- Delivery mechanisms supporting this include Local Nature Recovery Strategies under the Environment Act 2021, a statutory tree and woodland target to raise England's canopy and woodland cover to 16.5% by 2050, and a commitment to restore approximately 280,000 hectares of peatland by 2050.
- The NBSAP states that the revised Environmental Improvement Plan integrates and clarifies related England policy areas, including environmental land management schemes, local nature recovery strategies, and biodiversity net gain.

Fields in Trust

Fields in Trust (FIT) is an independent charity with over 90 years' experience protecting parks and green spaces. They work with landowners, community groups and policy makers to champion the value of our parks and green spaces to achieve better protection for their future at both local and national level.

Fields in Trust works in partnership with landowners to protect land through a Deed of Dedication, a binding legal commitment with the landowner which secures spaces (usually a public park, playing field or recreation ground) in perpetuity for current and future generations to enjoy. Even if a space already has a form of protection (such as a covenant, or town and village green registration), a Deed of Dedication will strengthen the protection¹¹.

The FIT report 'Creating great spaces for all'¹² provides minimum guidelines for practitioners on open space provision and design, which have been considered as part of the development of quantity, access and quality standards in Section 6 of this report.

FIT also conduct research into the benefits that local parks provide, such as the Revaluing Parks and Green Spaces Study (see below).

Revaluing Parks and Green Spaces - Measuring their economic and wellbeing value to individuals (Fields in Trust (FIT), 2018)

This report provides a robust economic valuation of parks and green spaces in the UK as well as valuing improvements in health and wellbeing associated with their frequent use. This is the first research study on parks and green spaces to use welfare weighting methodology, allowing for more informed evidence-based policy decisions. The headline figures are:

- **The Total Economic Value to an individual is £30.24 per year** (£2.52 per month), and includes benefits gained from using their local park or green space and non-use benefits such as the preservation of parks for future generations. The value of parks and green spaces is higher for individuals from lower socio-economic groups and from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. The findings show that any loss of parks and green spaces will disproportionately impact disadvantaged and underrepresented communities, precisely those who value them the most.
- **The Wellbeing Value associated with the frequent use of local parks and green spaces is worth £34.2 billion per year** to the entire UK adult population.
- **Parks and green spaces are estimated to save the NHS around £111 million per year** based solely on a reduction in GP visits and excluding any additional savings from prescribing or referrals.

Making Parks Count (The Parks Alliance (TPA), 2020)

This report makes the business case for parks, why they matter, and why they are a 'smart investment'. It illustrates how parks in England deliver over £6.6bn of health, climate change

¹¹ <https://fieldsintrust.org/content/images/FIT-Standards-2024-Accessible-version.pdf>

¹² <https://www.fieldsintrust.org/Upload/file/guidance/Guidance-for-Outdoor-Sport-and-Play-England.pdf>

and environmental benefits each year including £2.2bn in avoided health costs alone and worth £140 per year for each urban resident. For every £1 spent on parks in England an estimated £7 in additional value for health and wellbeing and the environment is generated. Some of the other key figures referenced in the report are:

- Urban green spaces raise house prices by an average of £2,500;
- London's parks alone help avoid an estimated £370m of mental health related costs each year;
- Parks are among the most species rich types of urban green spaces, and over 1,500 species of UK's pollinators deliver an estimated £680m in value to the economy;
- The benefits of air pollutant removal by trees in public parks in England is estimated at £60m per year;
- The value of carbon sequestration by trees in public parks in England is estimated at £9m per year;
- Parks in England provide an urban cooling benefit of £4.8m per year.

Sport England Sustainability Strategy – Every Move Strategy and Action Plan (2024)

The strategy recognises that the places and spaces used for sport and physical activity and people's participation are threatened by the effects of climate change, including reduced water and air quality, rising temperatures, and extreme weather events such as flooding, drought, and heatwaves.

The 2050 Vision for the sector includes:

- **Active Design:** Walking, cycling and low-emission travel through nature-rich corridors is the norm; and Physical activity and sustainability principles underpin the design of our community spaces.
- **Nature Thriving:** Everyone has access to clean green and blue spaces to enjoy, play and relax in; and These spaces are biodiversity and wildlife rich.
- **Zero carbon and climate resilience:** Sports facilities generate renewable energy for the local community and showcase circular and sustainable build methods; and Facilities and sports are adapted to our changing climate (e.g. flood resistant).
- **Community hubs:** Sports facilities and events are community orientated and co-located with health and other essential services; and Clubs regenerate and transform local communities through sustainable and inclusive practices.

Sport England Strategy – 'Uniting the movement: A 10-year vision to transform lives and communities through sport and physical activity'.

The Uniting the Movement Strategy by Sport England is a 10-year vision to transform lives and communities through sport and physical activity. It sets out how the sector needs to change to give people opportunities now and, in the future, to allow people to live happier, healthier, and more fulfilled lives. This includes tackling inequalities seen in sport and physical activity and helping to remove barriers. The three objectives for the strategy are:

1. Advocating for movement, sport, and physical activity.

2. Joining forces on five big issues: recover and reinvent; connecting communities; positive experience for children and young people; connecting with health and wellbeing and active environments.
3. Creating the catalysts for change.

Yearly implementation plans will ensure that Sport England are investing most in those that need it the most with the right blend of national and local action and keeping the plan simple providing information and guidance to support colleagues and partners.

Environment Agency National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy (2020)

The Environment Agency's Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy provides a framework for guiding the operational activities and decision making of practitioners supporting the direction set by government policy to protect people and places. It seeks to better manage the risk and consequences of flooding from rivers, the sea, groundwater, reservoirs, ordinary watercourses, surface water, sewers, and coastal erosion.

The strategy sets out the long-term delivery objectives the nation should take for the next 10 to 30 years as well as practical measures risk management authorities should take working with partners and communities. It has a vision for '*a nation ready for, and resilient to, flooding and coastal changes – today, tomorrow and to the year 2100*'. To achieve this vision the strategy has three long-term ambitions:

1. **Climate resilient places** – working with partners to improve resilience to flooding and coastal change both now and in the face of climate change. This includes using nature-based solutions and working with landowners to adapt practices to become more resilient.
2. **Today's growth and infrastructure resilient in tomorrow's climate** – making the right investment and planning decisions to secure sustainable growth and environmental improvements as well as providing resilience to change. This includes contributing to environmental net gain for new development proposals and putting a focus on providing planning advice that helps avoid inappropriate development in areas of risk.
3. **A nation ready to respond and adapt to flooding and coastal change** – ensuring local people understand their risk to flooding and coastal change and know their responsibilities and how to take action. This includes supporting communities to prepare and respond to flooding and coastal change by ensuring they have the skills and capabilities to adapt.

It should be noted that this strategy is undergoing a review in 2026.

3.2.2 Regional Context

Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Wiltshire and Swindon

The LNRS is a strategic document and accompanying habitat map covering Wiltshire and Swindon. It identifies priority habitats and areas where nature recovery action including habitat creation, restoration, and connection, will have the greatest impact, in order to guide funding, land management decisions, and planning outcomes. It was formally adopted in October 2025.

The LNRS area covers 348,543 hectares across Wiltshire and Swindon, split into distinct landscape character areas (e.g. Swindon Ridge and Clay Lowlands, Braydon Forest) — Swindon falls within Area 2.

Swindon sits within the "Swindon Ridge and Clay Lowlands" character area which has clay soils with wetland pockets supporting great crested newts, and urban greenspaces along the River Ray, Dorcan, and Shaftesbury Lake forming green corridors. Priority opportunities here include woodland and scrub, hedgerows and trees, flower-rich meadows, urban greening, and amphibian habitat. This includes:

- **Green and Blue Access Corridors:** Swindon has direct access to two National Trails (the Thames Path and the Ridgeway) plus the Kennet & Avon Canal, providing well-maintained recreational routes that the strategy also targets for habitat management along their edges.
- **Nature on Our Doorstep:** Targets biodiversity improvement in everyday urban open space applying Blue-Green Infrastructure principles (varied vegetation, wildlife features, sustainable drainage).
- **Urban climate resilience:** Urban trees in Swindon and the River Ray Parkway corridor are identified for shade/cooling benefits, alongside sustainable drainage in sealed urban areas.
- **Great Western Community Forest:** Centred on Swindon, delivering tree planting across the wider region and cited for mental/physical health benefits through nature access.

3.2.3 Local Context

Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026 (adopted 26th March 2015)

The Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026 is the Borough's primary planning document, setting out the scale and distribution of housing, employment, and retail development up to 2026. It identifies the infrastructure required to support this growth and includes policies to ensure high-quality development that avoids environmentally sensitive areas, respects the existing built environment, and meets the needs of current and future residents.

Key policies of relevance to the open space study include:

Policy EN3: Open Space - residential development is required to provide or contribute to public open space in accordance with defined standards, including provision for play areas, sports facilities, informal recreation, and allotments. Schemes of 25 dwellings or more are expected to deliver open space on site. Existing public open spaces are protected from development unless specific criteria are met, such as the provision of equivalent or improved alternative space, proposals that support the primary open space function, or where robust assessment demonstrates no harm to local provision or that wider community benefits outweigh any loss.

Policy EN1: Green Infrastructure Network – this sets out the Council's approach to protecting and enhancing green infrastructure across Swindon Borough. It operates in two parts:

The first part requires all development to protect and enhance green infrastructure assets identified in the Council's Green Infrastructure Strategy (Appendix 4). This includes the safeguarding of trees, hedgerows, and woodlands that are visually or ecologically significant. Particular weight is given to irreplaceable habitats, including ancient woodland and aged or veteran trees outside ancient woodland. Development resulting in the loss or deterioration of such assets will only be permitted where the need for and benefits of the development clearly and demonstrably outweigh that loss, setting a high bar for justification.

The second part requires new development to provide green infrastructure that actively connects with existing green corridors shown on the Policies Map. The emphasis is on maximising connectivity and multifunctional value, while ensuring that green infrastructure is sustainably managed and maintained over the long term.

Swindon Borough Council Open Space Audit and Assessment (March 2014)

Swindon Borough Council published its Open Space Audit and Assessment in August 2004. The audit set out detailed information on all recreational open space across the Borough and informed the delivery of policies and standards within the adopted Swindon Borough Local Plan 2011 (2006). It assessed all recreational open space in the Borough, including typology, function and quality and accessibility of each site.

Summary of standards:

Quantity

Type of Open Space	Definition	Requirement
Children and Teenager's Play Areas	All children and teenagers play areas, skateboard parks, outdoor basketball goals and similar facilities	0.3 ha / 1000 population

Type of Open Space	Definition	Requirement
Outdoor Sports Facilities	Includes all outdoor sports facilities whether naturally or artificially surfaced e.g. playing pitches, bowling greens and tennis courts	1.6 ha / 1000 population (1.2 ha of which is playing pitches)
General Recreational Areas	All areas of public open space which have a significant recreational function but do not fall in the other categories.	1 ha / 1000 population of which 0.5 ha should be suitable for children's informal play
Allotments	An areas containing allotment plots which the occupier uses mainly for the purpose of cultivating fruit or vegetables for consumption by the occupier or their family.	0.3 ha / 1000 population

Quality

Type of Open Space	Quality Standards
Children and Teenager's Play Areas	Fields in Trust (FiT) 2008
Outdoor Sports Facilities	Local standards based on Sport England guidance
General Recreational Areas	Local standard
Allotments	Local standard

Accessibility

Type of Open Space	Accessibility
<u>Children and Teenager's Play Areas</u>	250 metres (approx. 5 minutes walking time)
Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP)	250 metres (approx. 5 minutes walking time)
Swindon Local Landscaped Areas for Play (LLAP)	500 metres (approx. 10 minutes walking time)
Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP)	
Outdoor Sports Facilities	600 metres junior pitches (approx. 15 minutes walk time) Adult Sports Facilities (approx. 20 minutes drive time)
<u>General Recreational Areas</u>	2km
Local Open Spaces	5km
Major Open Spaces	
Allotments	600 metres

Open Space and New Housing Development (2004)

The Open Space and New Housing Development Supplementary Planning Guidance sets out a clear framework for securing the provision of open space as part of new residential development. It establishes that open space should be delivered as essential infrastructure,

contributing to health, wellbeing, recreation, and environmental quality, rather than being treated as residual land. It also details the quantity, quality and type of open space provision requirements and contributions.

Open Space requirements per dwelling

			Intermediate Play Area/LEAP		Local Open Space		Major Open Space ³		Playing Pitches		Total
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	
	Ave. persons per household ¹	Ave. children per household ¹	Open space requirement per child (sq M) ²	Open space requirement per dwelling (B x C)	Open space requirement per person (sq M)	Open space requirement per dwelling (A x E)	Open space requirement per person (sq M)	Open space requirement per dwelling (A x G)	Open space requirement per person (sq M)	Open space requirement per dwelling (A x H)	Total requirement (sq M)
1 bed	1.43	0	0	0	9	12.87	5.5	7.87	12	17.16	37.9
2 bed	1.92	0.25	15	3.75	9	17.28	5.5	10.56	12	23.04	54.6
3 bed	2.71	0.4	15	6	9	24.39	5.5	14.91	12	32.52	77.8
4 bed +	3.4	0.6	15	9	9	30.6	5.5	18.70	12	40.8	99.1

	Intermediate Play area/LEAP			Local Open Space		Major Open Space		Playing Pitches		
	No. of dwellings	Open Space requirement per dwelling	Total open space requirement	Open Space requirement per dwelling	Total open space requirement	Open Space requirement per dwelling	Total open space requirement	Open Space requirement per dwelling	Total open space requirement	Total
1 bed		0		12.9		7.9		17.2		38.0
2 bed		4		17.3		10.6		23.0		54.7
3 bed		6		24.4		14.9		32.5		77.8
4 bed		9		30.6		18.7		40.8		99.1
Total	0									269.57

Swindon Green Infrastructure Strategy (2024)

The Swindon Borough Green Infrastructure Strategy 2024 (Parts 1 and 2) establishes open space as a central component of a wider, multi-functional green infrastructure (GI) network, positioning it as essential infrastructure that supports health, climate resilience, biodiversity, and placemaking. Across the borough, a diverse range of open spaces are identified, including country parks, parks, natural and semi-natural greenspaces, recreation grounds, and green corridors; however, provision is uneven, with notable deficiencies in access and quality in some urban areas, particularly within the town centre.

The strategy adopts Natural England's accessibility standards to assess provision and highlights the need for all residents to have access to a hierarchy of spaces within defined walking distances. It identifies inequalities in access to open space and wider green infrastructure, linking these to deprivation and health outcomes, and promotes a stronger focus on environmental justice and "nature close to home" for all communities.

A key theme is the shift from standalone open space provision to a connected network approach, where open spaces form part of strategic green corridors and local networks that support both ecological connectivity and active travel. Existing assets including the borough's five country parks are recognised as critical resources but are noted to require investment and improved management to maximise their accessibility, quality, and biodiversity value.

For new development and regeneration, particularly in the Central Area, the strategy emphasises that open space must be planned from the outset, integrated with urban design, and delivered as multi-functional spaces incorporating play, sustainable drainage, urban greening, and opportunities for social interaction. There is a strong focus on increasing provision in areas of growth, including the introduction of pocket parks, enhancement of existing spaces, and improved public realm to address current deficiencies.

The strategy also identifies significant challenges around management, maintenance, and governance, with responsibilities split across the Borough and Parish Councils and increasing reliance on community groups. It calls for improved coordination, long-term funding mechanisms (including developer contributions and biodiversity net gain), and the establishment of a stakeholder forum to support ongoing delivery and stewardship.

Overall, the strategy supports a policy direction that prioritises the protection, enhancement, and creation of high-quality, accessible, and well-connected open spaces, underpinned by evidence from a borough-wide audit of quantity, quality, and accessibility. It advocates embedding clear requirements for green infrastructure within planning policy, ensuring that open space provision is sufficient, equitable, and capable of delivering multiple functions over the long term.

Swindon Playing Pitch Strategy (2025)

The Strategy provides a supply and demand assessment of playing pitch and outdoor sports facilities across Swindon. The strategy seeks to protect and sustain sports facilities for the long term, ensuring there is sufficient provision in the right locations to meet both current and future demand. It promotes a coordinated and sustainable approach to the delivery and management of playing pitches and clubs, with a focus on maintaining appropriate quality and accessibility standards. The aims also emphasise inclusive provision, ensuring facilities meet the needs of all residents, particularly those facing barriers to participation or health inequalities, and support community engagement in planning and development through ongoing local needs assessment.

It covers: Football pitches, Rugby union pitches, Rugby league pitches, Cricket pitches, third generation artificial grass (3G) pitches, Artificial grass pitches (including use for hockey), Outdoor Tennis (including padel), Outdoor Netball, Outdoor bowling greens, Athletics, Cycling, Speedway, Golf, Volleyball and Skateboarding.

Football presents the most significant shortfalls, with current overplay across adult, youth 11v11, youth 9v9 and mini 7v7 grass pitches — youth 9v9 being most acute. Quality is poor

across much of the stock (37% rated poor). There is also a shortfall of 3G pitches for training and match play, with existing pitches operating at or near capacity. There are currently no World Rugby compliant 3G pitches in the Borough.

Cricket has sufficient supply for Sunday and midweek play, but a current shortfall for Saturday cricket, concentrated at Swindon Cricket Club, which is projected to worsen with population growth.

Rugby union has a modest but clear shortfall, primarily affecting Swindon RUFC and Supermarine RUFC. Most pitches are poor quality and ancillary facilities require improvement. **Rugby league** is more critically underserved, with Swindon St George RLFC lacking both adequate capacity and security of tenure.

Hockey supply is currently sufficient but tenure at key education sites is insecure, making protection of existing provision the priority.

Tennis is well provided for at club level but recreational provision is limited, particularly in the north of the Borough, and there are no padel courts despite significant growing demand.

Netball courts are severely limited in number and quality, with only two sports-lit community courts across the Borough. Investment in quality and accessibility is needed.

Bowls, athletics, skateboarding and **croquet** are all adequately provided for, with protection of existing provision the main recommendation in each case. **Speedway** requires a facility solution, either through a new stadium or returning Swindon Stadium to use.

Across all sports, the overarching priorities are to address capacity shortfalls driven by population growth, improve quality of ageing stock, secure long-term tenure at education sites, and protect all existing provision from loss.

Great Western Community Forest Plan (2025–2050)

The Great Western Community Forest is one of England's 15 established community forests, and this plan published in 2025 covering the next 25 years. The forest covers 46,325 hectares centred on Swindon, extending to Royal Wootton Bassett, Wroughton, Faringdon, Highworth, and Cricklade, split into six sub-areas each with tailored canopy targets (10%–25%+).

The strategy is split into three overarching actions (enhance, expand, engage) which is delivered through five themes; canopy cover, biodiversity, health and wellbeing, education/employment and green infrastructure/climate resilience.

The Great Western Community Forest Plan (2025–2050) sets a series of ambitious targets for the Forest area. These include increasing tree canopy cover across the Forest to a sustainable average of 22% by 2050, supported by the planting of 400 hectares of new woodland by 2030 and 3,860 hectares in total by 2050. The Plan also commits to bringing 80% of woodland under sustainable management by 2050, alongside the planting of 1,000 new street trees in

Swindon and 80 new oak trees to commemorate 80 years since the end of the Second World War. New developments will be required to deliver a 25% uplift in canopy cover on site where appropriate. Delivery of these targets will be supported by community and business engagement, with an aim to involve 750 volunteers and 125 businesses over the next five years, and to raise £250,000 in funding by 2050.

3.3 Health and Deprivation Context

3.3.1 Health summary

Public Health England publish several indicators¹³ which can provide a summary of the health context of Swindon. Some of the key health indicators are highlighted below.

- Male Life expectancy (3-year range 2023-25) is 80.1 (which is higher than the England Average (79.7)).
- Female Life expectancy (3-year range 2023-25) is 83.7 (which is lower than the England Average (83.5)).
- Adult Overweight (including obesity 2024/25) is 68% (which is higher than the England average (64.6%)).
- Physically Active Adults (2024/25) is 67.1% (which is lower than the England Average (68%)).
- Children (under 16's) in relative low-income families (2024/25) is 16% which is lower than the England Average (19.8%).
- Child Obesity (prevalence of obesity in Year 6 children (10-11 yrs) 2024/25 is 21.3% which is lower than the England Average (22.2%)).

3.3.2 Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2023 - 2033) – “Narrowing the Gap – More People Spending More Years in Good Health”

Swindon's Health and Wellbeing Strategy sets out a ten-year vision to tackle health inequalities and empower residents to live longer, healthier lives supported by thriving, connected communities. This is in response to a key challenge identified in Swindon that healthy life expectancy is notably worse than the England average, despite life expectancies being broadly in line with the England averages. Women in Swindon are spending an estimated 21.4 years and men 18.4 years in poor health. This is compounded by high levels of childhood obesity, rising youth mental health admissions and self-harm rates, and above-average hospital admissions linked to smoking and alcohol, particularly among more deprived communities.

¹³ <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/health-profiles/data#page/1/gid/1938132701/pat/6/ati/301/are/E06000030/iid/90366/age/1/sex/1/cat/-1/ctp/-1/yr/3/cid/4/tbm/1>

The strategy is guided by four principles; being focused, addressing inequalities, starting with prevention, and making it real through community engagement. The strategy identifies three priorities spanning the life course (Starting Well, Living Well, Ageing Well); improving mental health and wellbeing, eating well and moving more, and stopping smoking and reducing alcohol.

Green spaces feature as a recurring, if supporting, theme throughout the strategy rather than as a standalone priority. Community engagement work highlighted access to green space and nature as an important contributor to good mental health, alongside social connection and a sense of purpose. The strategy also notes that Swindon already benefits from nine parks and seven outdoor gyms as community assets. Most concretely, "promoting green space and an active built environment" is named as one of the specific actions under the Eat Well and Move More priority, positioning green infrastructure as a practical lever for increasing physical activity and, in turn, reducing obesity and inactivity-related health risks across the borough.

Get Swindon Active Strategy (2022 – 2025)

The Get Swindon Active Strategy sets out Swindon Borough Council's approach to increasing physical activity across the borough between 2022 and 2025, delivered through the Get Swindon Active Partnership. The vision is for physical activity to become a normal part of everyday life for Swindon residents, with a particular focus on reducing inactivity among groups who are currently least active, including older people, disabled people and those with long-term health conditions, and residents in more deprived areas.

The strategy highlights that while 69% of Swindon adults are classed as active 26% remain inactive, rising to 45% among children and young people in the most deprived areas. Three main actions underpin delivery: encouraging everyone to move more, removing barriers to activity, and working in partnership with communities and local organisations.

The strategy identifies green and open spaces as key infrastructure for supporting activity. It commits to influencing "where we live, work, travel and play," including infrastructure changes that make active travel and use of green space easier. Parks and open spaces are highlighted as an existing borough-wide asset, with parkrun at Lydiard Park and Seven Fields (plus a junior parkrun at Lydiard Park) given as examples of established activity opportunities. However, the strategy also notes that access to parks and safety concerns, particularly women's fear of walking or jogging alone in parks, are recognised barriers to participation, alongside broader concerns about the cost of accessing some sports facilities.

3.3.3 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)

The Indices of Deprivation 2025 provide a set of relative measures of deprivation for small areas (Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs)) across England, based on seven different domains of deprivation:

- Income Deprivation
- Employment Deprivation
- Education, Skills, and Training Deprivation
- Health Deprivation and Disability
- Crime
- Barriers to Housing and Services
- Living Environment Deprivation

Each of these domains is based on a basket of indicators. As far as is possible, each indicator is based on data from the most recent time point available. The Index of Multiple Deprivation combines information from the seven domains to produce an overall relative measure of deprivation. Figure 4 below shows the IMD rank for each LSOA within the study area, where 1 is most deprived and 10 is least deprived. As can be seen, levels of deprivation are generally low across most of the study area, however there are pockets of higher deprivation in some parts of the town of Swindon notably in the ward of Parks, Walcot and Penshill & Pinehurst. Rurally, levels of deprivations are generally low with a small pocket within the settlement of Highworth.

A Public Health England report¹⁴ highlights that improving access to quality green space has the potential to improve health outcomes for the whole population, in a number of ways:

- Promoting health behaviour including encouraging physical activity and active travel;
- Improving social contacts and giving people a sense of familiarity and belonging;
- Supporting the development of skills and capabilities; and
- Mediating potential harms posed by the local environment for example air pollution, heat, noise and flood risk.

This is particularly true for disadvantaged communities, where the evidence suggests that people's health and wellbeing is enhanced by living in a greener environment. This means that green space also can be an important tool in the ambition to increase healthy life expectancy and narrow the gap between the life chances of the richest and poorest in society.

¹⁴ Public Health England Report - [Improving access to greenspace: a new review for 2020](#)

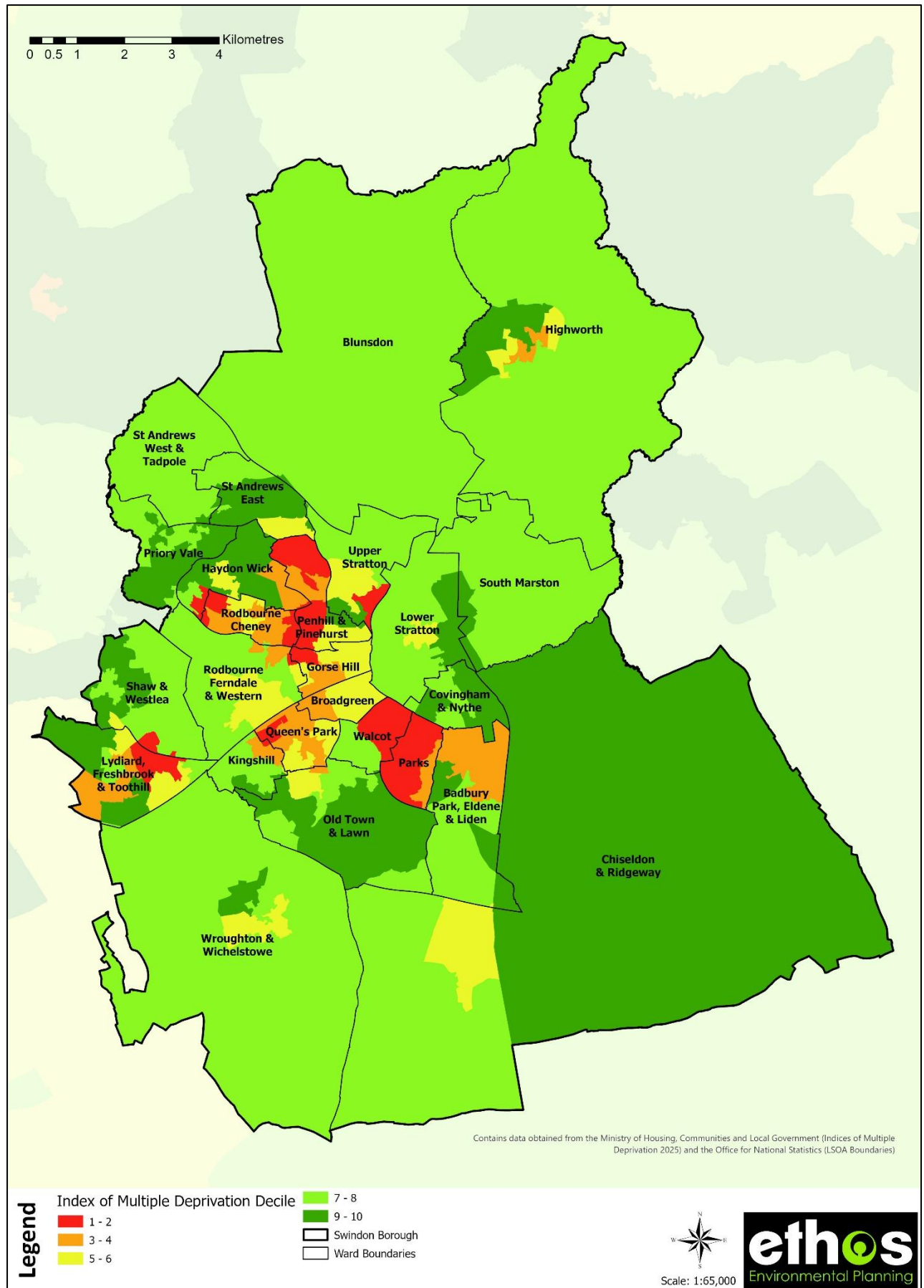


Figure 4 IMD ranks in the study area (by LSOA) – Where a rank of 1 is most deprived and 10 is least deprived.

4.0 LOCAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT (STEP 1)

4.1 Introduction

Consultation was conducted by Swindon Borough Council from 16th April – 11th May 2025 and consisted of a feedback map on open spaces and a survey. The results of this consultation and other analyses have helped (amongst other aspects) to inform the content of the recommended local standards (Section 6 of this report). It has also helped the study to understand the communities wider appreciated and values attached to open space and recreation facilities.

4.2 Key findings

A total of 574 residents responded to the open space survey (with one additional response received by email).

Quantity

- The survey indicates broad satisfaction with the overall quantity and variety of open spaces available. The majority of respondents confirmed there is sufficient variety, and open space is heavily used with 56% of respondents visit at least once every two days, with over 80% visiting at least seven times a month.
- The most used typologies are Parks and Gardens, Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspace, and Green Corridors, with all other typologies used by at least 10% of respondents. Primary uses include walking/running (505 responses), relaxation (381), dog walking (262), and socialising (240).
- Where gaps were identified, respondents pointed to a lack of teenage provision (skate parks, tennis courts and sports facilities), an imbalance between walking/dog walking areas and children's play provision depending on location, and a need for more allotment space. Concerns were also raised that ongoing development pressure risks reducing the overall supply of open space.

Quality

Quality and maintenance emerged as the most significant area of concern across the survey. Recurring issues raised in relation to specific sites include:

- **Litter and waste management** — bin emptying and litter picking were the most frequently cited maintenance issues, with several specific sites noted (e.g. Mannington Recreation Ground, Lydiard Park, and the Old Town area).

- **Seating and furniture** — a lack of benches was highlighted at multiple locations, including Weir Field (Wroughton) and Lawn Woods, with requests for vandal-proof provision.
- **Paths and surfaces** — poorly maintained or uneven paths were flagged as a quality issue, particularly in relation to usability for pushchairs, wheelchairs, and mobility-impaired users.
- **Toilet facilities** — public toilets at country parks (notably Coate Water) were identified as requiring improvement.
- **Security and vandalism** — concerns were raised at allotment sites (St Philips, Pickard Field) and more generally across open spaces.

Respondents also highlighted a desire for educational signage relating to nature and biodiversity, and better-quality maintained walking surfaces. Community engagement was ranked the highest priority when planning open spaces, though all planning priorities received similarly high scores overall (average rankings between 3.04 and 3.29).

In terms of policy, mixed views were expressed on whether existing local plan policy (EN3) adequately protects and promotes open space. Key concerns included Part B being considered too weak to prevent loss of open space to development, insufficient definition of quality standards, and no requirement for maintenance provisions within policy.

Access

Access to open space is generally positive with 92% of respondents (527 of 573) agreeing that open space in their local area is easy to access. However, a range of barriers were identified that affect certain users or times of day:

- **Safety and lighting** — insufficient lighting at night was the most commonly cited barrier, contributing to feelings of unsafety, particularly in the darker months. Antisocial behaviour and uncontrolled dogs were also raised as safety concerns.
- **Transport and parking** — lack of car parking or parking charges deterred visits to larger open spaces, while poor connectivity by bus or cycle made it difficult for non-car users to reach certain sites. A lack of cycle links between urban extensions was specifically noted.
- **Physical accessibility** — poorly maintained or uneven paths present significant barriers for wheelchair users, pushchair users, and those with mobility issues. Several respondents noted that some open spaces have no pavements at all, or that path surfaces are unsuitable in winter conditions.
- **Facilities** — lack of seating was identified as a deterrent, particularly for elderly users, and a shortage of public toilets limits access for some groups.

On inclusivity, the primary concerns related to pavement quality and wheelchair accessibility, followed by a need for more seating to support elderly and disabled visitors. Many of the

larger, higher-quality open spaces were noted as being effectively car-dependent, limiting access for those without vehicles.

5.0 AUDIT OF EXISTING OPEN SPACE ASSETS

5.1 General approach

5.1.1 Review of existing open space typologies

The Council's previous open space assessment (2014) typologies were as follows:

Type of Open Space	Definition
Children and Teenager's Play Areas	All children and teenager's play areas, skateboard parks, outdoor basketball goals and similar facilities
Outdoor Sports Facilities	Includes all outdoor sports facilities where naturally or artificially surfaced e.g. playing pitches, bowling green and tennis courts
General recreation areas	All areas of public open space which have a significant recreational function but do not fall in the other categories.
Allotments	An areas containing allotment plots which the occupier uses mainly for the purpose of cultivating fruit or vegetables for consumption by the occupier or their family.

The Open Space Audit and Assessment Interim Report Update in August 2025 conducted by Swindon Borough Council amended these typology definitions in line with the Fields in Trust, which are widely recognised as benchmark standards for open space. These are as follows:

Type of Open Space	Definition
Local Area of Play (LAP)	Local areas for play or 'door-step' spaces – for play and informal recreation (LAPs)
Local Equipped Area of Play (LEAP)	Local equipped, or local landscaped, areas for play – for play and informal recreation (LEAPs)
Neighbourhood Area of Play (NEAP)	Neighbourhood equipped areas for play -for play and informal recreation, and provision for children and young people (NEAPs)
Parks and Gardens	Urban parks and squares, country parks, regional parks, forest parks and formal gardens
Amenity Green Space	Informal recreation spaces, communal green spaces in and around housing, village green, urban commons, allotments and growing spaces and other incidental spaces which may include areas of hard spaces as well as green spaces
Natural and Semi-Natural Green Space	Woodland, scrub, grassland, heath or moor, wetlands, open and running water and open access land

Type of Open Space	Definition
Outdoor Sports	Sport pitches, courts, greens, tracks, trails or sports equipment (including schools and outdoor facilities not publicly accessible)
Cemeteries and Churchyards	Burial grounds and churchyards providing space for remembrance, quiet reflection, and often contributing to local heritage, biodiversity and informal recreation.
Allotments, Orchard and Community Grow Spaces	Allotments, orchards, and community grow spaces provide land for food growing and small-scale horticulture, contributing to health, community activity and the wider open space network

These typologies were generally considered to be fit for purpose, however several key changes to their scope/definitions were agreed with the project team, as follows:

- **Allotments and growing spaces** were removed from the **Amenity Green Space** typology definition, as these spaces are captured within their own typology. A size threshold of 0.1 ha was also applied to the analysis, as sites smaller than this generally provide visual amenity rather than recreational space. Existing sites mapped below this threshold were retained within the dataset.
- Golf courses were mapped separately but did not have a definition within the 2025 audit and assessment. These were incorporated into the **Outdoor Sport** typology, with a sub-typology of golf.
- A number of **green corridors** were mapped separately (taken from the Swindon Green Infrastructure strategy) but did not have a definition within the 2025 audit and assessment. However, following a review of these, many were identified as providing an important open space function, being often very large recreation sites. Therefore, a number of green corridors were re-classified as open space (either amenity green space, natural and semi-natural green space) with a sub-typology of green corridor retained. There are also several sites which have a primary typology of green corridors, which their primary function is linear access/connectivity for people and nature. This primary typology has used the definition from the Swindon Green Infrastructure Strategy (2014).
- **Play Spaces** are categorised using Fields in Trust typologies (LAP, LEAP and NEAP). These categories were considered appropriate; however, it was agreed a single play space quantity standard would be applied across all play spaces, with separate access analysis undertaken for LAP, LEAP and NEAP. This approach provides the Council with greater flexibility when determining the type of play provision required for new developments and developer contributions, rather than prescribing a specific play typology.
- Site visits highlighted inconsistencies between the definitions of **Amenity Green Space** and **Parks and Gardens**. It was agreed that the definition of Parks and Gardens would

be amended to clearly distinguish the two typologies by identifying the following characteristics:

- *Contains a NEAP; and/or*
- *Are formally laid out e.g., with identifiable entrance points, formal paths, formal planted shrub beds and flower beds, car parking; and*
- *Are actively managed and accessible to the public.*
- Country Parks were also mapped separately but did not have a definition within the 2025 audit and assessment. Site visits identified that the majority exhibited the characteristics of natural and semi-natural green space. Each site was therefore reviewed and classified as either **natural and semi-natural green space** or **parks and gardens** typologies. As country parks are considered strategically important within Swindon, the sub-typology of **Country Park** was retained.

5.1.2 Revised typologies

This section sets out the agreed open space typologies which have had standards developed as part of this assessment, and those which have been mapped, but do not have standards. The typologies of open space have drawn on Fields in Trust guidance, PPG17 guidance and through discussions with the project team. The agreed list of typologies is seen to be locally derived and appropriate for the type and range of open spaces that exist within the study area.

Although sites have been categorised into different typologies, the multifunctionality of different types of open space is important to recognise e.g., amenity green space, accessible natural green space, parks and recreation grounds and allotments may all provide numerous functions and benefits such as providing space for recreation, habitat for wildlife conservation, flood alleviation, improving air quality, and providing food growing opportunities.

The following typologies have been used in this assessment:

Table 5 Swindon Borough Council Open Space Typologies

Typologies mapped with standards	Typologies mapped but no standards ¹⁵
● Allotments, orchards and community grow spaces ● Amenity Green Space (>0.1ha) ● Parks and Gardens ● Play Space (LAP, LEAP and NEAP) ● Natural and Semi Natural Green Space	● Outdoor Sport ● Churchyards and Cemeteries ● Green Corridors

5.2 Typologies with Standards

¹⁵ An explanation for not developing standards for these typologies is outlined in the following sections.

5.2.1 Allotments, orchards and community grow spaces



Figure 5 Allotments - Rushey Platt Allotments

Allotments, orchards and community growing spaces provide land for food growing and small-scale horticulture, contributing to health, community activity and the wider open space network.

5.2.2 Amenity Green Space



Figure 6 Amenity Green Space - Smitanbrook

Informal recreation spaces, communal green spaces in and around housing, village greens, urban commons and other incidental spaces which may include areas of hard spaces as well as green spaces. Amenity green spaces smaller than 0.1ha are not included within the analysis for this typology, as it is considered that these sites will have limited recreation function and therefore should not count towards public open space provision. However, it is noted that these spaces may have value in terms of their visual amenity and/or biodiversity value and contribute to the wider network of Green Infrastructure within the borough.

5.2.3 Parks and Gardens



Figure 7 Parks and Gardens – GWR Park

Urban parks and squares, country parks, regional parks, and formal gardens. These spaces include the following characteristics:

- Contains a NEAP; and/or
- Are formally laid out e.g., with identifiable entrance points, formal paths, formal planted shrub beds and flower beds, car parking; and
- Are actively managed and accessible to the public.

5.2.4 Play Space

Play spaces have been categorised into the following:

Local Area of Play (LAP)

Local areas for play or 'door-step' spaces for play and informal recreation (LAPs).



Figure 8 Local Area of Play – Rainham Road Play Area

Local Equipped Area of Play (LEAP)

Local equipped, or local landscapes, areas for play – for play and informal recreation (LEAPs).



Figure 9 Local Equipped Area of Play – Lillian Close Play Area

Neighbourhood Equipped Area of Play (NEAP)

Neighbourhood equipped areas for play – for play and informal recreation, and provision for children and young people (NEAPs).



Figure 10 *Neighbourhood Equipped Area of Play – Voyager Drive Play Area*

5.2.5 Natural and Semi Natural Green Space



Figure 11 *Natural and Semi Natural Green Space – Clouts Wood East*

Woodland, scrub, grassland, heath or moor, wetlands, open and running water and open access land which are accessible to the public.

5.3 Typologies with no quantity and access standards

Outdoor Sport

Sport pitches, courts, greens, tracks, trails or sports equipment (including schools and outdoor facilities not publicly accessible). This typology includes golf courses, where more often than not, public access is restricted. Nevertheless, these facilities are used by local people, and they form part of the Green Infrastructure network.

This typology is included in the mapping to show how these sites have been considered separately from freely accessible public parks and recreation grounds. However, they will not be subject to detailed analysis/standards.

Churchyards and cemeteries

Burial grounds and churchyards providing space for remembrance, quiet reflection, and often contributing to local heritage, biodiversity and informal recreation.

Churchyards and cemeteries have been identified and mapped where known, however, no quantity or access standard for provision will be set, as it is outside the scope of this study to make recommendations related to requirements for new provision.

Green Corridors

Green corridors (protected under policy EN1) were reviewed by Ethos and a number of these have been classified as open space where they are providing an important recreational function. Where the green corridors are primarily providing a linear access route/connectivity for people and wildlife, these have been left in the mapping as green corridors.

Therefore, there will be a number of open spaces which are also protected by the green corridor policy, and no standards are required to be set.

5.4 Existing provision of open space

5.4.1 Open space provision across the study area

The existing provision of open space¹⁶ is based on the Swindon Borough Council desktop mapping undertaken as part of the Open Space Audit and Assessment (2025) and site surveys undertaken by Ethos Environmental Planning (May 2026) which included:

¹⁶ As of June 2026, when the mapping was signed off by the Council. It is acknowledged that new open spaces will come forward, and there may have been sites that are used by the local community that have not been recorded. The open space dataset will be monitored and refined by the Council, taking into account the best information available at that time, to feed into future updates of this assessment.

- Desktop mapping by SBC using ordnance survey mapping, open street map (OSM) sources and planning application data.
- Site visits to check accessibility, boundaries, typologies and complete quality audits.

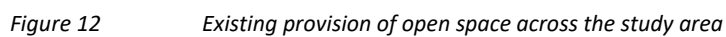
Detailed open space provision maps by ward are provided in Appendix 1 of this report, and a GIS database containing all mapped sites alongside quality results and access buffers has been provided to the Council.

The table below provides a study area wide summary for each open space typology which includes numbers of sites, total hectareage (ha), hectares per 1000 population (ha/1000), minimum, maximum and average sizes (ha).

Table 6 Summary of existing provision of open space across the study area

Typology	Number of Sites	Ha	Ha/1000	Minimum Size (ha)	Maximum Size (ha)	Average Size (ha)
Allotments, Orchards and Community Grow Spaces	49	45.10	0.18	0.02	4.45	0.92
Amenity Green Space (>0.1 ha)	186	204.04	0.83	0.10	30.62	1.09
Parks and Gardens	49	320.33	1.31	0.02	83.67	6.53
Play Space (LAP, LEAP and NEAP)	148	15.42	0.06	0.008	0.91	0.10
Natural and Semi Natural Green Space	55	627.64	2.57	0.02	74.50	11.41
Cemeteries and Churchyards	42	43.46	0.17	0.06	10.99	1.03
Green Corridors	57	149.18	0.61	0.03	11.30	2.61
Outdoor Sport	94	244.35	1.00	0.07	20.90	2.59

An indicative map showing the provision of open space across the study area is provided at Figure 12 below (more detailed maps by ward are provided at Appendix 1). Tables 9 and 10 below summarise the provision of open space for each typology, by ward and study area, in hectares (ha) and hectares per 1000 population (ha/1000).



5.4.2 Open space provision by ward and study area

Table 7 Existing provision of open space (hectares) by ward and study area

Ward	Allotments, Orchards and Community Grow Spaces	Amenity Green Space > 0.1Ha	Parks and Gardens	Outdoor Sports	Play (LAP, LEAP & NEAP)	Natural and Semi-Natural Green Space	Green Corridors	Churchyards and Cemeteries
Badbury Park, Eldene & Liden	0	24.71	25.28	7.81	1.25	20.08	20.47	0
Blunsdon	1	2.33	0	8.64	0.28	74.9	0	1.93
Broadgreen	2.57	0.96	0	11.3	0.22	0	2.91	0
Chiseldon & Ridgeway	1.93	3.02	0	23.39	0.21	19.09	6.89	3.47
Covingham & Nythe	0.92	7.8	5.42	0.03	0.52	4.56	3.87	0
Gorse Hill	0	5.45	2.29	7.61	0.05	0.12	0	0.2
Haydon Wick	2.26	13.89	3.11	1.52	0.64	26.85	5.03	7.68
Highworth	3.02	6.69	37.29	23.33	0.25	8.01	0	2.71
Kingshill	3.35	6.78	0	0.27	0.26	4.94	3.74	4.09
Lower Stratton	0.94	5.18	1.2	11.98	0.55	1.13	2.13	3.15
Lydiard, Freshbrook & Toothill	0.65	15.16	62.18	11.67	1.09	5.25	35.88	0.15
Old Town & Lawn	4.46	16.15	68.6	11.8	1.27	77.49	12.11	2.21
Parks	1.55	17.33	0.04	0.59	0.04	0	0	0.69
Penhill & Pinehurst	3.06	16.34	0.17	11.01	0.17	2.15	4.06	0.33
Priory Vale	0	16.85	4.88	0.64	0.58	49.99	6.51	0
Queen's Park	0	1.81	8.86	0	0.57	0	0	0.81
Rodbourne Cheney	0	7.15	4.67	5.61	0.13	0	0.89	0.87
Rodbourne Ferndale & Western	10	8	4.9	45.73	1.67	47.88	5.99	0.18
Shaw & Westlea	0	7.06	34.74	1.21	1.34	63.58	13.19	0.53
South Marston	0.91	0	0	2.58	0.39	51.13	0	0.35

Ward	Allotments, Orchards and Community Grow Spaces	Amenity Green Space > 0.1Ha	Parks and Gardens	Outdoor Sports	Play (LAP, LEAP & NEAP)	Natural and Semi-Natural Green Space	Green Corridors	Churchyards and Cemeteries
St Andrews East	0.28	3.14	31.73	0.16	0.88	3.44	3.97	0.18
St Andrews West & Tadpole	1.84	7.52	13.09	4.57	0.85	9.23	8.96	0
Upper Stratton	1.43	0.32	4.69	19.85	0.68	53.76	9.81	11.73
Walcot	0.77	2.93	5.09	9.23	0.41	1.87	0	0.4
Wroughton & Wichelstowe	4.15	7.45	2.05	23.81	1.14	101.79	2.31	1.8
Study Wide	45.09	204.02	320.28	244.34	15.44	627.24	148.72	43.46

Table 8 Existing provision of open space (hectares per 1000 population) by ward and study area

Ward	Allotments, Orchards and Community Grow Spaces	Amenity Green Space > 0.1Ha	Parks and Gardens	Outdoor Sports	Play (LAP, LEAP & NEAP)	Natural and Semi-Natural Green Space	Green Corridors	Churchyards and Cemeteries
Badbury Park, Eldene & Liden	0.00	2.13	2.17	0.67	0.11	1.73	1.76	0.00
Blunsdon	0.28	0.65	0.00	2.42	0.08	20.97	0.00	0.54
Broadgreen	0.30	0.11	0.00	1.30	0.03	0.00	0.33	0.00
Chiseldon & Ridgeway	0.33	0.51	0.00	3.95	0.04	3.22	1.16	0.59
Covingham & Nythe	0.11	0.92	0.64	0.00	0.06	0.54	0.46	0.00
Gorse Hill	0.00	1.11	0.47	1.55	0.01	0.02	0.00	0.04
Haydon Wick	0.18	1.13	0.25	0.12	0.05	2.18	0.41	0.62

Ward	Allotments, Orchards and Community Grow Spaces	Amenity Green Space > 0.1Ha	Parks and Gardens	Outdoor Sports	Play (LAP, LEAP & NEAP)	Natural and Semi-Natural Green Space	Green Corridors	Churchyards and Cemeteries
Highworth	0.36	0.79	4.41	2.76	0.03	0.95	0.00	0.32
Kingshill	0.41	0.83	0.00	0.03	0.03	0.60	0.46	0.50
Lower Stratton	0.08	0.43	0.10	0.99	0.05	0.09	0.18	0.26
Lydiard, Freshbrook & Toothill	0.05	1.11	4.57	0.86	0.08	0.39	2.63	0.01
Old Town & Lawn	0.31	1.14	4.84	0.83	0.09	5.46	0.85	0.16
Parks	0.14	1.61	0.00	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.06
Penhill & Pinehurst	0.28	1.48	0.02	1.00	0.02	0.19	0.37	0.03
Priory Vale	0.00	1.28	0.37	0.05	0.04	3.81	0.50	0.00
Queen's Park	0.00	0.13	0.64	0.00	0.04	0.00	0.00	0.06
Rodbourne Cheney	0.00	0.85	0.55	0.67	0.02	0.00	0.11	0.10
Rodbourne Ferndale & Western	0.71	0.57	0.35	3.26	0.12	3.41	0.43	0.01
Shaw & Westlea	0.00	0.54	2.68	0.09	0.10	4.91	1.02	0.04
South Marston	0.97	0.00	0.00	2.76	0.42	54.74	0.00	0.37
St Andrews East	0.03	0.34	3.45	0.02	0.10	0.37	0.43	0.02
St Andrews West & Tadpole	0.15	0.62	1.07	0.38	0.07	0.76	0.74	0.00
Upper Stratton	0.18	0.04	0.58	2.44	0.08	6.62	1.21	1.44
Walcot	0.09	0.36	0.62	1.12	0.05	0.23	0.00	0.05
Wroughton & Wichelstowe	0.46	0.83	0.23	2.64	0.13	11.31	0.26	0.20
Study Wide	0.18	0.84	1.31	1.00	0.06	2.57	0.61	0.18

6.0 THE DEVELOPMENT OF STANDARDS

6.1 General

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

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

- **Quantity standards:** These are determined by the analysis of existing quantity, consideration of existing local and national standards and benchmarks and evidence gathered from the local needs assessment. It is important that quantity standards are locally derived and are realistic and achievable. The recommended standards need to be robust, evidence based and deliverable through new development and future mechanisms of contributions through on-site or off-site provision.
- **Accessibility standards:** These reflect the needs of all potential users including those with physical or sensory disabilities, young and older people alike. Spaces likely to be used on a frequent and regular basis need to be within easy walking distance and to have safe access. Other facilities where visits are longer but perhaps less frequent, for example country parks, can be further away. Consideration is also given to existing local or national standards and benchmarks.
- **Quality standards:** The standards for each form of provision are derived from the quality audit and existing good practice and include recommended policies to guide the provision of new open space through development in the future.

The principles behind applying the standards

The standards are explained and justified in more detail below. The efficacy of standards will depend heavily on the way that they are applied. Here are some important and interrelated principles:

- An inability to provide sufficient quantity might be at least partly compensated for through better quality and access. Investment in the quality and robustness of open space can also often improve the 'carrying capacity' of open spaces and therefore offset some shortcomings in quantitative provision.
- New and improved open space should be designed to optimise multi-functionality to benefit both people and nature/the wider environment e.g., offering wildlife habitats, flood management opportunities, providing recreation opportunities etc. Wherever possible it should heighten residents' overall appreciation, understanding of, and respect for that environment so it becomes an important and valued local resource. Good practice guidance for the design of high-quality green space should draw on the

Green Flag Award guidance and Natural England's Green Infrastructure Standards Framework.

- Standards will need to be applied to a variety of circumstances, and flexibility of interpretation is the key to success. A pragmatic approach will be essential given the range of circumstances in which they will be used.

6.2 Allotments, orchards and community grow spaces

Table 9 Summary of quantity and access standards for allotments

Recommended New Quantity Standard	Recommended New Access Standard
0.3 ha/1000 population	15 minutes' walk-time (720m straight line)
Existing Quantity Standard	Existing Access Standard
0.3 ha/1000 population	600 metres

Existing national or local standards

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

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

The National Allotment Society guidance (21st Century Allotments in New Developments) recommends offering a variety of allotment plot sizes ensures inclusivity and enables participation across all life stages. While there is no minimum plot size, the legal maximum is 1012m². The National Allotment Society recommends 250 square metres as a standard size, based on the historical "ten pole" plot. This size supports efficient design, allows temporary subdivision into smaller plots, and offers flexibility to adjust to future demands. Designing for this standard ensures economical and practical infrastructure.

The current Swindon adopted standards includes a quantity standard of 0.3ha/1000 for allotments based on the 2014 open space assessment. The 2014 open space assessment also recommended a 600 meters access standard.

Justification of the quantity standard for allotments, orchards and community grow spaces

- The existing average level of provision across the study area is 0.18ha/1000.
- The provision of allotments varies by ward, with 6 out of the 25 wards having no provision, and some having comparatively high levels of provision (the highest being 0.97/1,000 in South Marston).

- The 2025 residents' survey highlighted that there was a need for more allotment provision.
- The current Local Plan adopted standards includes a quantity standard of 0.3ha/1000 for allotments (2014 open space assessment).
- The propensity for higher density new housing with smaller gardens is likely to increase demand.
- The research undertaken as part of this assessment highlights the value of open space such as allotments in providing access to outdoor physical activity and associated benefits for health and wellbeing.
- The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG) recommends 20 plots per 1,000 households of a standard plot size of 0.025ha, for Swindon this would equate to 0.5ha/1000. While 20 plots per 1,000 households is the baseline, the Society recognizes that high local demand often warrants splitting full plots into smaller half or quarter plots to accommodate more growers on a waiting list. Based on half plot sizes, this would equate to 0.25ha/1000.
- With the above in mind, it is considered that a quantity standard for allotments that is slightly higher than the existing average level of provision across the study area is justified and in line with the current adopted standard. Therefore, a minimum standard of **0.3 ha/1000** is recommended for analysing existing provision and for new provision. This is considered to be deliverable through new development and will highlight those areas with greatest need for new provision.

Justification of a new access standard for allotments, orchards and community grow spaces

- It is considered that the availability of allotments is more important than having them very close to home, nevertheless there is some demand for facilities relatively nearby.
- The concept of the 15-minute neighbourhood is growing momentum which, which aims to transform urban spaces into connected and self-sufficient cities/neighbourhoods. This means that a resident can fulfil their basic needs such as gaining access to local goods, services and leisure within a 15-minute walk or cycle ride of their home. This is also in line with Natural England's headline accessible green space standard.
- Therefore, a standard of no more than **15 minutes' walk time** (or 720 metres straight line) is recommended.

Justification of a new quality standard for allotments

Quality audits were not undertaken at allotments.

A number of general recommendations are made in relation to quality, which should include the following where possible (especially applicable to new provision):

- Well-drained soil which is capable of cultivation to a reasonable standard.
- A sunny, open aspect preferably on a southern facing slope.
- Limited overhang from trees and buildings either bounding or within the site.

- Adequate lockable storage facilities, and a good water supply within easy walking distance of individual plots.
- Provision of facilities for rainwater harvesting.
- Provision for composting facilities.
- Secure boundary fencing.
- Good access within the site both for pedestrians and vehicles.
- Good vehicular access into the site and adequate parking and manoeuvring space.
- A community hut/space.
- Disabled access.
- Toilets.
- Notice Boards.

6.3 Amenity Green Space

Table 10 Summary of quantity and access standards for amenity green space

Recommended New Quantity Standard	Recommended New Access Standard
0.7 ha/1000 population (minimum size 0.1 ha)	10 minutes' walk time (480m straight line)
Existing Quantity Standard	Existing Access Standard
None	None

Existing national or local standards

The Fields in Trust Standards 'Creating great spaces for all' (2024) report proposes a minimum standard of 0.6ha/1000 population of amenity green space. FIT recommend that the quantity guidelines are adjusted to take account of local circumstances.

Swindon's adopted standards doesn't set a specific amenity green space standard, but it is incorporated into the general recreational area's quantity requirements of 1ha/1000 population, with an access standard of 2km.

Justification of a new quantity standard for amenity green space

- The existing average level of provision across the study area is 0.84ha/1000 (for sites greater than 0.1 ha in size).
- Provision varies by ward, with some areas falling below the average, and others far exceeding it.
- There is a very large amenity green space (Richard Jefferies Parkway, consisting of two areas which total 27ha) which is inflating the average level of provision across the study area. When this site is removed from the quantity analysis, the average level of provision of amenity green space across the study area is 0.72ha/1000.
- The Fields in Trust "Creating great spaces for all" report proposes a minimum guideline of 0.6ha/1000 population of amenity green space.
- Swindon is characterised by a significant proportion of amenity green space, which contributes to the borough's green corridors. This is reflected in the 2025 residents' survey, which highlighted the need to protect all existing open space.

- Considering the above, it is recommended that a standard is set in line with existing provision levels which is slightly higher than the FIT standard but reflects the characteristics and importance of amenity green space within the Swindon borough. Therefore, a minimum standard of **0.7 ha/1000** is recommended for analysing existing levels of provision and for new provision of amenity green space.
- Just because a ward may have levels of provision above the minimum standard, it does not mean these spaces are surplus to requirement (as access and quality also need to be considered - they may also be able to help address shortfalls in other types of open space, or they may be important in terms of heritage, biodiversity, green infrastructure etc). The minimum standard for assessing existing provision serves to highlight those areas with low levels of provision, and therefore where new provision should be focused.
- When delivering new provision, consideration should be given to combining this with the natural green space standard (i.e. a combined standard of **2.15ha/1000**) in order to provide bigger, more biodiverse spaces.
- The minimum size of a space that will be considered acceptable and count towards open space provision is recommended to be 0.1 ha in size. This will avoid a proliferation of small amenity spaces which have no real recreation function. Any spaces below this size will be acceptable in terms of their visual amenity but would not count towards the required level of provision.

Justification of a new access standard for amenity green space

- Amenity green spaces provide important local access to green space for informal recreation and therefore should be close to home.
- Research into local authorities which are of a similar size and characteristics to Swindon have an adopted walk time 400 – 480 metres (Telford and Wrekin, Milton Keynes and Cheltenham).
- Therefore, a standard of no more than **10 minutes' walk time** (480 metres straight line) is recommended.

Justification of a new quality standard for amenity green space

The value of informal/amenity green space must be recognised especially within housing areas, where it can provide important local opportunities for play, exercise, visual amenity and biodiversity that are almost immediately accessible. It is important to strike the correct balance between having accessible and attractive space to meet the needs of the community and having too much which may be difficult to manage properly and therefore a potential liability and source of nuisance. It is important that amenity green space should be capable of use for at least some forms of public recreation activity.

It is therefore recommended that, in addition to the minimum size threshold identified above (0.1ha), amenity green spaces should be subject to landscape design, in pursuit of the following quality objectives:

- Capable of supporting informal recreation such as a kickabout, space for dog walking or space to sit and relax;

- Include high-quality planting of native trees and/or shrubs to create landscape structure and biodiversity value;
- Include paths along main desire lines (lit where appropriate);
- Be designed to ensure easy maintenance
- Be designed to ensure safety and personal security.

6.4 Parks and Gardens

Table 11 Summary of quantity and access standards for parks and gardens

Recommended New Quantity Standard	Recommended New Access Standard
0.8 ha/1000 population	15 minutes' walk time (720 metres straight line)
Existing Quantity Standard	Existing Access Standard
None	None

Existing national or local standards

The Fields in Trust Standards 'Creating great spaces for all' (2024) report proposes a minimum guideline of 0.80ha/1000 population for parks and gardens.

Swindon's adopted standards do not set a specific parks and gardens standard, but it is incorporated into the general recreational area quantity requirements of 1ha/1000 population, with an access standard of 2km.

Justification of a new quantity standard for parks and gardens

- The existing average level of provision across the study area is 1.31ha/1000.
- This figure includes two large country parks which are inflating the average level of provision across the study area (these are Coate Water Park: 61ha and Lydiard Country Park: 54ha). When these sites are removed from the quantity analysis, the existing average level of provision is 0.84ha/1000.
- Green spaces including parks are vital to physical and mental health and wellbeing. This was demonstrated throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and has been highlighted through the consultation, and policy review undertaken as part of this study.
- The 2025 residents' survey identified that parks and gardens are one of the most well used types of open space.
- The Fields in Trust (FIT) Guidance "Creating great spaces for all" proposes a minimum guideline of 0.80ha/1000 population for parks and gardens. In addition to this they also recommend 1.6ha/1000 population for all outdoor sports.
- Considering the above, a quantity standard in line with existing levels of provision (with the largest two parks and gardens removed) and the FIT guidance is recommended, at **0.80ha/1000** for analysing existing provision and the requirements for new provision.

- It should be reiterated that this standard is intended to provide sufficient landscape space. The separate Playing Pitch Assessment and Strategy will deal with the detail around outdoor sport requirements.

Justification of a new access standard for parks and gardens

- FIT “Creating great spaces for all” proposes a walking distance guideline of 710m for parks and gardens and 1,200m for playing pitches and outdoor sports.
- Natural England’s green space standard for accessible green space recommends that accessible green space should be within a 15-minute walk time.
- Considering the above, a standard of no more than **15 minutes’ walk time** (or 720 metres straight line) is recommended.

Justification of a new quality standard for park and gardens

National guidance relevant to this typology is provided in the ‘Green Flag’ quality standard for parks which sets out benchmark criteria for quality open spaces. Guidance is also available from Building with Nature and the Natural England Green Infrastructure Standards Framework, which references both the Green Flag award and also the Sensory Trust’s guide ‘By all Reasonable Means – Least Restrictive Access to the Outdoors’.

For outdoor sports space, Sport England and the various national governing bodies of sport have produced a wealth of useful documents outlining the quality standards for facilities such as playing pitches, changing rooms, MUGAs and tennis courts plus associated ancillary facilities. It is recommended that the guidance provided in these documents is adopted by the Council, and that all new and improved provision seeks to meet these guidelines.

All parks and gardens were visited as part of the quality audits. Results highlighted that 73% of parks and gardens were assessed as being of excellent quality, with the remaining 27% scoring as good (6 sites) or fair with 1+ poor criterion (1 site).

6.5 Play Space (LAP, LEAP and NEAP)

Table 12 Summary of quantity and access standards for play space

Recommended New Quantity Standard	Recommended New Access Standard
0.3 ha/1000 population	LAP – 5 minutes’ walk time LEAP – 10 minutes’ walk time NEAP – 15 minutes’ walk time
Existing Quantity Standard	Existing Access Standard
0.3 ha/1000 population	LAP - 250 metres (approx. 5 minutes walking time) LEAP - 250 metres (approx. 5 minutes walking time) NEAP - 500 metres (approx. 10 minutes walking time)

Existing national or local standards

Fields in Trust recommend a total play space of 0.55ha/1000 population, split as follows:

- Equipped/designated play areas: 0.25ha/1000 population, with a walking distance of 100m for Local Areas for Play (LAPs), 400m for Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs) and 1000m for Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs).
- Informal play provision (MUGAs and skateboard parks): 0.30ha/1000 population and a walking distance of 700m.

The following minimum size guidelines are recommended by FIT:

Local Areas for Play (LAP) - need not be equipped)

- Minimum active playable space of 100 sq. m (need not be equipped).

Locally Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP)

- Minimum activity zone area of 400 sq. m.

Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAP)

- Minimum activity zone area of 1000 sq. m

Informal Play for all

- Minimum activity zone area of 1000 sq. m

The current Swindon adopted standards includes a quantity standard of 0.3ha/1000 for children's and teenagers play area provision and uses the Fields in Trust 2008 access standards.

Justification of new quantity standards for play spaces

- The existing average level of provision of play space across the study area is 0.06 ha/1,000.
- The 2025 residents' survey identified that there is a need for more children and youth play space.
- FIT guidance "Creating great spaces for all" recommends provision of 0.55ha/1000 population with 0.25ha of equipped/designated play areas, and 0.30ha/1000 for informal play provision (MUGAs and skateboard parks). These standards are considered to be high and difficult to deliver (this is in Ethos' experience).
- The current Local Plan adopted standards includes a quantity standard of 0.3ha/1,000 (2014 open space assessment).
- Considering the above factors, it is considered that a quantity standard for children's play space should be kept at the existing standard (**0.3 ha/1000**), as the existing provision is in a large deficit. These standards are recommended for analysing existing provision and the requirements for new provision for LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs.

- It is considered that the minimum size of equipped play provision would be 100 sqm (0.01ha). In addition to this, buffer zones (which will take a landscape design approach) will be provided between 5m and 30m, depending on the size of the play area. Proximity to housing requires careful consideration in order to avoid conflict.

Justification of new access standards for play spaces

- Generally, there is a requirement for children's play spaces closer to home, due to the reliance on walking, whereas for youth play spaces older children can walk further and will often use other modes of transport such as cycling.
- This is reflected in the FIT "Creating great spaces for all", which proposes a walking distance guideline of 100m for Local Areas for Play (LAPs), 400m for Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs) and 1000m for Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs). For MUGA's and skateboard parks FIT propose a walking distance guideline of 700m.
- Considering the above, the following access standards are recommended:
 - LAP – **5 minutes' walk time**
 - LEAP – **10 minutes' walk time**
 - NEAP – **15 minutes' walk times**

Justification of a new quality standard for play spaces

It is expected that the design of new play provision would take a landscape design approach (designed to fit its surroundings and enhance the local environment), incorporating play into the overall landscape masterplan for new development, and could include natural play e.g. grassy mounds, planting, logs, and boulders to make a more attractive and playable setting for equipment, and planting which can also help attract birds and other wildlife to literally bring the play space alive. In densely populated urban areas with little or no natural or green space, this more natural approach can help soften the hard, urban landscape.

The challenge for play providers is to provide the best possible play opportunities, and to create play spaces which will attract children, capture their imagination and give them scope to play in new, more exciting, and more creative ways e.g. moving away from fencing play areas (where it is safe to do so), so that the equipment is integrated with its setting, making it feel more inviting to explore and so people are free to use the space without feeling restricted.

Play England's guidance, including **Design for Play** and **Better Places to Play through Planning**, continues to provide a useful framework for the design, accessibility and quality of play spaces.

PiPA (Plan Inclusive Play Areas) offers an evidence-based framework for designing and assessing inclusive play environments. Local authorities should seek to ensure that new and enhanced play spaces are accessible, inclusive and meet the needs of children and families with a wide range of abilities.

Make space for girls is a campaign for parks and public spaces to be designed for girls and young women, not just boys and young men. In their 'Research Background Report (2023)' they identify that currently provision for young people consists almost entirely of facilities such as skate parks, MUGA (aka fenced pitches) and BMX tracks. These are seen as meeting the needs of all young people when in fact they are places dominated by boys. Girls feel that parks are unsafe, and offer nothing for them, yet these issues are seldom acknowledged or addressed. Race and national heritage, religion, culture, relative deprivation and disability all affect girls' access to public spaces. Many boys are also not interested in the facilities which are on offer or don't feel they can access them. Furthermore, improving parks, in particular lighting and toilets, could have benefits for many other groups too, such as older people, women and other marginalised genders, and the disabled. One of the most important actions is to ask girls what they want and provide facilities which they are interested in and will use. Only by doing this can councils, designers and planners find out what girls want from parks, and what the problems are with the current provision.

All play spaces were visited as part of the quality audits. 76% of sites were assessed as being of excellent or good quality. 21% were assessed as being of fair quality, and only 2% scored as poor quality.

6.6 Natural and Semi-Natural Green Space

Table 13 Summary of quantity and access standards for natural and semi-natural green space

Recommended New Quantity Standard	Recommended New Access Standard
1.45 ha/1000 population (for new provision)	15 minutes' walk time (720m straight line) and Natural England's Accessible Green Space standards
Existing Quantity Standard	Existing Access Standard
None	None

Existing national or local standards

Natural England's **National Green Infrastructure Framework (2023)** establishes national standards for GI in England. They recommend the following Accessible Greenspace Standards (AGS):

Capacity criteria: Local authorities have at least **3 hectares of publicly accessible greenspace per 1,000 population** (n.b. not only accessible natural greenspace).

Size and Proximity criteria: The Green Infrastructure Headline Standards states everyone should have access to good quality green and blue spaces close to home for health and wellbeing and contact with nature with an initial focus on **access to green and blue spaces within 15 minutes' walk from home**.

Quality criteria: Accessible greenspace meets the **Green Flag Award Criteria**, (Ellicott, 2016) and **best practice in accessibility for all:** By All Reasonable Means: Least restrictive access to the outdoors (The Sensory Trust, 2020).

Natural England no longer recommend access standards specifically for natural or semi-natural open space. Analysis of access to all open space typologies against the AGS is provided in Section 7.3.2.

The Fields in Trust Standards 'Creating great spaces for all' (2024) also recommends a minimum quantity standard of 1.8ha per 1000 population for natural and semi-natural green space.

Swindon's adopted standards doesn't set a specific natural and semi-natural green space standard, but it is incorporated into the general recreational area's quantity requirements of 1ha/1000 population, with an access standard of 2km.

Justification of a new quantity standard for natural and semi-natural green space

- The existing average level of provision of accessible natural green space across the study area is 2.57ha/1000.
- There are a number of very large accessible natural green spaces which are inflating the average levels of provision across the study area. When the five largest spaces are removed (Stanton Country Park: 74ha, Woodland Trust Kingsdown MOS: 53ha, Nightingale Wood: 51ha, Barbury Castle: 49ha; and Mouldon Country Park: 48ha) from the quantity analysis, the average level of provision across the study area is 1.44ha/1000.
- The 2025 residents' survey highlighted that natural and semi natural were one of the most well used types of open space.
- The importance of natural green spaces (along with other open spaces) is recognised not only in their contribution to recreation and health and wellbeing, but also importantly in terms of Green Infrastructure and nature conservation/biodiversity and climate change mitigation/adaptation.
- The FIT guidance "Creating great spaces for all" also recommends a quantity standard of 1.8ha per 1000 population for natural and semi-natural green space.
- Considering the above, a quantity standard of **1.45ha/1,000** population is recommended for new and existing provision. The standard is considered realistic and achievable given the characteristics of Swindon and the nature and location of proposed new development.
- Just because a ward may have levels of provision above the minimum standard, it does not mean these spaces are surplus to requirement (as access and quality also need to be considered, and these spaces may be important in terms of heritage, biodiversity, green infrastructure etc). The minimum standard for assessing existing provision serves to highlight those areas with low levels of provision, and therefore where new provision should be focused.
- As already mentioned under the quantity standard for amenity green space, when delivering new provision, consideration should be given to combining this with the amenity green space standard (i.e., a combined standard of **2.15ha/1000**) in order to provide bigger, more biodiverse spaces, in accordance with the NPPF.

Justification of new access standards for natural and semi-natural green space

- The FIT guidance “Creating great spaces for all” recommends a walking distance of 720m for natural and semi-natural green space.
- Natural England’s green space standard for accessible green space recommends that accessible green space should be within a 15-minute walk time. The standards based on different size thresholds will be applied to identify key gaps in access.
- It is therefore recommended that an access standard of **15 minutes’ walk time** (720m straight line) is used to identify key gaps in access to all accessible natural green spaces, in addition to the Natural England Accessible Green Space Standards.

Justification of a new quality standards for natural and semi-natural green space

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

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

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

The above should objectives to pursue and encourage at all times.

Protecting, creating, enhancing and retrofitting natural and semi-natural features in urban environments is a cost-effective and win-win approach to delivering positive outcomes for people and wildlife. The Natural England GI Standards and Building with Nature benchmark quality standards for the design and delivery of GI should be endorsed and advocated by the Council and included within their GI policy where possible.

Natural and semi-natural green spaces above >0.5ha were assessed for quality. 82% of sites were assessed to be of excellent or good quality, with the remaining 17% being assessed as fair quality with 1+ poor criterion.

6.7 Summary of recommended open space quantity and access standards

Table 14 Summary of recommended open space quantity and access standards

Typology	Quantity standards (ha/1000 population)	Access standard
Allotments, orchards and community grow spaces	0.3	15 minutes' walk time (720m straight line)
Amenity Green Space (sites above 0.1 ha)	0.7	10 minutes' walk time (480m straight line)
Parks and Gardens	0.8	15 minutes' walk time (720m straight line)
Play Space (LAP, LEAP and NEAP)	0.3	LAP – 5 minutes' walk time LEAP – 10 minutes' walk time NEAP – 15 minutes' walk time
Natural and Semi-Natural Green Space	1.45	15 minutes' walk time (720m straight line)
Total for new provision (ha/1000 population)	3.55	

These quantity and access standards are in line with Natural England's recommended capacity and proximity standards for Green Infrastructure (summarised in Section 6.6).

7.0 APPLYING LOCAL STANDARDS

7.1 Introduction

This part of the report uses the proposed new standards in respect of ‘quantity’, ‘quality’ and ‘access’ to analyse open space provision across the study area. This section provides an overview of provision and supply across the study area and individual wards, with maps by ward provided in Appendices 1, 2 and 3.

It also looks at the wider value of open space using a number of measurable criteria, with a summary of the methodology and results provided. The full results are provided as part of the GIS database.

Quantity analysis

The quantity of provision is assessed using the recommended quantity standards for each of the typologies where a quantity standard has been developed. Recommended standards are expressed as hectares of open space per 1,000 population.

The quantity assessment looks at the existing levels of provision, then uses the recommended standard to assess the required level of provision. From this a calculation is made of the supply, which will either be sufficient or insufficient.

Access analysis

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

However, the key to access analysis, is understanding the picture at a more localised level, therefore, maps showing local access provision by ward are included in Appendix 2.

Quality and value analysis

This section of the report makes analysis of each typology across the study area; it highlights any common themes or issues that have arisen from the consultation and provides a summary of the quality audit results at the study area level. The detailed quality audits have been provided to the Council as part of the GIS database, and maps by ward are provided at Appendix 3 which show the ranking of each open space audited (excellent, good, fair, or poor). The detailed scoring is provided at Appendix 4.

Alongside the site visits/quality assessments, desktop criteria have been used to help indicate the wider value of open space, in terms of their key functions and contribution to the green and blue infrastructure network. This analysis only covers a select number of criteria for which spatial GIS datasets were available, and it is recognised that there are other areas of

open space value that have not been considered. The detailed scoring is provided at Appendix 5.

7.2 Application of quantity standards

7.2.1 Current supply against the standards

The table below shows the existing supply (in hectares) of open space for each typology for each of the wards and at the study area level. The supply is calculated using the population figures provided by the council (see Section 1.4.3) and the quantity of open space (Section 5) compared to what the requirements for open space are against the recommended standards (Section 6).

Positive figures show where the area meets the quantity standard for the open space typology, and negative figures show where there is a shortfall in supply against the quantity standard.

Although these figures highlight where there are shortfalls in supply against the quantity standards and therefore where new provision should be sought, in many cases new provision will not be achievable (unless, for example, through new development). These figures can help inform decisions about the form of new open spaces and improvements to existing open spaces, rather than it being imperative that every ward must achieve a ‘+’ number.

It is important that these figures are considered alongside the access analysis (see section below), as even if a ward is showing a shortfall in the supply of a particular typology, there may be access to open space in a neighbouring ward.

Table 15 Open space supply (ha) by ward and study area

Ward	Allotments, Orchard and Community Food Growing	Amenity Green Space (>0.1ha)	Parks and Gardens	Play Space	Natural and Semi-Natural Green Space
Badbury Park, Eldene & Linden	-3.49	16.57	15.98	-2.24	3.22
Blunsdon	-0.07	-0.17	-2.86	-0.79	69.72
Broadgreen	-0.04	-5.13	-6.96	-2.39	-12.62
Chiseldon & Ridgeway	0.15	-1.13	-4.74	-1.57	10.50
Covingham & Nythe	-1.62	1.88	-1.35	-2.02	-7.70
Gorse Hill	-1.47	2.01	-1.64	-1.42	-7.00
Haydon Wick	-1.44	5.26	-6.75	-3.06	8.97
Highworth	0.49	0.78	30.53	-2.28	-4.24
Kingshill	0.89	1.05	-6.55	-2.20	-6.93
Lower Stratton	-2.68	-3.26	-8.44	-3.07	-16.35

Ward	Allotments, Orchard and Community Food Growing	Amenity Green Space (>0.1ha)	Parks and Gardens	Play Space	Natural and Semi-Natural Green Space
Lydiard, Fresbrook & Toothill	-3.44	5.63	51.29	-3.00	-14.49
Old Town & Lawn	0.21	6.22	57.26	-2.98	56.93
Parks	-1.68	9.78	-8.59	-3.19	-15.64
Penhill & Pinehurst	-0.26	8.60	-8.67	-3.15	-13.87
Priory Vale	-3.94	7.66	-5.62	-3.36	30.95
Queen's Park	-4.15	-7.87	-2.20	-3.58	-20.05
Rodbourne Cheney	-2.53	1.25	-2.07	-2.40	-12.21
Rodbourne Ferndale & Western	5.79	-1.83	-6.33	-2.54	27.52
Shaw & Westlea	-3.89	-2.01	24.37	-2.55	44.79
South Marston	0.63	-0.65	-0.75	0.11	49.78
St Andrews East	-2.48	-3.30	24.37	-1.88	-9.90
St Andrews West & Tadpole	-1.81	-1.01	3.34	-2.80	-8.44
Upper Stratton	-1.01	-5.36	-1.81	-1.76	41.98
Walcot	-1.69	-2.81	-1.48	-2.05	-10.03
Wroughton & Wichelstowe	1.45	1.15	-5.15	-1.56	88.74
Study Wide	-28.07	33.31	125.18	-57.72	273.62

Table 15 shows that open space provision varies across wards and typologies, with some meeting the standards and some falling below. Looking across the study area there are overall shortfalls in allotments and play space. There is further variation at the ward level, although all wards with the exception of South Marston have a shortfall in play space. Natural and semi-natural green space has the most variation in supply with some wards with surpluses over 50ha and some having shortfalls of more than 10ha. This will be an important consideration when determining the need for on-site open space as part of new development.

Just because a typology is in sufficient supply, this does not mean it is 'surplus' to requirements, as the access and quantity standards also need to be considered alongside the quantity requirements – this may indicate a need to protect or re-designate/re-design an existing open space to reduce shortfalls in other types of open space, or prevent shortfalls from getting worse (see Section 8.2 and 8.4 of this report). There may also be other factors such as a site's nature conservation, historic or cultural value, or its contribution to the Green and Blue Infrastructure network which mean it should be protected (see Section 8.2 of this report).

7.2.2 Future need for open space

The Council have provided a draft housing allocation figure for the borough as a whole. This figure consists of permissions and strategic allocations. This figure is subject to change as the Regulation 19 Plan is developed.

Over the new Local Plan period approximately 25,796 homes will be delivered. Using an average household size of 2.4 persons/household (based on Census 2021), this results in an estimated population increase of 61,910.

Based on an estimated population increase of 61,910, this is likely to result in the following indicative open space requirements up to 2043 (using the quantity standards set out in Section 6.7, Table 16):

- Allotments, orchards and community grow spaces: 18.57ha
- Amenity green space: 43.33ha
- Parks and gardens: 49.52ha
- Play space: 18.58ha
- Natural and semi-natural green space: 89.77ha

The figures for open space requirements are for indicative purposes - the calculations are based on all open space being provided on site (which will not be the reality in some cases, as consideration of the individual development size and proximity to existing open spaces needs to be considered (see Section 8)).

More detail around the application of the open space standards and a recommended costings methodology for open space provision/contributions is provided in Section 8.7 of this report.

The effectiveness of standards will depend heavily on the way that they are applied. Some important principles have been set out in Section 6.1 to help guide their application.

7.3 Application of access standards

This section provides an overview of access to different types of open space typologies across the study area, using the access standards summarised in Table 16. The maps are intended to provide an overview and are for illustrative purposes only. More detailed maps by ward are provided for each typology within Appendix 2.

The maps show the walk-time buffers for each open space typology. They are created in ArcGIS Pro using service area analysis (supported by the ArcGIS Network Analyst extension). Unlike straight-line buffers which assume unimpeded movement in any direction, the service areas model follows paths and roads that allow pedestrian traffic and finds solutions that optimise travel time. The walking speed is set to 5 kilometres/3.1 miles an hour¹⁷.

¹⁷ This is in line with the British Heart Foundation state as an average walking pace on country and forestry footpaths: <https://www.bhf.org.uk/how-you-can-help/events/training-zone/walking-training-zone/walking-faqs>

Table 2 (Section 2.4 of this report) shows how walk-time relates to straight-line distances and pedestrian route distances. The straight-line walking distances do not take into account roads or barriers to access and so the actual route walked (the pedestrian route) is generally further i.e., straight-line distances are around 60% of actual distances. The more basic straight-line buffer access analysis approach has been used for the Natural England Accessible Green Space standards, which define straight line buffers and not walk time.

7.3.1 Access maps

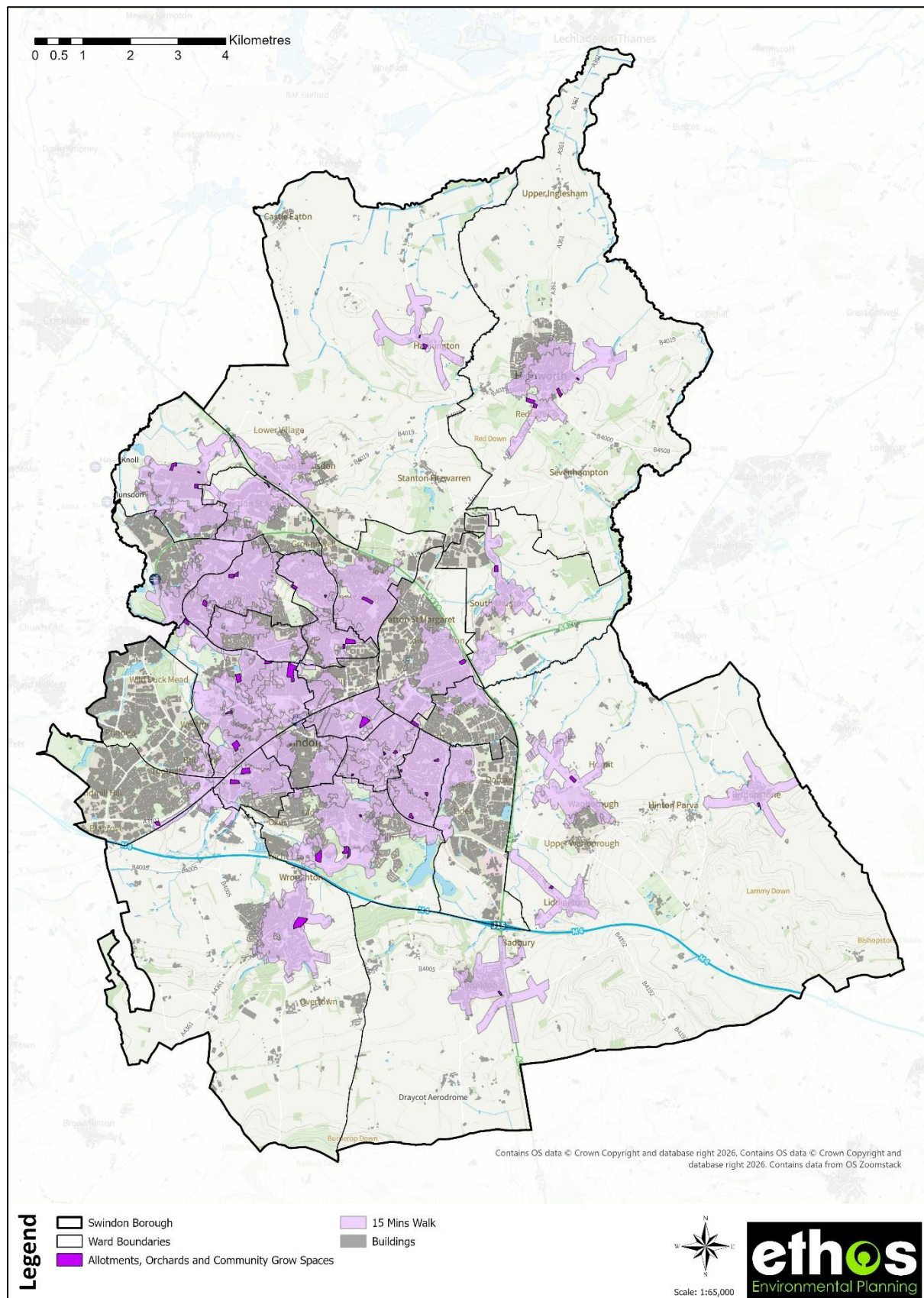


Figure 13 Access to allotments, orchard and community grow spaces (15 minutes' walk time buffer)

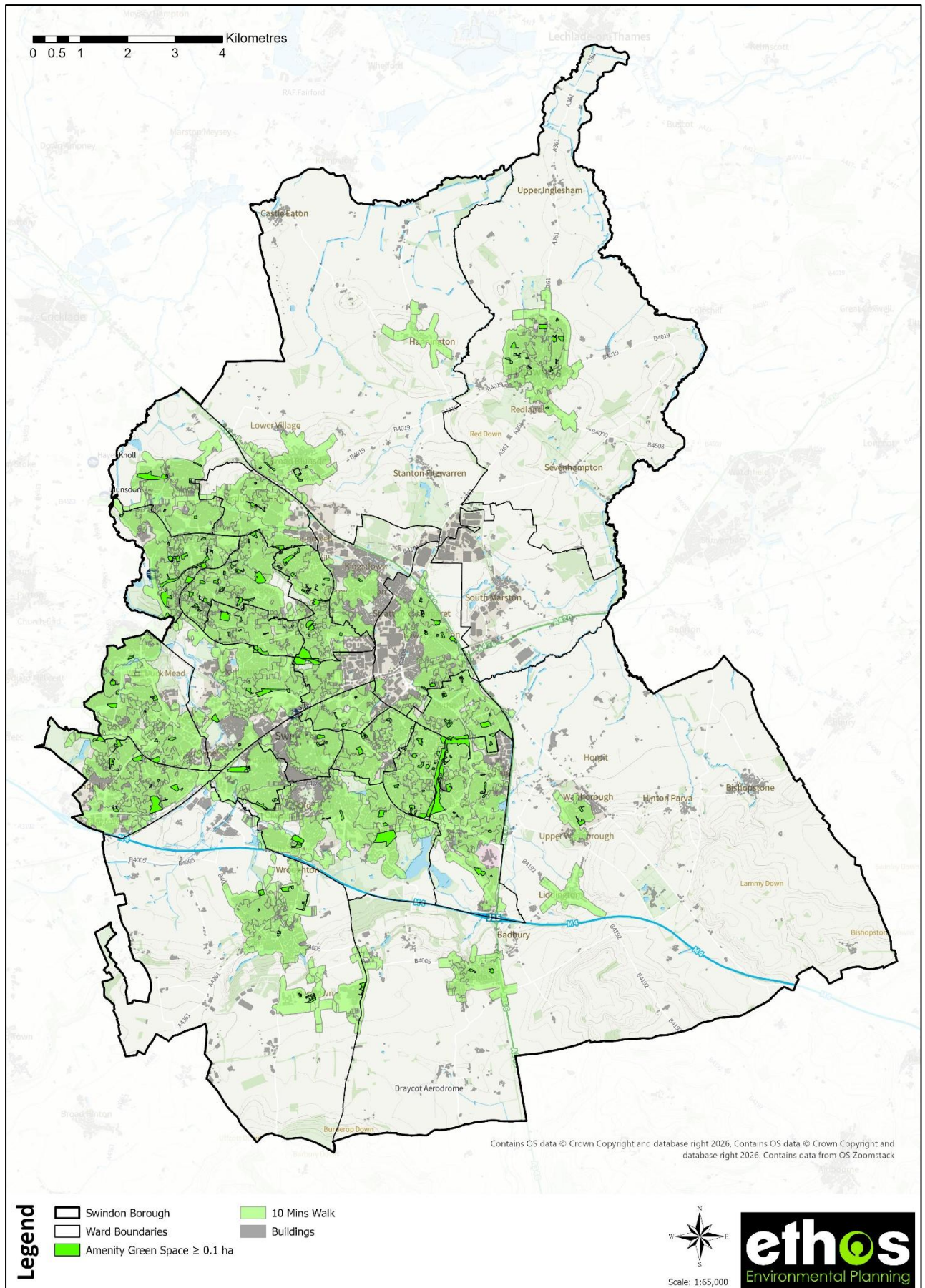


Figure 14 Access to amenity green space (10 minutes' walk time buffer)

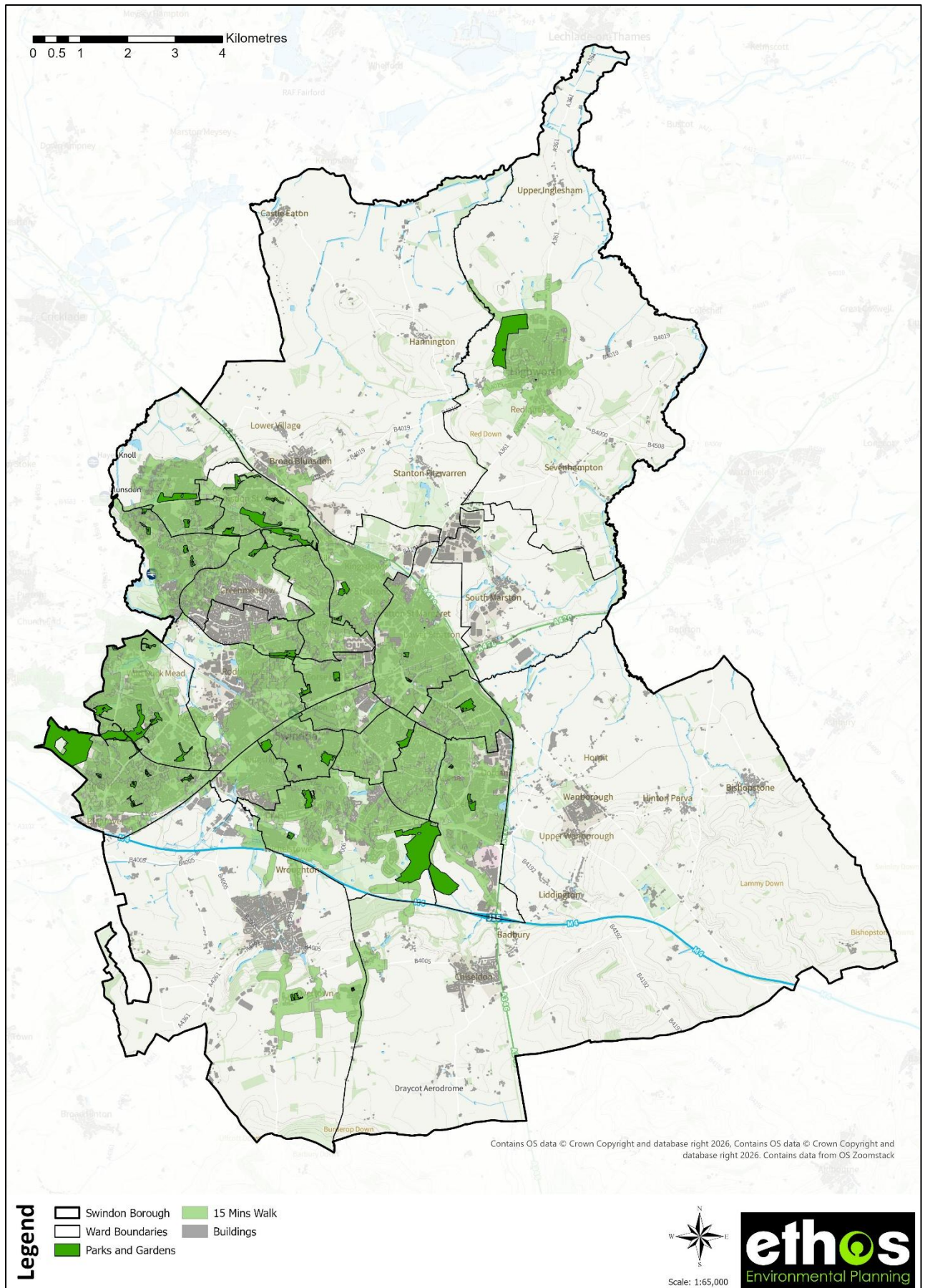


Figure 15 Access to parks and gardens (15 minutes' walk time buffer)

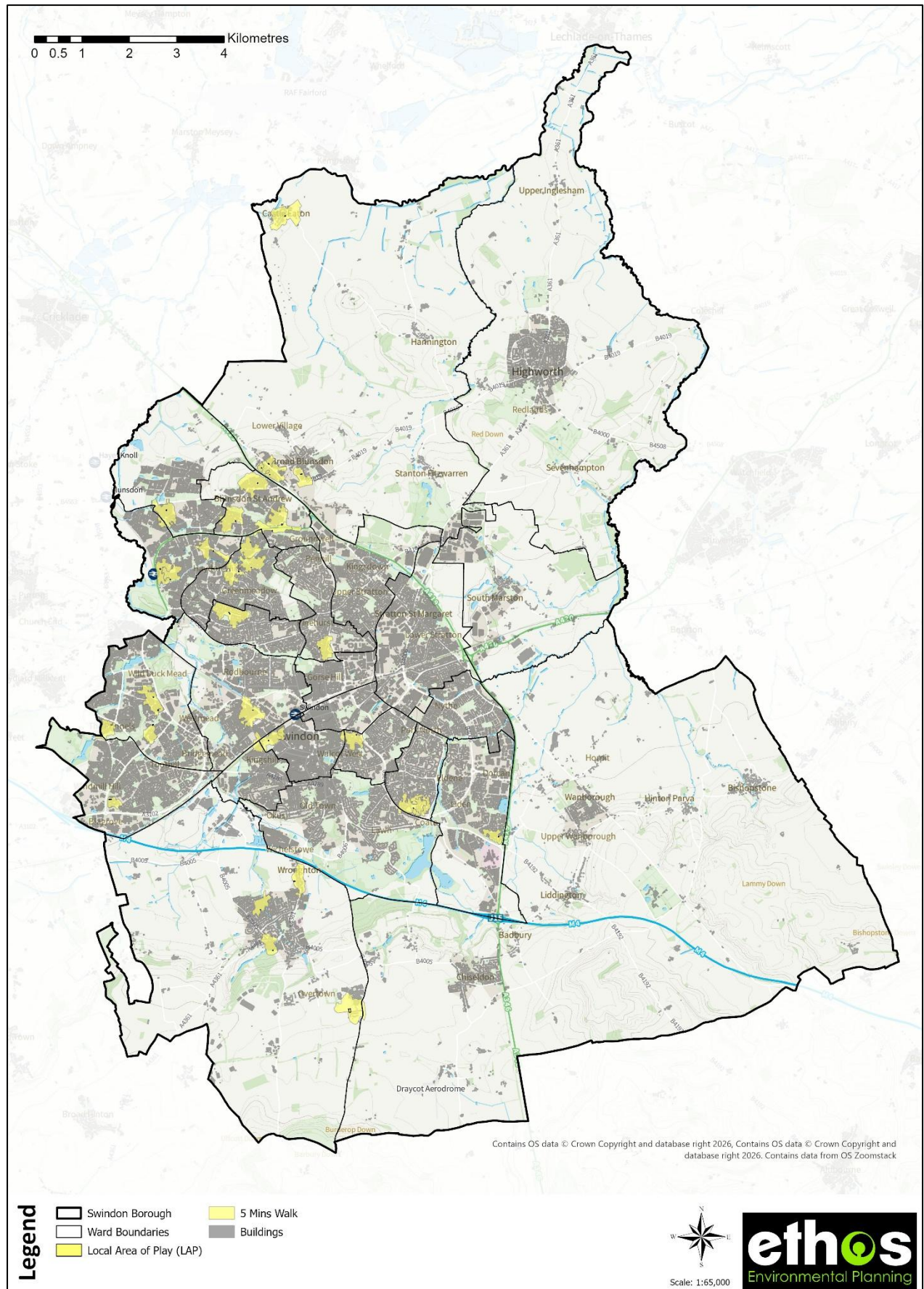


Figure 16

Access to Local Area of Play (5 minutes' walk time buffer)

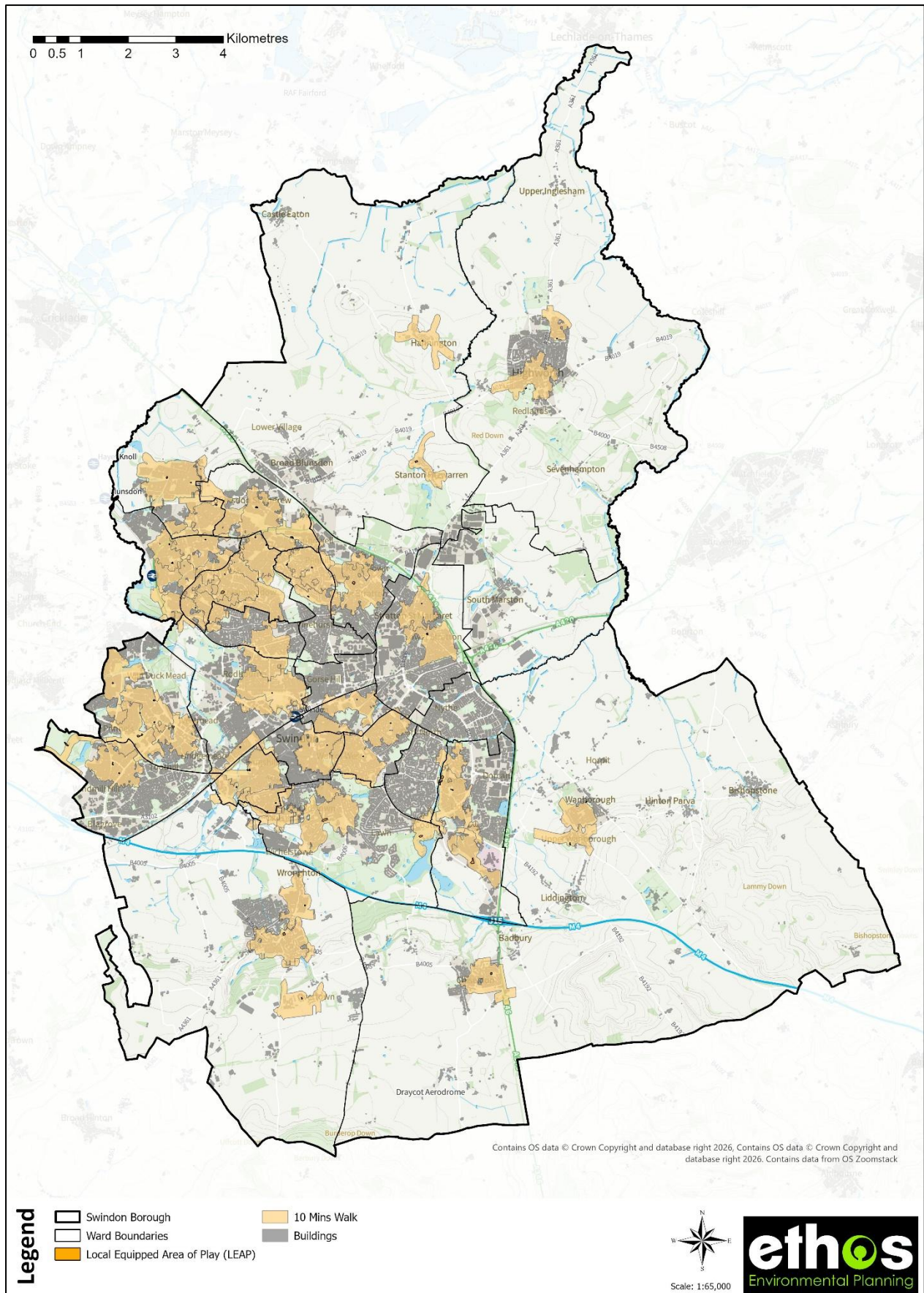


Figure 17 Access to Local Equipped Area of Play (10 minutes' walk time buffer)

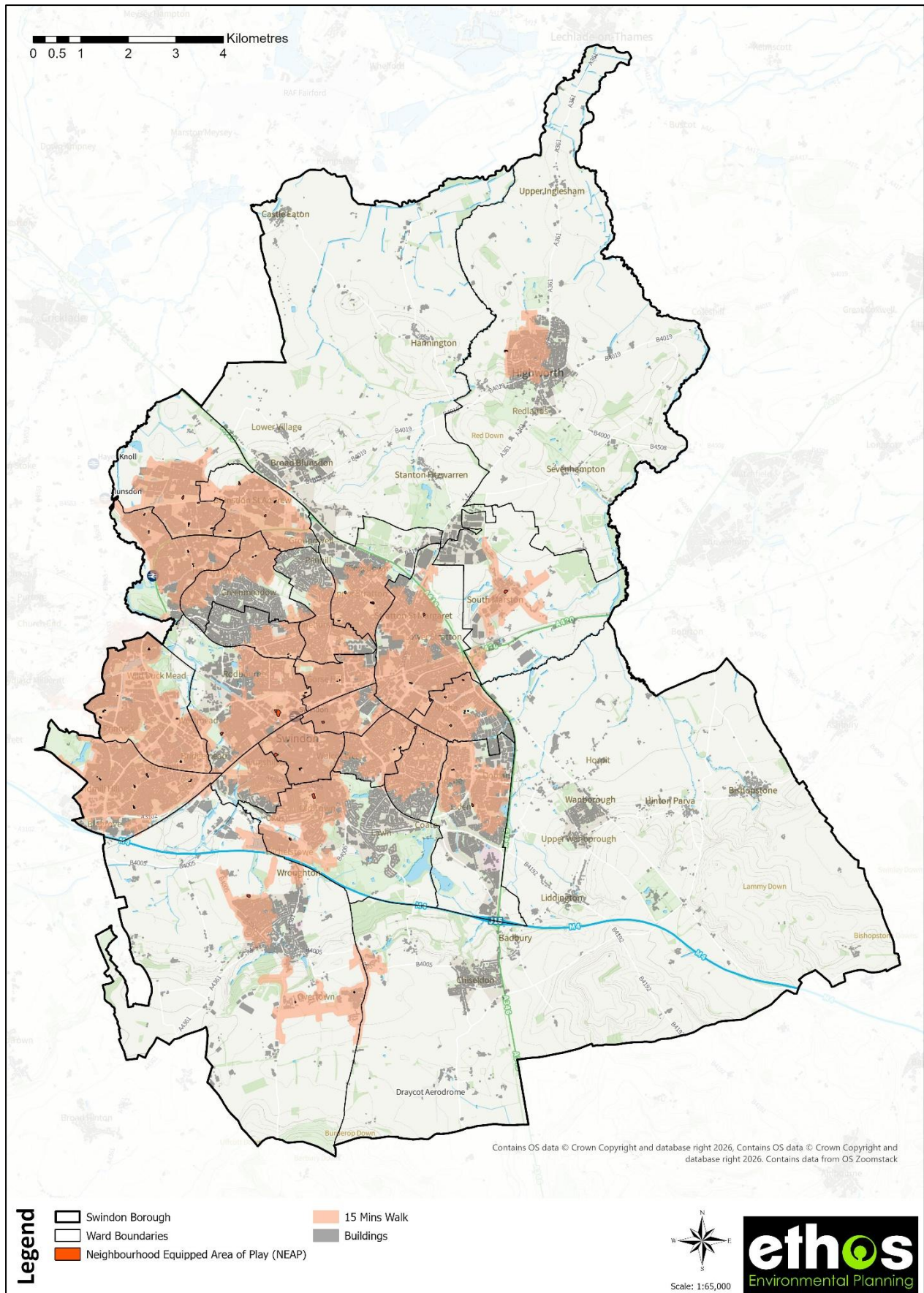


Figure 18 Access to Neighbourhood Equipped Area of Play (15 minutes' walk time buffer)

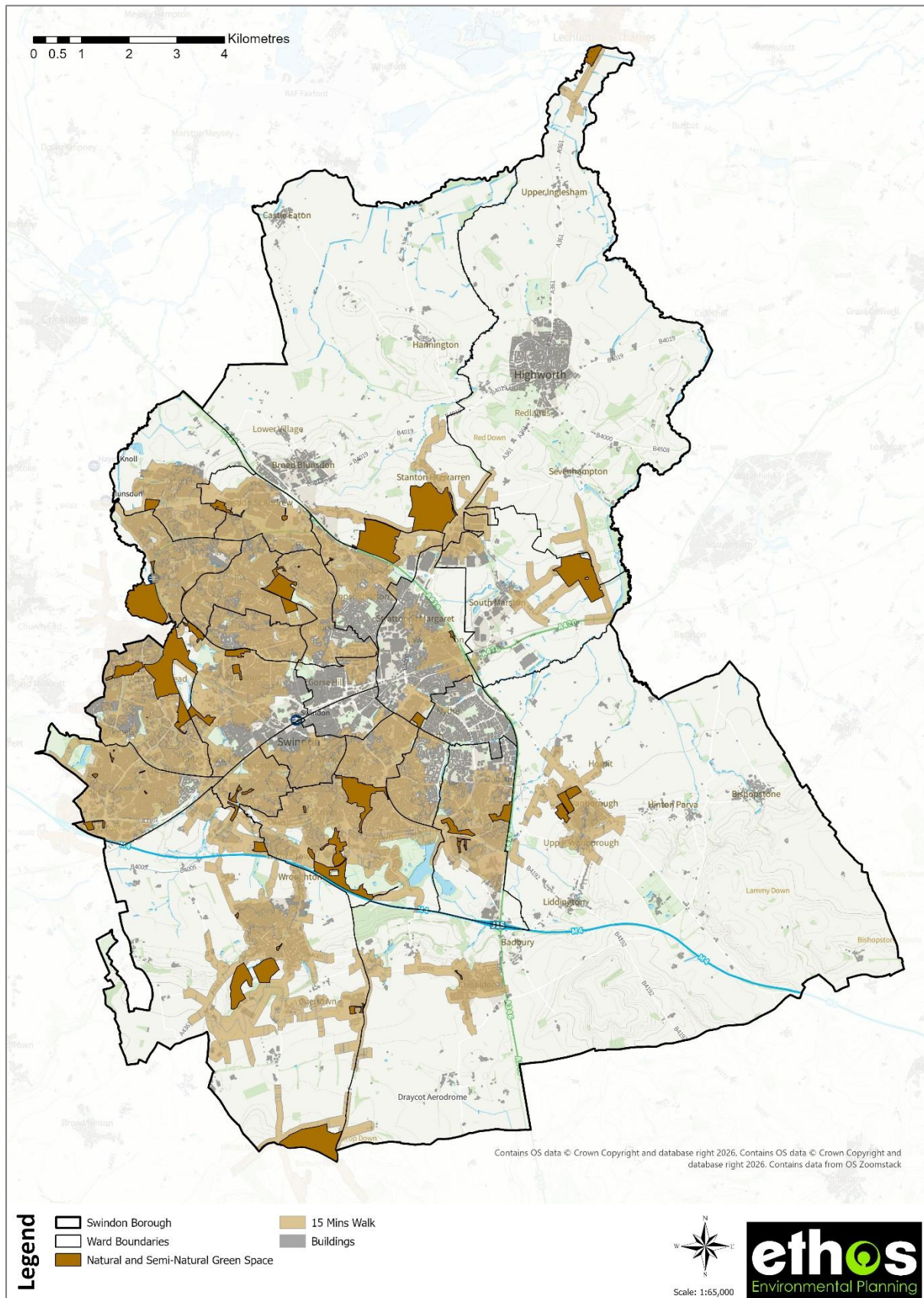


Figure 19 Access to Natural and Semi-Natural Green Space (15 minutes' walk time buffer)

Table 16 Summary of access issues

Typology	Key Access Issues
Allotments, orchards and community grow spaces	There are some large gaps in access within the urban area of Swindon, particularly in the west of the town (Shaw & Westlea and Lydiard, Freshbrook & Toothill) and the south-east, particularly within the Badbury Park, Eldene & Liden ward. The majority of settlements within the rural part of the borough have good access to allotments, with the exception of Sevenhampton and Overtown.
Amenity Green Space	Access is generally good across the study area, although there are some small gaps within central Swindon and larger gaps within the Upper Stratton ward. Access is also generally good within the larger rural settlements; however, many of the smaller, dispersed settlements particularly in the east of the study area do not have access.
Parks and Gardens	Access is generally good across the urban areas of the borough, although there is a significant gap in the north of Swindon, covering the Haydon Wick and Rodbourne wards. In contrast, access to parks and gardens is much poorer across the rural parts of the borough, with only a small number of settlements having access.
Local Area of Play (LAP)	Access to LAPs is generally poor across the study area, with only a few small pockets of access scattered throughout Swindon. Within the rural parts of the borough, only the settlements of Wroughton and Castle Eaton have access to LAPs.
Local Equipped Areas of Play (LEAP)	Overall, access to LEAPs is better than access to LAPs, with good coverage across the urban area of Swindon. However, there are some gaps in access across the central and eastern wards of the town. The picture is more mixed across the rural parts of the borough, with some

Typology	Key Access Issues
	settlements having access to LEAPs and others having no access.
Neighbourhood equipped Area of Play (NEAP)	Access to NEAPs is generally good across the urban area of Swindon, with only a few gaps in the south of the town (particularly Old Town & Lawn and Badbury Park, Eldene & Liden) and within the Rodbourne Cheney and Penhill and Pinehurst wards in the north. Across the rural parts of the borough, access is generally poor, with the exception of the larger settlements of Wroughton, Highworth and South Marston, which have good access.
Natural and Semi Natural Green Space	Access is generally good across the majority of the urban area of Swindon; however, there is a gap in access across the central and eastern wards. Across the rural parts of the borough, the picture is more mixed, with some settlements having good access and others, particularly in the north and east of the borough, having no access.

7.3.2 Access to all accessible green space across the study area

This section looks at access to all accessible green space across the study area (i.e. all mapped typologies of open space), through the Natural England Accessible Greenspace Standards, in order to identify the main gaps in access.

Natural England Accessible Greenspace Standards (2023)

The Green Infrastructure Headline Standards states everyone should have access to good quality green and blue spaces close to home for health and wellbeing and contact with nature, to meet the Accessible Greenspace Standards, with an initial focus on access to green and blue spaces within 15 minutes' walk from home.

Within 15 minutes' walk:

EITHER a Doorstep OR Local Accessible Greenspace

- A doorstep greenspace of at least 0.5ha within 200 metres, or
- A local greenspace of at least 2ha within 300 metres walk from home.

AND

- A neighbourhood greenspace (10ha) within 1km.

AND, beyond 15 minutes' walk:

- A wider neighbourhood natural greenspace (20ha) within 2km, and
- A district natural greenspace (100ha) within 5km, and
- A very large subregional greenspace within (500 ha) within 10 km

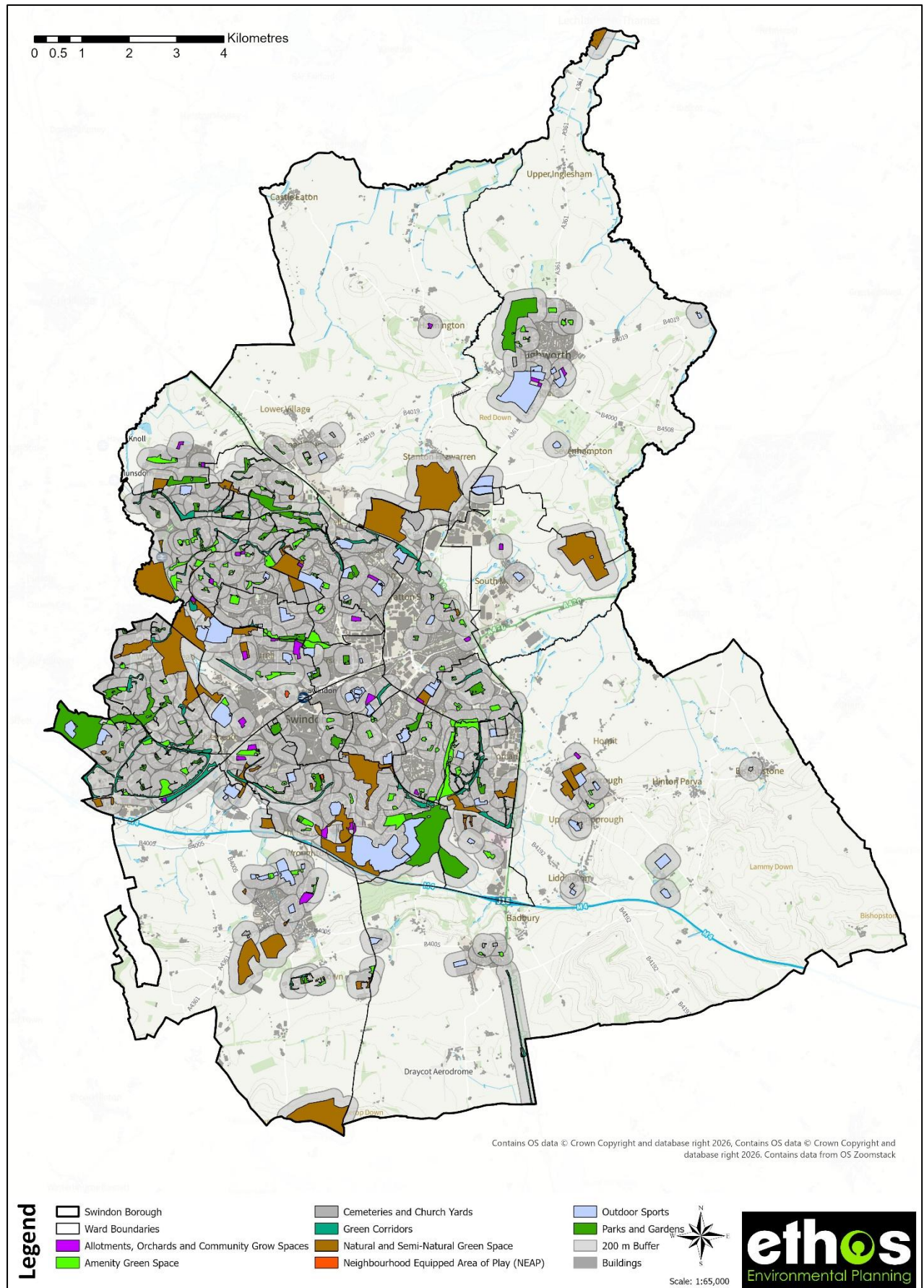


Figure 20

Access to doorstep greenspace (at least 0.5ha) within 200m

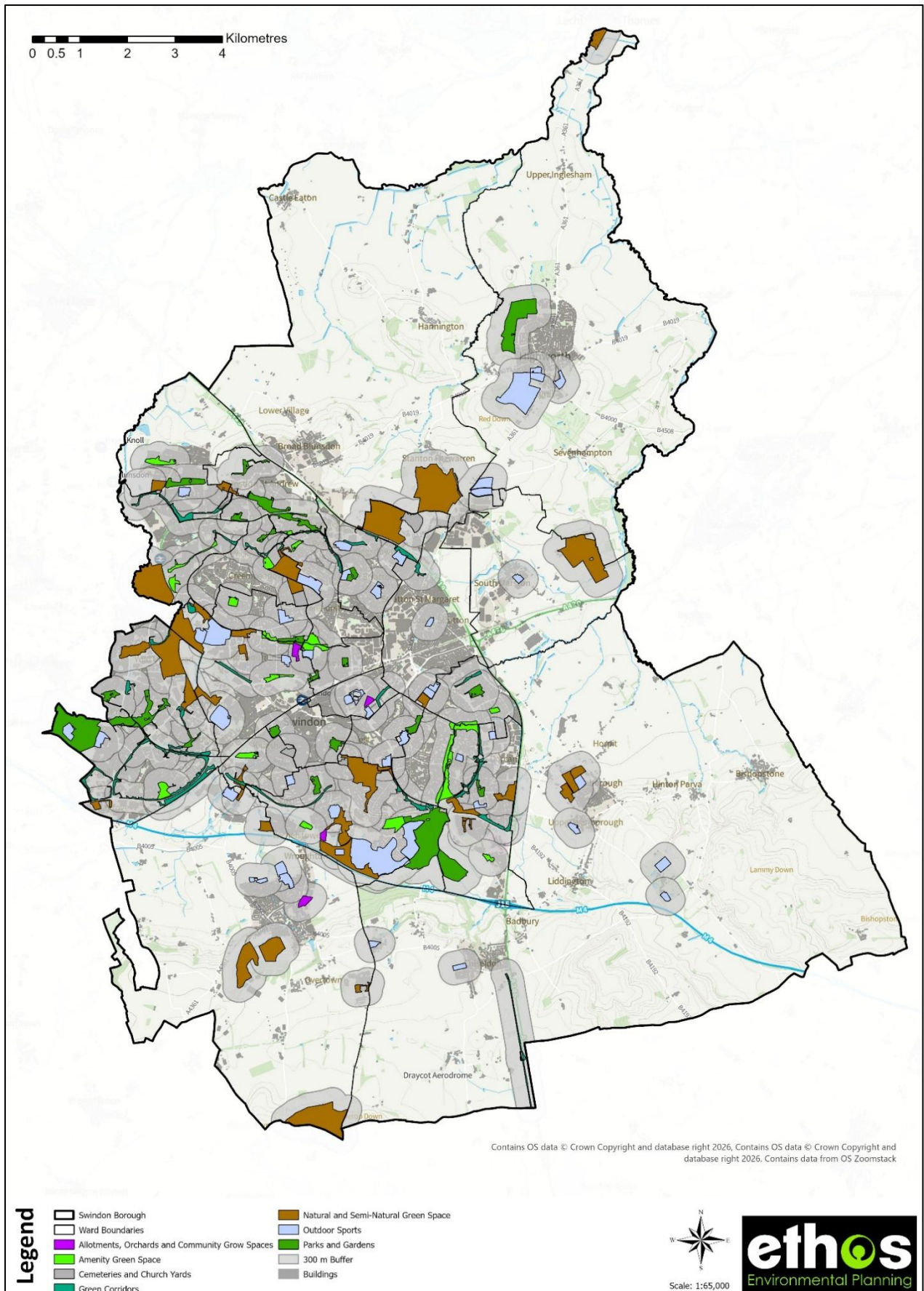


Figure 21 Access to local greenspace (at least 2ha) within 300m

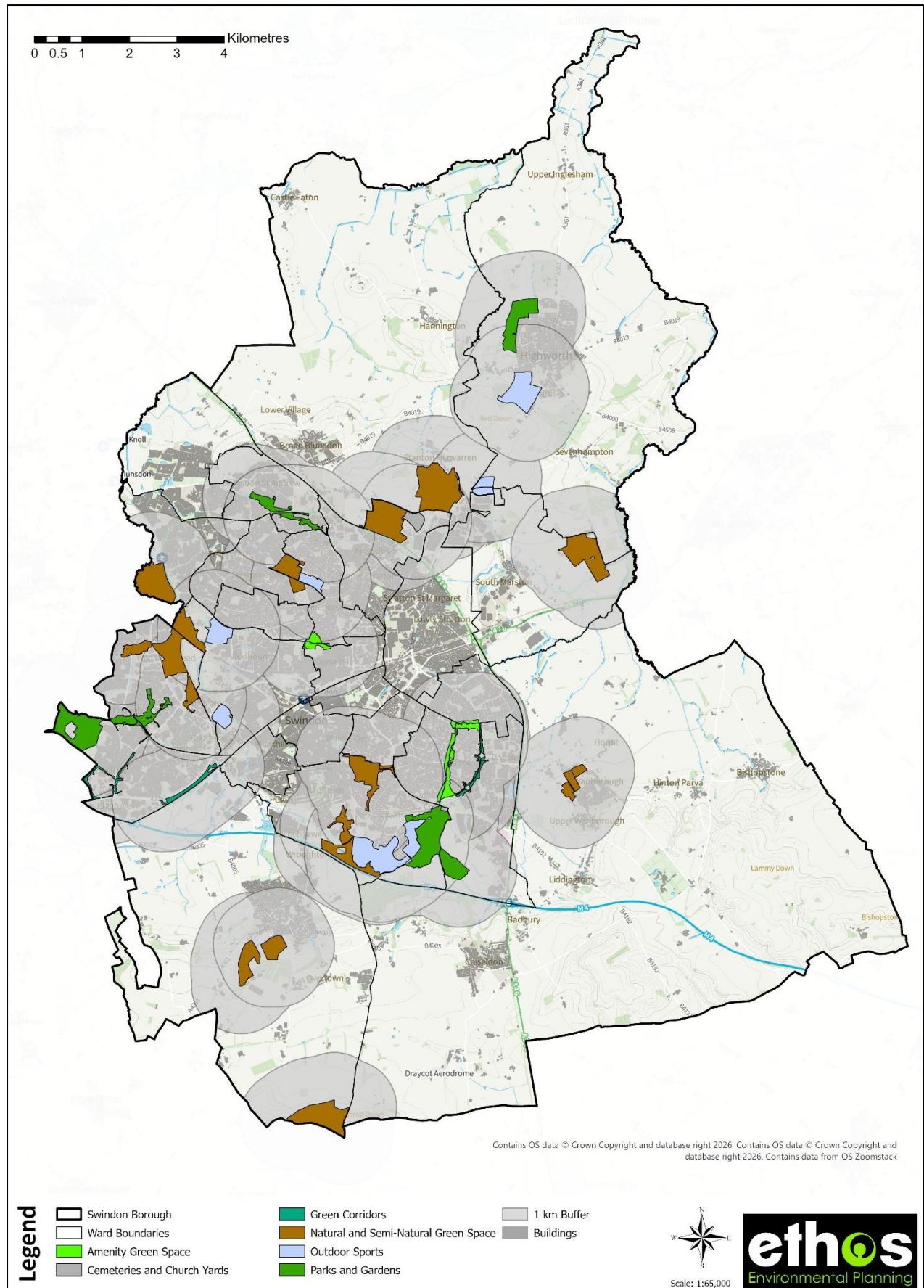


Figure 22 Access to neighbourhood greenspace (at least 10ha) within 1km

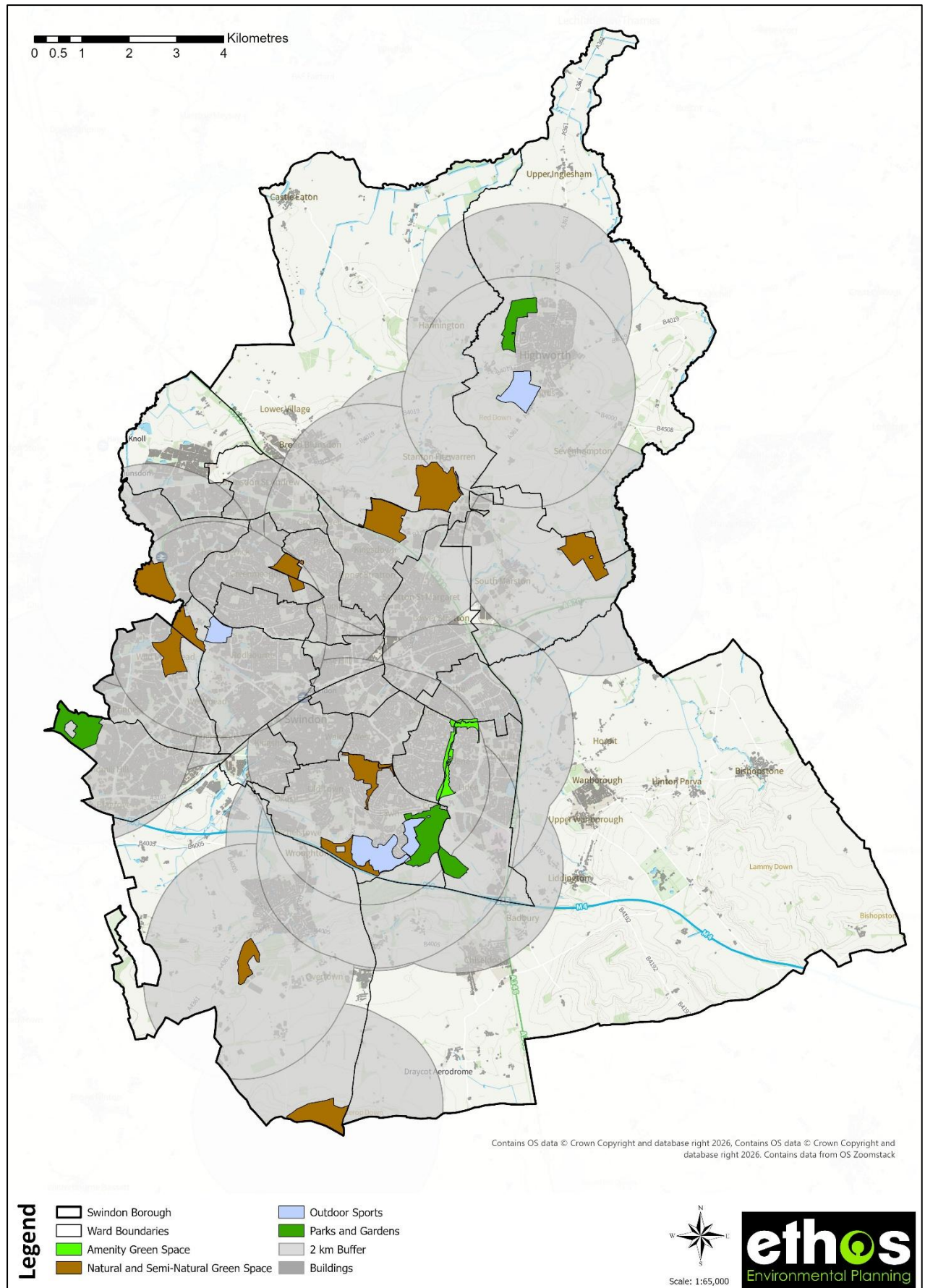


Table 17 Summary of key access issues for greenspace

Standard	Key access Issues
A doorstep greenspace (of at least 0.5ha) within 200m	Access to doorstep greenspaces is dense and largely continuous across the main Swindon urban areas and around Highworth. However, the outlying villages in the south-east have limited access leaving gaps between settlements. The rural north and east of the borough has little to no access to doorstep greenspaces.
A local greenspace (at least 2ha site) within 300 metres	Access to local greenspace provision is similar to doorstep greenspace. The south-eastern villages rely on isolated/larger sites to provide access and therefore some parts of these settlements have poor access. Similarly, the northern and eastern wards have no access to local greenspaces.
A neighbourhood greenspace (at least 10ha site) within 1km	Good access to the majority of the central and northern areas of Swindon urban area but gaps in access within Stratton at Margaret, Lower Stratton and South Marston. The northern wards and the south eastern wards including the settlement of Chiseldon have no access to a neighbourhood greenspace.
A wider neighbourhood space (at least 20ha) within 2km kilometers	Only a small number of sites meet this threshold but they do provide good access to the majority of the district. The settlements of Wanborough, Hinton Parva and Bishopstone have no access to wider neighbourhood space.
A district natural greenspace (of at least 100ha) within 5km	No sites of this size have been recorded as part of this assessment.
A subregional greenspace (of at least 500ha) within 10km	No sites of this size have been recorded as part of this assessment.

7.3.3 Urban Nature Recovery Standard

Natural England's Urban Nature Recovery Standard (part of the National Green Infrastructure Framework) sets out benchmarks for improving nature recovery in urban and urban fringe areas. Under the area-wide standard, local authorities are expected to increase the proportion of green infrastructure that is designed and managed for nature recovery, against a locally defined baseline reflecting local needs, opportunities and constraints. Within this, local authorities are expected to set targets for the provision and sustainable management of Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) and Local Wildlife Sites, and in particular to provide **at least 1 hectare of Local Nature Reserve per 1,000 population** (for nature conservation and quiet enjoyment), alongside enhancing existing and identifying new Local Wildlife Sites. A separate

major development standard requires developers to set out, through the Green Infrastructure Plan or Design and Access Statement, how a scheme will contribute to nature recovery, including the potential to create or enhance LNRs or Local Wildlife Sites.

Figure 24 shows the existing local nature reserves in Swindon which totals 174.93ha across the district. 9 out of 25 wards have Local Nature Reserve provision which is mainly across the Swindon urban area.

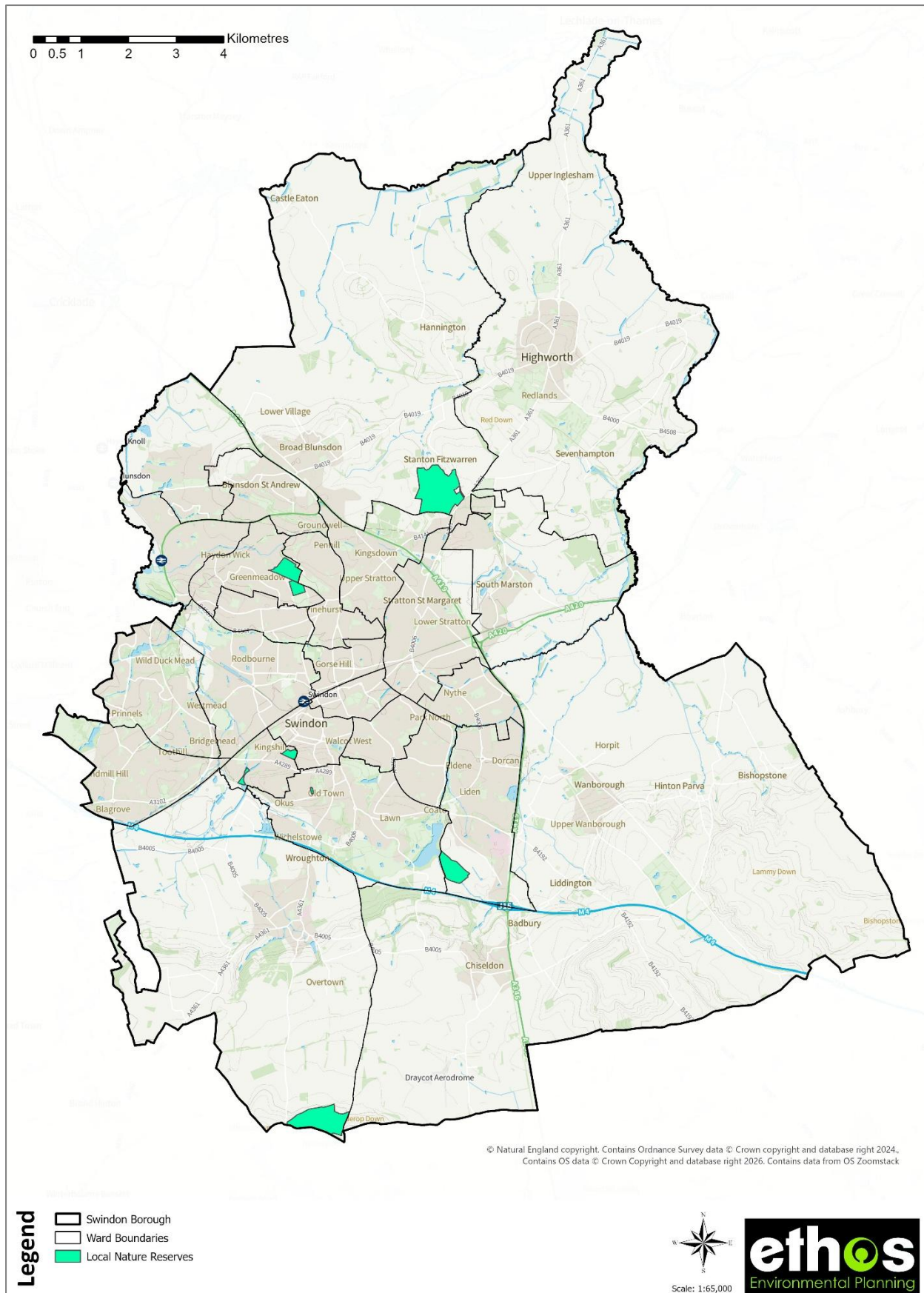


Figure 24

Local Nature Reserves

Provision against the standard

Applying the 1ha/1,000 population benchmark at the study area level, Swindon's overall LNR provision is 174.93ha (0.71ha/1000) which is a borough-wide shortfall of 68.95ha. Only 4 of the 25 wards meet the Natural England 1ha/1,000 population standard for Local Nature Reserves; Blunsdon, Haydon Wick, Badbury Park, Eldene & Liden, and Wroughton & Wichelstowe - each driven by one or two large sites rather than broad-based provision. The remaining 21 wards fall short, with 16 having no LNR at all

Table 18 LNR provision against the Natural England Standard

Ward	Population	LNR Provision (ha)	Surplus/shortfall (ha)
Badbury Park, Eldene & Liden	11,625	11.62	9.94
Blunsdon	3,571	74.71	71.14
Broadgreen	8,704	0	-8.70
Chiseldon & Ridgeway	5,925	0	-5.92
Covingham & Nythe	8,458	0	-8.46
Gorse Hill	4,912	0	-4.91
Haydon Wick	12,330	23.47	11.14
Highworth	8,447	0	-8.45
Kingshill	8,184	6.42	-1.77
Lower Stratton	12,053	0	-12.05
Lydiard, Freshbrook & Toothill	13,617	0	-13.62
Old Town & Lawn	14,181	0.58	-13.60
Parks	10,783	0	-10.78
Penhill & Pinehurst	11,051	0.02	-11.03
Priory Vale	13,128	0	-13.13
Queen's Park	13,828	0	-13.81
Rodbourne Cheney	8,423	0	-8.42
Rodbourne Ferndale & Western	14,043	0	-14.04
Shaw & Westlea	12,962	0	-12.96
South Marston	934	0	-0.93
St Andrews East	9,203	0	-9.20
St Andrews West & Tadpole	12,183	0	-12.18
Upper Stratton	8,121	0.03	-8.09
Walcot	8,207	0	-8.21
Wroughton & Wichelstowe	9,002	48.11	39.11

A number of potential delivery routes could be considered to help address the identified shortfalls, tailored to the characteristics of each ward. Three broad mechanisms may be worth exploring:

Reclassification of existing sites: in wards where land supply is constrained or development is likely limited, one option could be to formally designate existing green space such as Local

Wildlife Sites as Local Nature Reserves. This route could potentially address shortfalls in the most constrained wards.

Development-secured provision: in wards with significant allocated growth, consideration could be given to requiring major development proposals, through Green Infrastructure or landscape plans, to demonstrate how a scheme might contribute to closing locally identified shortfall. Where appropriate, such contributions could be geographically targeted to the ward in which the shortfall has been identified, rather being solely met through generic borough-wider gains so that the benefits of new provision are more likely to be realised where the need has been evidenced.

Council owned land: where wards have shortfalls in Local Nature Reserves and have council-owned land, there may be scope for the Council to explore bring this land forward for LNR designation and management directly. The extent to which this route could be relied upon would need to be considered alongside resourcing implications, and any constraints on delivery capacity.

7.4 Application of quality standards

7.4.1 Quality of open space – residents' consultation (2025) key findings

Respondents were asked where their local open space is and how satisfied are you with the quality and maintenance of the open space.

Consultation responses highlighted a mixed picture of quality and maintenance across the borough's open spaces. Sites praised for their upkeep included Merton Fields (Upper Stratton), Claridges Pond (Stratton St Margaret), and Highworth Golf Course, the latter also valued for its natural, biodiversity-rich character. Conversely, several sites were identified as requiring attention: Pentylands Park was reported to lack adequate maintenance, and concerns were raised about poor-quality upkeep and waste build-up in the Old Town area.

A number of site-specific issues were also raised. At Mannington Recreation Ground, respondents noted problems with litter, overflowing bins, and inadequate fencing that put dogs at risk of running into the road. Weir Field in Wroughton was recognised as having good facilities for children but was felt to need improved provision for dog walkers, including additional poo bins and benches. Similarly, Lydiard Park was reported to need more bins, while Lawn Woods would benefit from vandal-proof benches. Coate Water's public toilets were flagged as requiring improvement, and open spaces in Pinehurst were suggested as an opportunity to provide educational information on local nature and biodiversity for young people. On allotment sites, St Philip's allotment was reported to need greater security, and Pickard Field allotment was noted as requiring better maintenance during periods when plots are unoccupied.

Several common themes emerged across responses. The frequency of bin emptying and litter picking was repeatedly raised as an issue, with users calling for more regular servicing of open

spaces. The provision of benches and well-maintained walking routes was identified as a priority for users, alongside a consistent call for improved quality and maintenance of public toilets at country parks. While provision for children's play was generally considered sufficient, concerns around site security and vandalism in open spaces were raised on multiple occasions.

7.4.2 Quality of open space - audit methodology

The quality audits were undertaken using a standardised methodology and consistent approach. However, audits of this nature can only ever be a snapshot in time and their main purpose is to provide a consistent and objective assessment of a site's existing quality rather than a full asset audit. Quality audits were undertaken at 226 open spaces in May 2026.

Sites were visited, and data captured using a phone/tablet with ArcGIS Field Maps and Survey 123. A photographic record was made of key features (geolocated within the GIS database), along with a description of the site and recommendations for improvements. An assessment of the quality of the open space was undertaken using the agreed criteria, set out in Table 21 below. These criteria are based on the Green Flag Award assessment.¹⁸

Scoring

Table 19 Quality scoring line

Very poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent	Exceptional
1,2	3, 4	5, 6	7	8	9	10

Each of the 11 criteria below have been scored between 1 (very poor) and 10 (exceptional), and there is also an N/A option for some of the criteria. The scores for each site are added together and the mean calculated based on how many criteria were scored (e.g., If 'Appropriate signage and information' is given N/A for a site, the total is divided by 10). This mean is then multiplied by 10 to produce the percentage final score.

The final percentage score is used to group sites into categories (e.g., poor, fair, good excellent) based on the range of site scores (using equal intervals).

- Excellent ≥ 81%
- Good 66-80%
- Fair 45-65%
- Poor ≤ 45%

If a site scores fair, good or excellent overall but has particular issues e.g., scores poor (or 4 or below) for any particular criterion, this has been flagged up within the analysis.

Criteria

¹⁸ <https://www.greenflagaward.org/>

Table 20 Open space quality audit criteria

Criteria	Key points for consideration
Welcoming	• Are the entrances well maintained and safe? • Is the site managed/laid out so that there is an overall sense of welcome?
Good and safe access	• Are the paths clean and tidy? • Are the paths accessible for mobility scooter/wheelchair users? • Are there good links to adjacent green spaces/community facilities?
Appropriate signage and information	• Are there clear and well-maintained signs/maps/information boards, which are appropriate to the site. • Is the site easy to find with directional signage where required?
Appropriate provision of facilities N.b. there is an N/A option for this criterion as not appropriate for all open spaces to have facilities. Again, this will really only be applicable to small amenity green spaces, and possibly small accessible natural green spaces. As the quality audits are focusing on key sites, in reality there should be very few sites that are given N/A.	• Are there a range of good quality facilities (includes paths, bins and benches, as well as the more obvious things such as play areas, outdoor gyms, toilets etc.) which are appropriate to the site? • Do play spaces have good play value?
Personal security N.b some accessible natural green spaces will not be overlooked by housing due to their nature and size, or have clear sight lines	• Is the site overlooked by housing? • Are there clear sight lines? • Does it look like the site has a problem with anti-social behaviour (e.g., graffiti, dumping)?
Dog fouling and litter	• Are dog bins available and visible and is there dog fouling present? • Are litter bins/signs available and visible and is there a litter issue/fly tipping across the site?
Site maintenance	• Are the grounds, horticultural areas and trees managed appropriately? • Is equipment fit-for-use and well-maintained and has redundant equipment been removed?

Criteria	Key points for consideration
	• Is the infrastructure (paths, lighting, fencing, seating) and buildings (if present) well-maintained and safe? • Are equipment and facilities safe and dangers/hazards cordoned off? • Do surfaces drain well?
Biodiversity	• Does the site contribute positively to biodiversity through providing a diversity of habitats which are well managed and connected within the site? • Do habitats on site provide opportunities for people to connect with nature?
Landscape, heritage and sense of place	• Does the site feel like a positive and distinctive part of the local area? Does it improve how the area looks and feel, and is it something people notice and value when they pass through or visit? • Is the planting attractive and does it give the site as clear identity? Do the trees, flowers and green spaces feel well cared for, visually appealing, and appropriate to the character of the place? • Can people easily recognise and understand the site's history or cultural importance? Are historic features visible, well maintained, and explained in a way that helps more people connect with that place? • Are there distinctive features or qualities that make people want to return, spend time there or feel a sense of pride in it?
Climate change mitigation and adaptation	• Are there mature trees which provide shade and cooling, help attenuate rainwater and store and capture carbon? • Are there a range of habitats e.g., scrub, meadow, rough grassland providing natural infiltration and carbon storage. • Are there well managed wetlands or SuDs on site to help attenuate rainwater and store carbon?
Tranquillity	• Does the site provide high levels of tranquillity, with low levels of disturbance from busy roads or industrial facilities?

7.4.3 Quality audit results

The quality audit was undertaken at a sample of 226 open spaces across the study area. The details of the quality audits are contained within the GIS database provided to the council. For each of the wards within the study area, a map showing the results of the quality audit has been produced, showing the sites which scored excellent, good, fair, or poor quality (see Appendix 3). The detailed quality audits are also provided as a spreadsheet (see Appendix 4).

Figure 25 and Table 21 are intended to provide a high-level overview of the quality audit results across the study area. The detailed quality audit results spreadsheet is provided at Appendix 4, with more detailed maps by ward provided at Appendix 3.

The majority of open spaces (89 sites, approximately 39%) were assessed as being of excellent quality overall, one of which scored poor for at least one criterion and may therefore still be a priority for improvement. A similarly large proportion of sites were assessed as being good (92 sites, approximately 41%), with 2 of these sites scoring poor for at least one criterion. A further 39 sites (17%) were assessed as fair, of which 14 scored poor for at least one criterion, and 6 sites (3%) were assessed as poor overall. This highlights the need for quality improvements across all typologies of open space, and particularly with regards to amenity green space, Local Areas of Play (LAP), and Neighbourhood Equipped Areas of Play (NEAP), which each recorded a notable share of Fair or Poor ratings.

Table 21 Overview of quality audit scores across the study area

Typology	Excellent	Excellent with 1+ poor Criterion	Good	Good with 1+ Poor Criterion	Fair	Fair with 1+ Poor Criterion	Poor
Amenity green space	12		12		2	1	3
Green corridors						1	
Local Area of Play (LAP)	5		13		9	1	
Local Equipped Area of Play (LEAP)	15		22	2	9	3	
Natural and Semi-Natural Green Space	20	1	13			7	
Neighbourhood Equipped Area of Play (NEAP)	17		24		5		3
Parks and Gardens	19		6			1	
Total	88	1	90	2	25	14	6

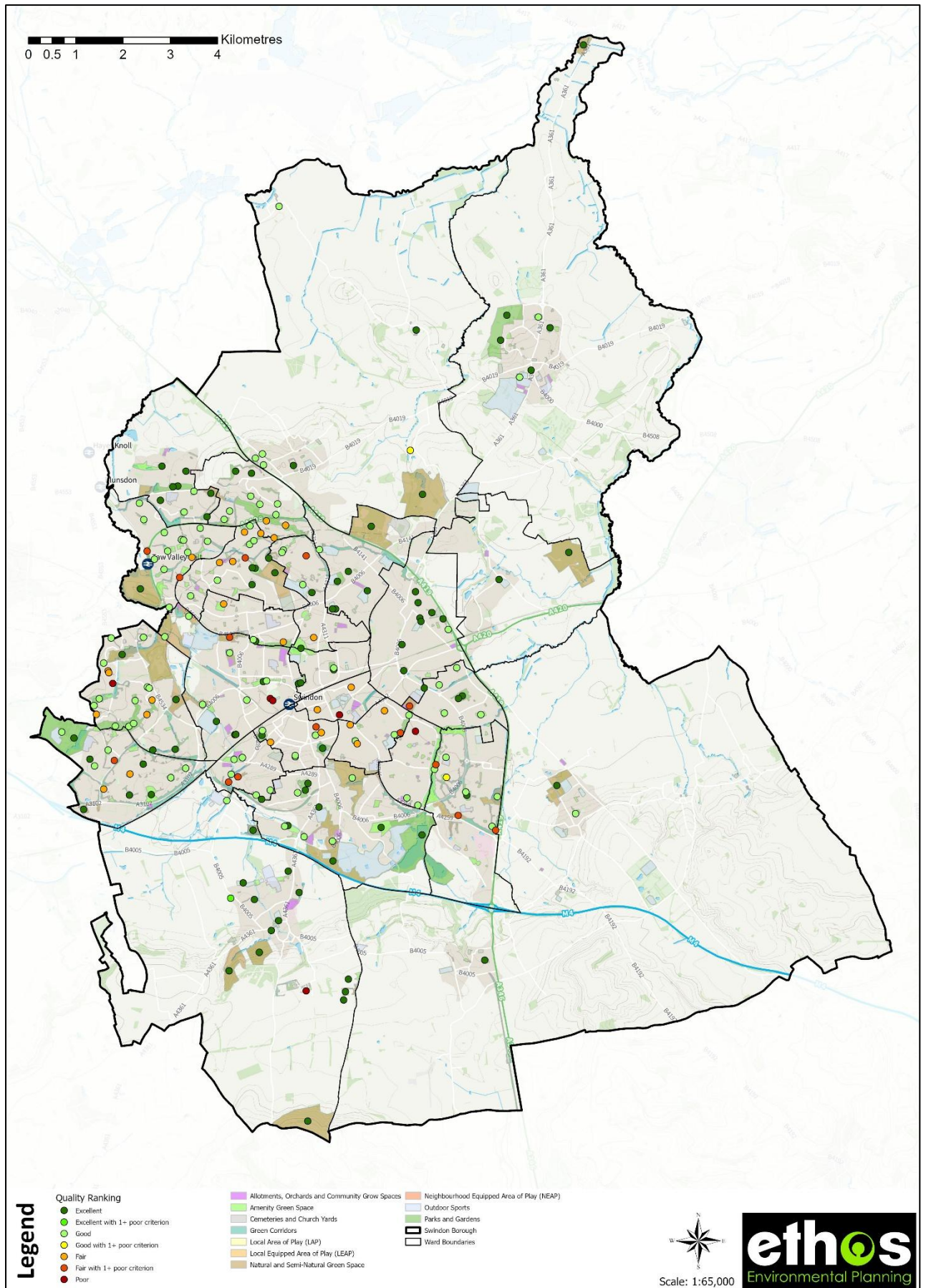


Figure 25 Overview of open space quality scores (May 2026)

7.5 Value assessment

Alongside the site visits/quality assessments, desktop criteria have been used to help indicate the wider value of open space, in terms of their key functions and contribution to the green and blue infrastructure network. The table below summarises the data and scoring used¹⁹.

This information could be used to prioritise sites for improvement, including the nature of the improvement e.g., open spaces that score poorly for biodiversity from the site visit score, but fall within close proximity to a designated site could be prioritised for biodiversity improvements.

Table 22 GIS datasets used in assessing an open spaces wider value

Value Criteria	GIS dataset	Scoring
Links with Strategic GI	Proximity to strategic green corridor from the Swindon Green Infrastructure Strategy provided by the Council	Within/overlaps with – score 3 Within 100m – score 2 100 – 500m - score 1 500m+ - score 0
Biodiversity/nature conservation	Proximity to LNRS Areas of Particular Importance to Biodiversity (APIB)	Within network – score 3 Within 100m – score 2 100 – 500m - score 1 500m+ - score 0
Water management	Combined Risk of Flooding from Surface Water (RoFSW) & Risk of Flooding from Rivers and Sea (RoFRS) datasets from Defra Data Services	Within area of surface water flooding - score 3 Within 50m – score 2 50– 100m - score 1 100m+ - score 0
Health and wellbeing/reducing health inequalities	Proximity to high levels of deprivation (IMD 2025).	Within an IMD decile of 1 to 3: score 3 Within an IMD decile of 4-6: score 2 Within an IMD decile of 7 to 8: score 1 Within an IMD decile of 9-10: score 0
Heritage	Proximity to heritage designation/heritage features: • Historic Park and Garden • SAM • Ancient woodland • Ancient or veteran trees	Site falls within or contains – score 3 Within 500m – score 2 500 – 1000m - score 1 1000m+ - score 0

¹⁹ This analysis only covers a select number of criteria for which spatial GIS datasets were available, and it is recognised that there are other areas of open space value that have not been considered. This analysis is therefore intended to provide an indication, and a starting point for potential future analysis.

Value Criteria	GIS dataset	Scoring
	Data from National Heritage List for England (NHLE). Used the Feature to Point tool to convert the polygon layers to points and then combined all points into a single layer to run the prioritisation from.	
Tree canopy cover	Canopy cover data sent by the council (% canopy cover by ward)	Less than 10% - score 3 10-20% - score 2 20% or above - score 1

The scoring is added together for each site to indicate which sites have the highest value in relation to these criteria. The bandings are as follows²⁰:

- High: 11- 15
- Medium: 9 - 10
- Low: 3 - 8

A summary of the results is provided in the table and figure below. These are intended to provide a high-level overview of the value assessment across the study area. **The detailed value assessment spreadsheet is provided at Appendix 5.**

Table 23 Results of desktop value assessment

Typology	High	Medium	Low
Allotments, Orchard and Community Grow Space	12	18	19
Amenity Green Space	47	88	84
Churchyards and Cemeteries	8	16	18
Green Corridors	18	33	6
Natural and Semi-Natural Green Space	24	16	15
Outdoor Sport	31	34	31
Parks and Gardens	49	50	46
Play space	20	43	84

²⁰ Banding has been split using the quantile/tertile split method cutting the scores at the 33rd and 66th percentiles using the total number of sites of 715 i.e. “top third, middle third and bottom third”

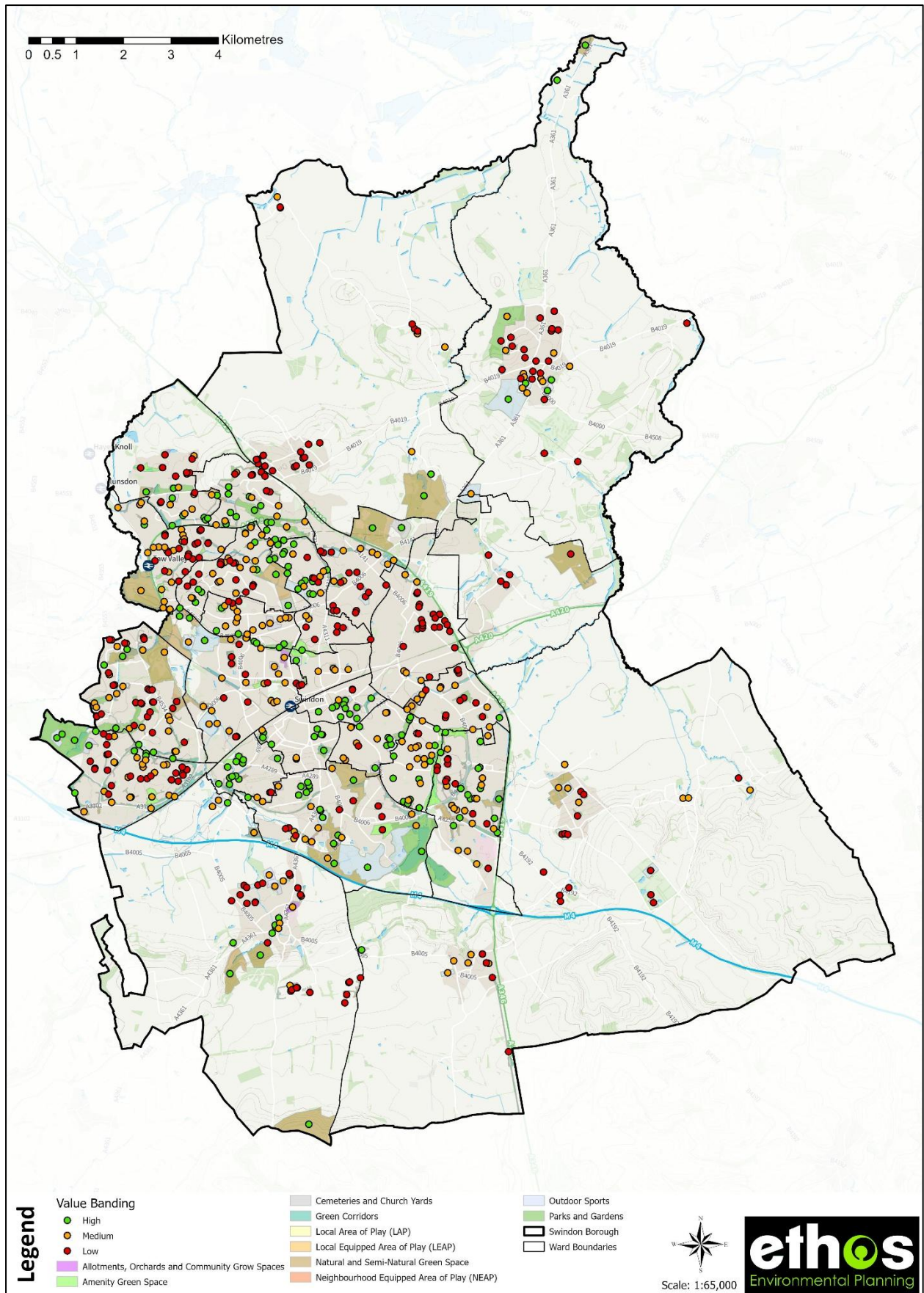


Figure 26 Open space value ((high, medium or low)

8.0 STRATEGIC OPTIONS, POLICY & MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

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

8.1 Strategic Options

8.1.1 Introduction

The strategic options address six key areas:

- 1) Existing provision to be protected;
- 2) Existing provision to be enhanced;
- 3) Opportunities for re-location/re-designation of open space;
- 4) Identification of areas for new provision;
- 5) Facilities that may be surplus to requirement;
- 6) Developer contributions and recommended thresholds for on-site provision of open space

8.1.2 Delivering Strategic Options

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The planning system has three overarching objectives (economic, social, and environmental), which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways. Open spaces (provision, protection, enhancement) and their associated intrinsic benefits are key components of all three of the objectives.

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

Although it is up to local communities to define their own priorities (such as through neighbourhood plans, engagement with community groups and other stakeholders, and the Local Green Space nomination process), the information provided within this study will form a good basis to inform any decisions related to the provision of open space.

The following sections consider the key issues for open space in the study area, and the recommendations that emerge need to be taken in context with national policy and legislation, and consideration needs to be given as to how they can fit into local decision making. The following sections serve to highlight issues, but do not necessarily resolve how

they may be delivered. The information provided within this study will also form the basis for potential future strategies. The recommended policies within this study can also be used to help form the basis of any open space policies within the emerging Swindon Local Plan 2043.

8.2 Existing provision to be protected

The starting point of any policy adopted by the local authorities should be that all open space should be afforded protection unless, it can be demonstrated it is not required/is surplus to requirements (in accordance with the NPPF). Even where open spaces are in sufficient supply within a given area, this does not necessarily mean there is a 'surplus' in provision of open space, as additional factors such as access to open space, the supply of other typologies of open space, the quality of open space and where new development is planned needs to be taken into account (as explained further in the sections below and covered in Section 7 of this report).

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

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

The quantity analysis, summarised in Table 15 (Section 7.2.1) shows that in every ward with, there is a deficiency in at least two typologies of open space. Therefore, the following recommendations are made:

Open Space Policy Direction (protecting open space):

OS1	The starting point is that all open space will be protected, unless it can be demonstrated that it is surplus to requirements. The distribution of open space varies across the study area, however, there are identified shortfalls of at least two typologies of open space in all wards, and in addition, gaps in access to open spaces. It is therefore recommended that priority is placed on protecting those open spaces where there are existing shortfalls against the quantity and/or access standards, and also those open spaces which have scored highly in the quality and/or value assessment.
OS2	Sites which are critical to avoiding deficiencies, or making deficiencies worse, in respect of quantity, quality or accessibility should be protected unless suitable alternative provision can be provided which would compensate for any deficiencies caused.
OS3	Sites which have significant nature conservation, historical or cultural value (or other functions contributing to the overall connectivity and functioning of the green and blue infrastructure network, such as water management) should be afforded protection, even if there is an identified surplus in quality, quantity, or accessibility in that local area.

8.3 Existing provision to be enhanced

In areas where there is a quantitative deficiency of provision but no accessibility issues, then quantitative deficiencies could be met by increasing the capacity of existing facilities through quality improvements e.g., increasing the size and quality of a play area.

In areas where facilities or spaces do not meet the relevant quality standards, then enhancements will be sought. These can be delivered either through development where opportunities arise as above, or through other funding sources identified by the council.

This includes those spaces or facilities which:

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

Those sites which require enhancement are identified within the quality audit that was undertaken by Ethos in May 2026, although there may also be local priorities that have not been picked up as part of the quality audits, and not all open spaces within the borough for quality audited. Some of the key observations related to site quality, functionality and enhancement include:

1. The importance of providing high-quality provision and maintenance of formal facilities such as parks and gardens and play space.
2. The need for additional and improved facilities.
3. The need to ensure high-quality open spaces which optimise multi-functionality are designed and provided through new development where feasible.
4. The importance of rights of way and accessible natural green space within the study area, and the need to maintain and enhance provision for biodiversity.
5. The role of open space in contributing to wider priorities such as biodiversity, health and wellbeing and climate change adaptation and mitigation.
6. The role of open space in extending and enhancing the network of green corridors including the connectivity between sites and improved accessibility to existing sites.

Appendix 3 provides maps by ward showing the sites that were quality audited and their overall score (excellent, good, fair, poor), as identified within the quality audit GIS database and the detailed quality audit spreadsheet (Appendix 4). An overview of the open space quality scores is provided in Section 7.4.3. The following recommendations are made in relation to the quality of open space:

Open Space Policy Direction (enhancing open space):

OS4	Where new housing development is proposed, and open space is not practicable on site, consideration should be given to improving existing open spaces within the ward or neighbouring ward to which the development is located. Priority should
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	be given to any sites identified as poor or fair as detailed in the quality audit database ²¹ .
OS5	New development should seek to follow best practice guidance e.g., Natural England's GI Standards Framework for high-quality Green Infrastructure, in order to ensure that open space delivered through new development is multi-functional, climate resilient, future proof, responds to policy (local and national) and is appropriate to the landscape context/contributes to sense of place.
OS6	The findings of the assessment make recommendations for improving the quality of open space across the study area. This should feed into new/updated strategies for achieving open space improvements.
OS7	Management plans (if not already established) should be developed for the main parks and gardens. These priorities could also be considered in neighbourhood plans and by the local community.

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

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

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

These decisions could include the spatial and investment plans for green space and set the foundations for green space provision (e.g., for the lifetime of a plan period). They should outline where different types of facilities and space - such as play space and sports pitches etc. are to be located. It will also identify if any open space is no longer needed and how its disposal or re use can be used to fund improvements to other spaces.

Spatial and Investment plans should apply the standards and be in accordance with the strategic policies set out in the adopted Swindon Local Plan (as informed by this study) and seek to ensure that where significant investment is anticipated for public open spaces that this is prioritised and realised with the help of key stakeholders and communities.

The standards recommended in this study can be used to help determine a minimum level of quality and quantity of green space provision and the maximum distance people should have to travel to access different types of green space.

²¹ There may also be a demonstrated need to improve the quality of open spaces which were not included within the quality audits or those sites which were assessed as being good quality (e.g., where scoring poor against 1 or more criteria). There may also be local aspirations for sites which have not been identified within the quality audits.

This study provides information on the existing supply of different types of open space, an analysis of access and identifies local issues related to quality. It will act as a good starting point for feeding into strategies for future decision making in consultation with the local community.

Table 24 below provides an example of applying the supply, accessibility, and quality of open space in the ward Haydon Wick in order to highlight potential opportunities for re-location or re-designation of open spaces or improvements to open spaces to help reduce existing shortfalls in quantity, accessibility and quality. It also considers those open spaces which may have potential to be considered as surplus to requirement. This is an example that could be used to guide SBC in applying similar solutions to other wards as required.

These considerations will act as a good starting point for decision making but will require further detailed investigation and community consultation before any decisions can be made. For example, just because an open space may be in sufficient supply with overlaps in access, and it may be of fair or poor quality, local knowledge (or other considerations such as value/green infrastructure) may show that it is a highly valued and/or an important facility, and therefore it should not be considered for alternative use/as being surplus to requirement.

Table 24 *Example of opportunities for re-location or redesignation of open space (or quality improvements) to reduce existing shortfalls*

Ward	Current Open Space Provision	Opportunities
Haydon Wick	Quantity: there is a sufficient supply of amenity green space and natural and semi-natural green space. However, there are shortfalls in the remaining typologies of allotments, orchards and community grow space, parks and gardens and play. Access: Overall, the ward has a good supply of allotments and accessible natural green space. Access to play spaces varies, with LAP provision being limited across much of the ward, although some areas in the north have access. LEAP provision is more widely accessible across the ward, with only a small area in the far east lacking access. NEAP access is concentrated in the northern half of the ward, while the southern part has no access. Similarly, parks and gardens are generally accessible across the north and east, but there is a notable lack of access in the southern portion of the ward.	There is potential for accessible natural green spaces (such as Sevenfields Local Nature Reserve) to provide allotment provision and with play, in order to reduce the current shortfalls in allotments and play. If LAP or a NEAP were incorporated, this would also reduce the existing gaps in access within the southern portion of the ward. Due to the shortfalls in access to doorstep accessible natural green space in the middle of the ward/urban area, there could be potential to manage some or parts of the amenity green spaces in this area with more of a wildlife focus, to increase local connection with nature e.g. with tree planting or wildflower areas. Due to the shortfalls in supply of parks and recreation grounds and child and youth play space, and the potential of amenity green space and accessible natural green space to reduce existing shortfalls, (and the value of these spaces in terms of green infrastructure and biodiversity), it is recommended that no open spaces are considered as surplus to requirement.

Ward	Current Open Space Provision	Opportunities
	Quality: 10 out of the 15 sites audited within the ward scored as excellent or good condition. These tended to be the larger open spaces (or the play spaces within them). 4 scored as fair and 1 scored as poor.	

8.5 Identification of areas for new provision

New open space provision will be required where there is a new development (of a certain size – see threshold guidance Table 28) and a planned increase in population, and/or where an existing deficiency in supply or access to facilities exists. Section 7 outlines the existing situation with regards to supply and access to open space. This study can be used as the basis for decision making, as follows:

Quantity

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

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

New development would not be expected to address any existing shortfalls, but it would need to ensure it doesn’t worsen the shortfall i.e. it needs to meet its own needs. For example, if the development will result in an increase of 500 people, the quantity standards (ha/1000 population) would need to be applied to this increase in population.

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

Access

This study considers how access to different types of open space varies across the various geographies against the proposed standards. The maps in Section 7 (and Appendix 2) show where there are deficiencies and potential over supply of facilities. This information can be used alongside the quantity statistics to determine if new provision or improved accessibility is required in an area. For example, if a new development is proposed, the maps should be consulted to determine if there is an existing gap in provision of a particular typology which could be met by the development.

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

Delivering new provision

Viability issues will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will need to consider if there is sufficient space on site (on site provision of open space is a priority – but this will need to be balanced with other planning matters/policies and requirements). It will also need to consider costings for offsite contributions/financial viability. These considerations will be reviewed by SBC on a case-by-case basis.

There are various opportunities for delivering new open space (and wider green infrastructure) through new development (and also outside of development e.g. through capital and grant funding) e.g., planning conditions, developer contributions (CIL and S106), and biodiversity net gain. Consideration could also be given to adopting an Urban Greening Factor.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

The CIL is a tool for local authorities to help fund the delivery of infrastructure. CIL is a non-negotiable standard charge on new development. It takes the form of a charge per square metre of net additional floorspace and applies to most new development.

CIL money can be used to support development by funding infrastructure to support 'growth', it does not need to be used for providing infrastructure on the site it is collected from. This is not the case for Section 106 agreements where money collected will be restricted to that infrastructure required to directly mitigate the impact of a proposal. Where a development is unable to provide sufficient on-site provision of open space to mitigate the impact of that development, the council can collect Section 106 contributions that could be put towards off-site provision/enhancement. This is an example of how Section 106 agreements can be used alongside CIL.

Planning Obligations (S106)

'Section 106' planning obligations may be required for specific on-site mitigation measures and/or contributions towards off-site infrastructure, such as public open space provision. Any adverse impacts on the local environment or local infrastructure, which will arise as a direct result of development, and which can be made acceptable in planning terms, should be mitigated via a planning obligation. Planning obligations must be made in accordance with the three tests of CIL Regulation 122:

- necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
 - directly related to the development; and,
 - fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.
-

New development will be required to provide on-site and/or off-site open space in accordance with SBC policy requirements, as informed by the standards outlined in this study. Whilst not all developments will be of a size that will generate the requirement for on-site open space, when considering future requirements for Swindon Borough, there will be many that will. This study should be used to inform local decisions about where and when new on-site provision will be required.

Figure 27 below shows an example flow chart/decision making process to help developers/council officers determine the need for on or off-site provision of open space. **This is only a guide and requirements will be determined on a case-by-case basis using the standards and assessment within this study. Where possible, this should be determined through pre-application discussions with the Council.**

Biodiversity net gain (BNG)

Biodiversity Net Gain is an approach to development that leaves biodiversity in a better state than before. Where a development has an impact on biodiversity it encourages developers to provide an increase in appropriate natural habitat and ecological features over and above that being affected in such a way it is hoped that the current loss of biodiversity through development will be halted and ecological networks can be restored.

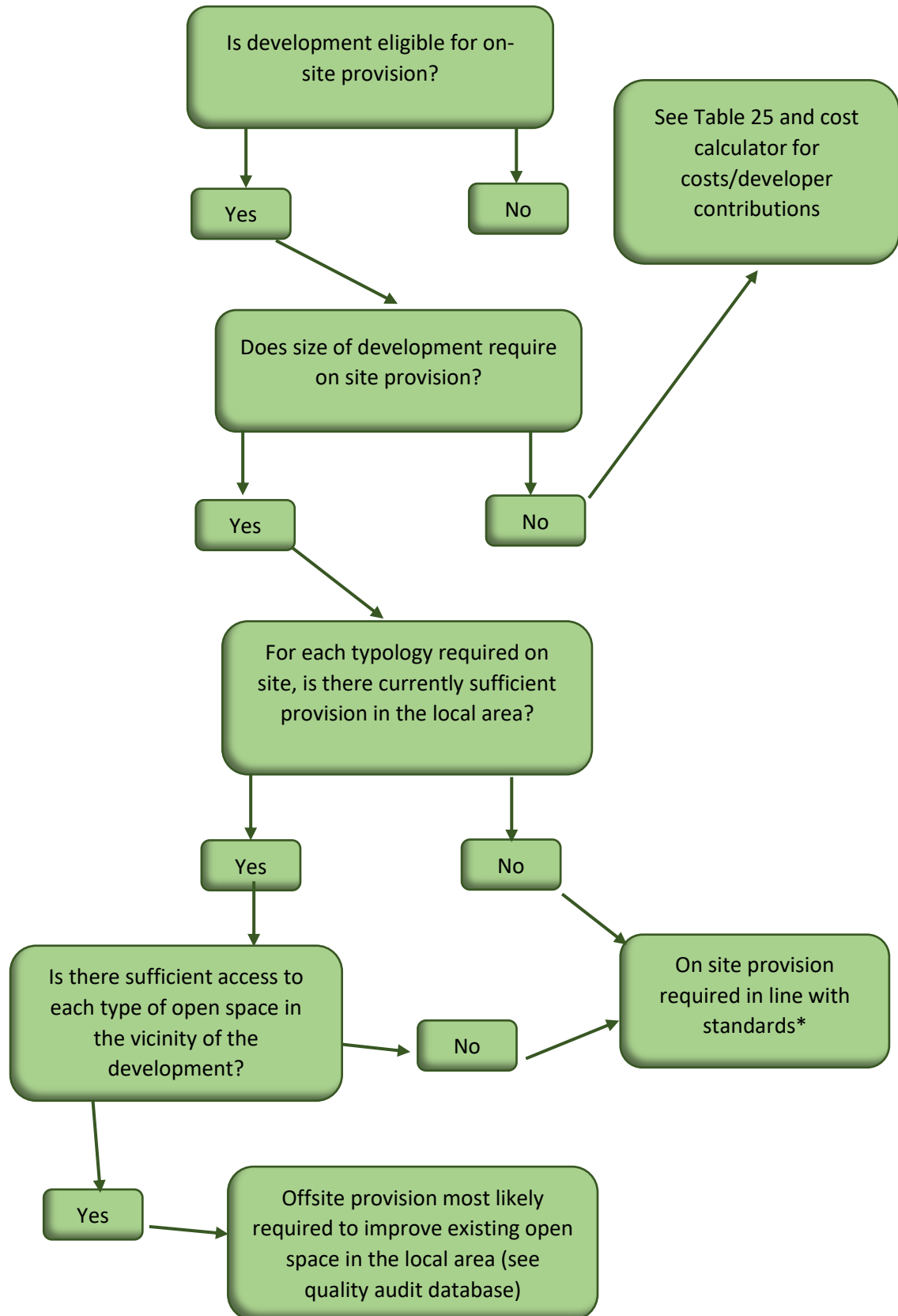
In England, BNG is mandatory under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021). Developers must deliver a BNG of 10%. This means a development will result in more or better-quality natural habitat than there was before development (there are exceptions for Permitted Development and Householder Applications). The minimum 10% increase in biodiversity value can be delivered through habitat creation or enhancement either on-site, off-site or through biodiversity credits, and there must be 30 years management of those habitats.

Further to this, BNG is supported within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which states that planning policies and decisions ‘should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs.’

Capital and grant funding

Although the availability of capital and grant funding has diminished in recent years, nevertheless funding does become available for providing facilities for open space, sport and recreation. National and governing bodies for individual sports should be consulted where new infrastructure is required, such as changing rooms and sports pitches. Environmental grants and stewardship schemes are available for managing accessible natural green space.

The Green Infrastructure Partnership provide a summary of current opportunities to access funding for green infrastructure projects across the UK²².



²² <https://gipartnership.org.uk/funding/>

*If it is not feasible to deliver open space on site due to exceptional circumstances e.g., viability or land availability, then potential to make off site provision will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Figure 27 *Decision making process for on-site provision of open space, or off-site contributions to enhance existing open space*

Urban Greening Factor

Urban greening factor (UGF)²³ is one of the five headline standards within the Natural England GI Standards Framework. It helps to improve the provision of Green Infrastructure and increase greening. UGF works well in higher density urban districts that generally struggle to significantly increase the quantum of green space but can benefit incrementally from the addition of greenery within development.

Scores are calculated by using a set of weighted green infrastructure surface cover types including natural and semi-natural vegetation, street trees, hedgerows, sustainable drainage features, green roofs, and walls. Each of these surface cover types are then multiplied by the weighting and then the sum of these figures divided by the total site area. The UGF figure provides a means to measure and compare the functionality of green infrastructure design proposals.

UGF can be used alongside biodiversity net gain and is especially valuable on sites where the baseline biodiversity is low by ensuring that sites can promote more nature rich environments.

Requirements for open space from new housing

Section 7.2 (Table 15) summarises the variation in supply of different typologies of open space across wards. As identified, every ward has a shortfall in at least two typologies of open space, therefore, the starting point for new housing (of a certain size - see Table 28 for recommended thresholds) is to assume that some form of on-site open space provision would be required.

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

OS8	New provision of open space will be required as part of new development. On-site provision will be considered as the first solution and should be provided in line with the proposed open space standards. Where on-site provision is deemed impractical, or not required e.g., for small sites, or where there is good provision in the vicinity, consideration will be given to opportunities for off-site provision and/or improvements. Improvements to existing open space will be considered first in the ward within which the development is located, then in open spaces in neighbouring wards. Open spaces requiring improvements will be identified using the results from the
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²³ <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/GIStandards.aspx>

quality audit and from site management plans and the Councils' own knowledge of their sites.

The Council could also consider the use of Urban Greening Factor (UGF) as part of Green Infrastructure Policy (this can work alongside Biodiversity Net Gain, especially on sites with low existing biodiversity value). UGF works well in higher density urban districts that generally struggle to significantly increase the quantum of green space but can benefit incrementally from the addition of greenery within development.

8.6 Facilities that are surplus to requirement

In addition to the strategic options outlined above, consideration should also be given to facilities that are surplus to requirement. There are important issues to resolve in terms of striking the correct balance of open space across the study area before any disposal can be contemplated. Whilst there is under provision relative to the minimum standards in several areas, there are other areas where provision compares favourably with the standards. However, it is once again emphasised that the proposed standards are for *minimum* levels of provision. Factors to be considered before any decision to release open space for alternative uses can be taken include:

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

Figure 28 and the associated paragraphs below suggests an outline of the decision process that should be followed before the development/alternative use of an open space can be seriously contemplated.

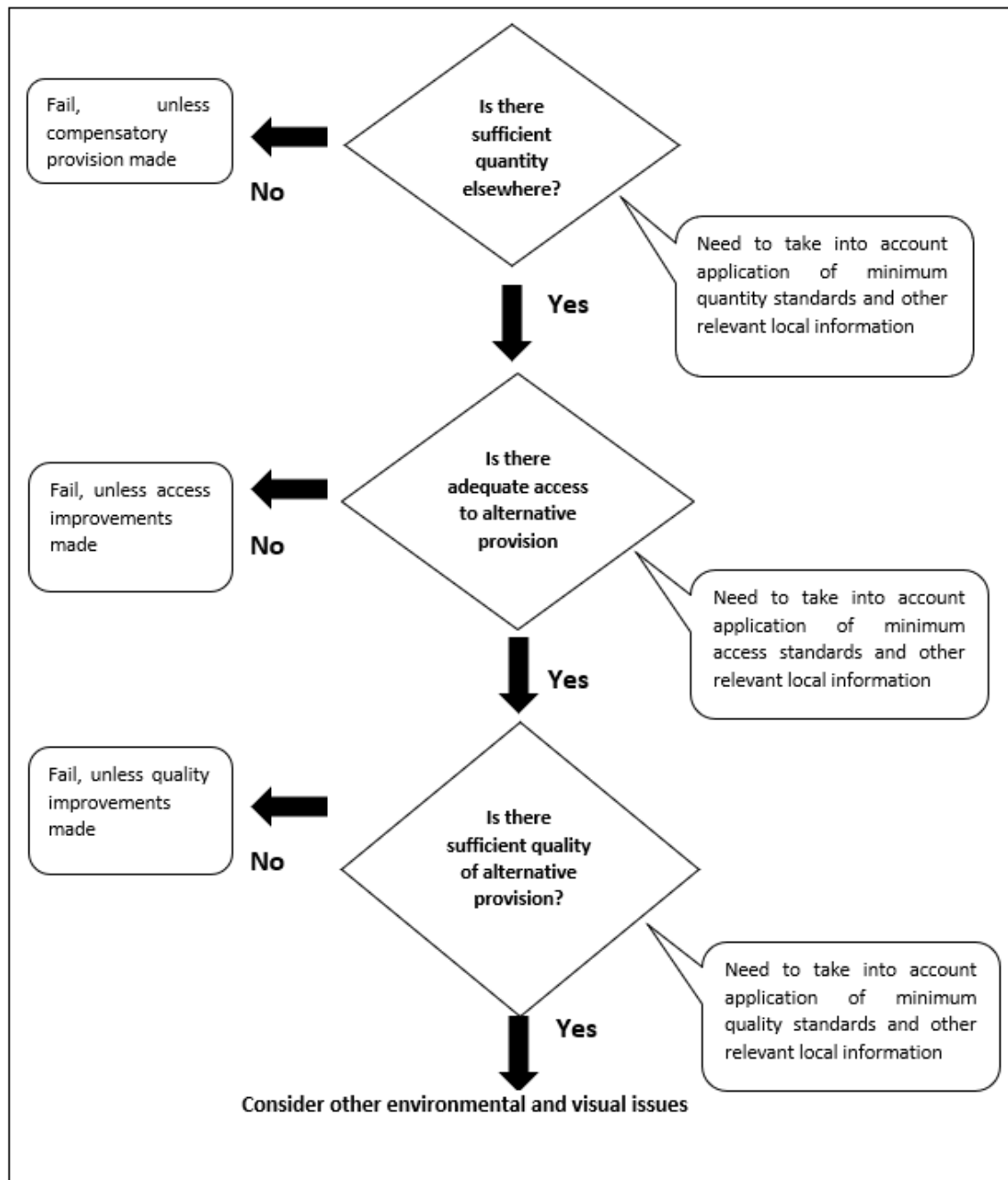


Figure 28 Outline decision making process in relation to sanctioning (re)development of open space

Figure 28 should first be considered on a typology-by-typology basis before considering the overall picture of open space provision. This could be undertaken by assessing total open space provision against the standard of 3.55 ha per 1,000 population set out in Table 14. A hypothetical example of how this might be applied follows and relates to an area of amenity green space.

Q. Is there sufficient quantity?

A. If the minimum quantitative standard for amenity green space is exceeded in a defined geographical area, the relative provision of other forms of open space must then be considered (amenity green space can in principle be converted into other forms of open space

where the need arises). If a) provision meets the minimum quantitative standard; b) there is no significant local information suggesting a need to retain the site; and, c) there is not a perceived lack of other forms of open space, the next question can be addressed.

Q. Is there adequate access to alternative provision?

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

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

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

The quality audit provided as part of this study provides a useful framework for identifying and prioritising open spaces that require improvements. Those open spaces which have been assessed as being of poor or average quality should be prioritised for improvement. If existing open spaces in the vicinity of new development are of poor/average quality, then their improvement (e.g., access improvements, signage, improvements to facilities and/or habitats) would need to be secured before any 'surplus' in a particular open space typology could be considered.

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

8.7 Developer Contributions

This section draws on the policy recommendations in the previous section and outlines a process for calculating S106 developer contributions for on and off-site provision.

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

In order to calculate developer contributions for facilities, a methodology has been recommended which calculates how much it would cost the Local Authority to provide them. These costs have been calculated by Ethos Environmental Planning using Spon's²⁴. A summary of the costs is outlined in Table 25 below. These costs are indicative and may be reviewed and updated by the Local Authority with localised information/costings from other sources.

²⁴ Spon's Architects' and Builders' Price Book 2025

Contributions towards the provision or improvement of open space are calculated using the capital cost of provision. The same charges apply to both provision of new facilities and the upgrading/improvement of existing facilities (where related to new development), which will normally include at least some new provision. Contribution per person is taken to be a reasonable approach to calculating the amount of money required and is an accepted approach used by many local authorities, irrespective of whether new provision or improvement of existing facilities is required. It ensures contributions are “in scale” as required by the CIL Regulations. The calculated costs have drawn on the standards of provision summarised in Section 6.7, Table 14.

Table 25 Costs for providing open space (excludes land costs)

Typology	Standard (m ²) per person (see Table 16)	Cost of provision	
		Cost / m ²	Contribution per person
Allotments, orchards and community grow spaces	3.0	£33.58	£100.74
Parks and Gardens	8.0	£62.19 ²⁵	£497.52
Play Space	3.0	£227.00 ²⁶	£681.00
Amenity green space	7.0	£17.36	£121.52
Natural and semi natural green space	14.5	£13.85	£200.82
Total	35.5		£1,601.60

This shows that it costs £1,601.60 per person to provide new open space to meet the Swindon Borough standards for open space if contributions are sought for all typologies. These calculations may be used to calculate developer contributions for on-site provision and where required, for off-site contributions. Costs should be updated annually to account for inflation based on the Bank of England inflation rate (“Index Linking”).

The detailed open space costs spreadsheet has been provided to the Council. The summary figures in Table 25 above apply a South West regional multiplier of 0.91, as set out in Spon’s 2025.

Viability issues will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will need to consider if there is sufficient space on site (on site provision of open space is a priority – but this will need to be balanced with other planning matters/policies and requirements). It will also need to consider costings for offsite contributions/financial viability. These considerations will be reviewed by SBC on a case-by-case basis.

²⁵ This is the cost for a larger park with a building and space for multiple facilities. The cost of provision for parks and recreation grounds does not include the cost of providing playing pitches or fixed facilities such as tennis and bowls, which are additional costs which would need to be agreed in addition to the open space costs, where new pitches or contributions to existing pitches are required. Sport England also set out [facilities costs](#). The cost of a small formal park/ garden is £145.82m².

²⁶ This is the average cost per m² for a LAP, LEAP and NEAP.

A **cost calculator** has been provided to the council so that the on and off-site requirements for open space can be calculated for different sized developments. This cost calculator is a recommendation by Ethos that might be further developed by the council, taking into account overall development viability. It provides an example of how costs might be calculated, but site circumstances will also need to be taken into account such as topography, or proximity to existing open space.

The cost calculator is based on the following assumptions:

- Average household size (2.4 persons/household²⁷)
- The open space quantity standards (see Table 16)
- The cost of open space per m² (see Table 26)
- Thresholds for on-site provision (see Table 29)

Cost calculator: Example

A housing development of 80 dwellings would generate the following minimum requirements for on-site provision of open space and contributions for off-site improvements:

On-site provision:

- 0.1344 ha (1,344 sqm) of amenity green space
- 0.2688 ha (2,688 sqm) of accessible natural green space
- 0.0576 ha (576 sqm) of children's play space

Contributions for off-site provision/improvements required²⁸:

- £19,342 for allotments
- £92,375 for parks and gardens

2) Maintenance contributions (commuted sums) for on-site provision

Where new open space is provided, the developer would be expected to provide the open space and either maintain the open space through a management company or other suitably agreed stewardship arrangement, or if, the site is to be adopted by the Local Authority, then maintenance fees will be included in the Section 106 legal agreement. If the open space is maintained by a Management Company, then the open space should be publicly accessible in perpetuity. It is expected that a management plan for the open space would be submitted and approved by the council as a planning condition or part of the legal agreement. Details of how the Management Company will be established and managed, and the provisions put in place should the management company fail etc. would also need to be approved by the council.

²⁷ The average household size in Swindon is 2.4 (based on 97,300 households and a population of 233,407 – Census 2021)

²⁸ Viability issues will be taken into account when considering the off-site contributions that would be required, on a case-by-case basis.

In the event that the open space would be adopted by the council, they may be willing to accept a commuted sum and make arrangements for management of the open space. The amount payable for the commuted sum may be calculated using the figures in Table 26 below. These figures do not include professional fees, set up costs and admin etc. The figures provide guidance on how much it costs to maintain open space per metre squared. The costs have been provided from maintenance costs estimated by Ethos Environmental Planning using Spon's 2025²⁹, and include lifecycle replacement costs. An inflation rate based on the Bank of England inflation rate should be applied. As with the capital costs, these costs may be reviewed and updated by the council.

Table 26 Maintenance costs for open space (excluding professional fees, set up costs and admin)

Typology	Cost/sq. m per annum
Play Space ³⁰	£14.28
Parks and Gardens ³¹	£4.91
Amenity Green Space and Natural Green Space	£0.90
Allotments, Orchards and Community Grow Spaces	£1.69

The detailed open space maintenance costs spreadsheet has been provided to the Council. The summary figures in Table 26 above apply a South West regional multiplier of 0.91, as set out in Spon's 2025.

3) Eligible types of development for on-site provision

Table 27 outlines the type of housing that will be considered eligible for on-site provision of open space to meet the needs of future occupants.

Table 27 Eligible types of residential development

Category	Open Market Housing / Flats	Affordable Housing	Older People's Accommodation	Permanent mobile homes
Play Space (Children and Youth)	✓	✓	x	✓
Parks and Recreation Grounds	✓	✓	On a case-by-case basis	✓
Amenity Open Space	✓	✓	On a case-by-case basis	✓

²⁹ Spon's Architects' and Builders' Price Book 2025.

³⁰ An average between LAP, LEAP and NEAP has been used here.

³¹ This is the cost for a larger park with space for multiple facilities. The cost of provision for parks and recreation grounds does not include the cost of providing playing pitches or fixed facilities such as tennis and bowls, which are additional costs which would need to be agreed in addition to the open space costs, where new pitches or contributions to existing pitches are required. Sport England also set out [facilities costs](#). The maintenance cost of a small formal park/ garden is £4.75m².

Category	Open Market Housing / Flats	Affordable Housing	Older People's Accommodation	Permanent mobile homes
Accessible Natural Green Space	✓	✓	On a case-by-case basis	✓
Allotments	✓	✓	On a case-by-case basis	✓

4) *Thresholds for provision*

The required open space should in the first instance be provided on-site, with off-site provision/contributions only to be considered where on-site provision is either not needed (considering the analysis of supply, accessibility) or not possible/practicable.

Where facilities are to be provided on-site, the council will expect the developer to provide the land for the facility and either:

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

The decision on whether facility provision is to be on-site, off-site or both depends on the following considerations³²:

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

Table 28 provides guidance on how to assess different scales of development sites that could generate a need for different open space typologies to be provided on-site (also see the flow chart at Figure 27, which shows how the quantity, access and quality analysis needs to be taken into account). Where a development is of a size that would generate the need for provision of new on-site open space, consideration should be given to the supply and access to open space in the vicinity, as if there is sufficient access to and provision of existing open space to meet the needs of the new development, the priority may be to improve existing open space (off-site) rather than new on-site provision.

Where a development would result in less than 0.1ha of amenity green space, it will be provided as a single space. For developments that result in more than 0.1ha of amenity green space, the minimum size of a single space considered acceptable is 0.1ha. This will avoid a proliferation of small amenity spaces which have no real recreation function. Where possible,

³² Also see flow chart at Figure 27.

amenity green space will be combined with accessible natural green space, to provide spaces that are larger and also more biodiverse. Informal play opportunities should also be designed in amenity green spaces, in accordance with the FiT guidance.

While Table 28 acts as a useful guide to the recommended types of provision in relation to the size of a scheme, each proposal will still be considered on a site-by-site basis, with on-site provision always to be considered as the first solution. The table below will be most applicable to greenfield sites. For high density brownfield sites, off-site contributions rather than on-site open space provision are considered to be reasonable, due to the limited land available for new development. The enhancement of existing facilities (including improving access to existing facilities) will be key to meeting unmet demand.

Table 28 Potential open space requirements based on scheme size

Type of Provision	1 - 19 dwellings	20-49 dwellings	50-150 dwellings	150+ dwellings
Allotments, Community Food Growing and Orchards	X	X	X	✓
Amenity Green Space	X	✓	✓	✓
Natural and Semi Natural Green Space	X	✓	✓	✓
Parks and Gardens	X	X	X	✓
Play Space	X	✓	✓	✓

KEY: ✓ on-site provision normally sought
X off-site provision/improvements to existing open space normally required

9.0 CONCLUSION

This study provides a robust analysis of the status of open space within Swindon Borough as of 2026. It includes an audit of provision and a local needs assessment (consultation) with findings used to produce new recommended standards for quantity, accessibility and quality of open space. The study also includes a suite of policy recommendations and methodologies for interpreting and informing the needs for the assessed open space typologies for the new Local Plan period up to 2043, as well as a process for calculating developer contributions.

The role and value of open space in contributing to the delivery of national and local priorities and targets, including climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity and nature recovery, and health and wellbeing, is clear from this assessment. It is important that the policies and recommendations included within this assessment are considered for inclusion as statutory planning policy, associated guidance and other council strategies and policy documents.

Council officers and elected members play a pivotal role in adopting and promoting the recommendations within this assessment and ensuring that key stakeholders such as councillors, developers and community groups are suitably informed and engaged in the open space process.

Summary of key priorities

Key priorities identified within the study are as follows, which could form the basis of a more detailed action plan:

Quantity: Across the study area, there are surpluses against the recommended minimum standards for amenity green space, parks and gardens and natural and semi-natural green space), but shortfalls in allotments, orchards and community grow spaces and play space. The picture varies considerably at ward level: almost every ward, with the sole exception of South Marston, has a shortfall in play space, meaning this is the most widespread priority across the borough. Where new development is planned, this indicates a clear need to secure new play space provision, particularly LAPs and LEAPs, alongside continued protection of allotment sites.

At the study area level there is good overall provision of amenity green space, parks and gardens, and natural and semi-natural green space, although there is variation in supply and access at the ward level. These typologies also provide opportunities to reduce shortfalls in other types of open space (for example, upgrading an amenity green space to a park and garden) and can have wider value, for example in terms of nature conservation or green infrastructure. Therefore, the general priority will be to protect and enhance existing provision of these typologies, while ensuring new allotment and play space provision is secured through new development and, where appropriate, through developer contributions.

Consolidation of spaces could be considered in consultation with the community, where there are overlaps in access, and opportunities to expand and improve key sites, to avoid worsening existing deficiencies.

Quality and value: The assessment found that the quality of open space varies across the study area (Section 7.4). Of the 226 sites audited, the majority were assessed as good (41%) or excellent (39%) quality, with 17% assessed as fair and 3% as poor. However, a significant proportion of sites scored poorly against at least one individual criterion, particularly amenity green space, LAPs and NEAPs, meaning there are quality issues that need addressing even where overall provision is good. Improving the quality of existing open spaces is therefore a key priority for Swindon Borough, which will also help meet wider priorities around health and wellbeing and reducing health inequalities, and can contribute to biodiversity and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The wider value of open space is also highlighted in this assessment (Section 7.5), with the majority of open spaces providing a wide range of benefits/potential benefits such as enhancing biodiversity, flood management and reducing health inequalities.

Access: Access to open space also varies considerably across the study area and by typology. There is generally good access to amenity green space and Neighbourhood Equipped Areas of Play across urban Swindon, but access to Local Areas of Play is poor across the study area as a whole. There is a notable gap in access to parks and gardens covering the Haydon Wick and Rodbourne wards, and access across the rural parts of the borough is consistently poorer than in the urban area for parks, allotments and play space

Delivering open space improvements

New development that is well designed and follows good practice can play a positive role in the protection, provision and enhancement of high-quality open space which provides multiple benefits for people and nature, as part of a wider green and blue infrastructure network within the study area (and beyond). Over the new Local Plan period, approximately 25,796 homes are anticipated across the borough, equivalent to an estimated population increase of around 61,910 people. Applying the recommended standards set out in Section 6.7, this is likely to generate a substantial requirement for new open space, particularly allotments and play space, up to 2043.

Outside of development, the Council and other open space providers (such as town and parish councils) play a key role in high-quality open space provision, through strong planning policy in the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans, and also site management that follows best practice and optimises the benefits for people and wildlife.

Despite the demonstrated benefits of high-quality parks and open spaces, funding for the management and enhancement of open space is a key issue, in light of continued budget pressures. The Council could therefore consider developing a parks and open space strategy which could look at prioritising site investment, alongside exploring different funding options, models and mechanisms including the developer contributions approach set out in Section 8.7 for securing open space into the long term. The value and benefits of open space and

green infrastructure to society, the environment and the economy are increasingly recognised and are central to national planning policy. This has been accompanied by increased opportunities for investment, funding and delivery

The assessment has also recommended that management plans are developed for key open spaces, including parks and gardens and natural and semi-natural green space. These should be developed through engaging with local communities to help ensure that local needs are met, and to help make them safe, welcoming, inclusive, wildlife-friendly and climate-resilient spaces for the whole community to enjoy and benefit from.
