

Swindon Borough Council

Open Space Audit and Assessment Update

Part A: Report

March 2014

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Appendix 1: Open Space Standards and Definitions

1. Background

- 1.1 Swindon Borough Council published its first Open Space Audit and Assessment in August 2004. The audit provided comprehensive information on all recreational open space within the Borough and was used to support the implementation of policies and standards detailed in the adopted Swindon Borough Local Plan 2011 (2006).
- 1.2 An update to the Playing Pitch Strategy to supplement the audit was undertaken by PMP for Swindon Borough and published in May 2007.
- 1.3 A partial review of the August 2004 audit as relates to quantity (including playing pitches) was undertaken in 2007, predominantly due to the emergence of the Northern Development Area (NDA).
- 1.4 A further review was completed in 2011 which assessed all areas of open space, within the Borough. This update will apply the data collected during the 2011 audit, realigning the data with the new ward boundaries.
- 1.5 The National Planning Policy Framework (2012) defines open space as any land or water of public value which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity (Annex 2, p.54). It emphasises the importance of a robust assessment being completed and kept up to date to ensure specific needs, surpluses and deficits of open space are identified and can be used to determine open space, sports and recreation provision required (Paragraph 73, p. 18).
- 1.6 Although Planning Policy Guidance 17 - Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (PPG17) together with the accompanying companion guide provided the framework to previous Open Space Audits, they have since been superseded by the NPPF (2012) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) (2014) which now form the basis for this update.
- 1.7 Swindon Borough published a Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy for consultation in 2009 with a revised draft for consultation in March 2011. GI consists of strategic networks of accessible, multifunctional sites (including parks, woodland, informal open spaces, nature reserves and

historic sites) as well as linkages (such as river corridors and floodplains, wildlife corridors and greenways). These contribute to people's well-being, and together comprise a coherent managed resource responsive to evolving conditions.

- 1.8 The GI Strategy's vision is that Swindon will sit at the heart of a far-reaching network of interconnected and multifunctional green spaces that:
- Helps meet the challenges of climate change
 - Connects and enrich biodiverse habitats
 - Improves access, recreation and tourism opportunities
 - Enhances landscape character and respects local distinctiveness
 - Realises the potential of historical and cultural heritage features to contribute to local identity and sense of place
- 1.9 The GI Strategy highlighted that there is considerable variation in the quality of recreational open spaces across Swindon Borough. High standards of design, construction and on-going management need to be maintained to ensure GI remains fit for purpose and poor quality does not undermine the benefits it seeks to promote.
- 1.10 This update will play a role in addressing deficiencies in the quantity, quality and accessibility of open space in line with local standards and wider GI needs. It will further support the GI and continue to inform S106 contributions and the introduction of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) requirements.
- 1.11 The draft Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026 sets out a strong focus and protection of green infrastructure and open space through Policy EN1 – Green Infrastructure Network and Policy EN3 – Open Space. Open Space standards and definitions are set out in Appendix 1 of this report.

Swindon's Growth

- 1.12 The expansion of Swindon has seen an increased demand for open space as a result of new housing development and this is set to continue.

New green infrastructure has been provided as part of major expansion areas at North Swindon (formerly known as the Northern Development Area) and at Wichelstowe (formerly the Southern Development Area).

- 1.13 Recent planning consents for development proposals at Commonhead (890 dwellings) and Tadpole Farm (1,695 dwellings) will secure green infrastructure provision. Whilst the proposed strategic allocation identified at the Eastern Villages, including Rowborough and the South Marston Village expansion (about 6,000 dwellings south of the A420 and about 2,000 dwellings north of the A420) and the proposed allocation for a mixed-use development at Kingsdown (a total of 1,650 dwellings) will also secure the provision of green infrastructure as part of these developments.
- 1.14 Together with the expansion areas, the draft Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026 proposes a further 3,500 homes within Swindon's existing urban area, 1,000 within the Swindon Central Area and 450 homes within the rural settlements. This proposed development will have a cumulative impact on existing GI, including open space and it is essential that this increased demand on open space is taken into account and provided for.

2. Update Requirements

- 2.1 This update will identify open space provision in response to the new ward boundaries (2012). Although the typology and function remains unchanged, the quantity, quality and accessibility of open spaces sites has been updated in line with the revised ward boundaries and local plan standards.
- 2.2 The typologies considered within this update include:
- Public Parks and Gardens - including urban parks, country parks and formal gardens
 - Amenity Greenspace - (most commonly, but not exclusively in housing areas) includes:
 - Major Open Space (MOS)

- Local Open Space (LOS)
- Playspace - provision for children and teenagers, including play areas, skateboard parks, outdoor basketball hoops, and other more informal areas
- Green Corridors - these include natural, linear and strategic corridors
- Semi-Natural Spaces
- Outdoor Sports Facilities
- Allotments, community gardens and urban farms

2.3 Further, function refers to the purpose of the open space. Primary purpose infers that there is at least one secondary purpose; this both reflects the multi-functional nature of many open spaces and brings clarity and consistency to planning, design and management policies.

Functions considered include:

- Strategic functions: defining and separating urban areas; better lining of town and country; and providing for recreational needs over a wide area
- Urban quality: helping to support regeneration and improving quality of life for communities by providing visually attractive open spaces close to where people live
- Promoting health and well-being: providing opportunities for all to participate in formal and informal recreation, or to walk, cycle or ride within parks and open spaces or along paths, bridleways and canal banks. Allotments may provide physical exercise and other health benefits
- Connection: how open spaces are connected together to form GI networks
- As a community resource: as a place for congregating and for holding community events, religious festivals, fetes and travelling fairs
- Havens and habitats for flora and fauna: sites may also have potential to be wildlife corridors or stepping stones from one

habitat to another and may contribute towards achieving objectives set out in local biodiversity action plans

- As a visual amenity: even without public access, people can enjoy open space near to them to provide an outlook, variety in the urban scene, or as a positive element in the landscape

2.4 Quantitative information as relates to playing pitches is taken forward from the Playing Pitch Strategy (May 2007). Further, open spaces which hold an environmental designation are identified through using symbols for their designations and include:

- Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Local Nature Reserve (LNR)
- County Wildlife Site (CWS)

2.5 A major part of the previous review study (2011) was to assess the quality of open space in light of the considerable variation in the quality across Swindon Borough as highlighted within the Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy. As detailed in the strategy quality open space is defined as greenspace (open space) which is 'fit for purpose' - greenspace which is in the right place, readily accessible, safe, inclusive, welcoming, well-maintained, well managed and performing an identified function. Data has been taken from the previous review (2011).

2.6 Quality assessments consider the following factors to reflect multi-functionality and connectivity:

- Accessibility and Connectivity
- Attractive and Appealing Places
- Biodiversity
- Activity, Health and Well-being
- Community Benefits

Qualitative information as relates to playing pitches quality is taken forward from the Playing Pitch Strategy (May 2007).

2.7 This update also considers the accessibility of open space not only within a ward, but also within a wider context, for instance on the edge of adjoining wards.

3. Methodology

- 3.1 For this Open Space Audit and Assessment update, data was acquired from the surveys undertaken in summer of 2010, which formed the basis for the previous review (2011). These surveys assessed all recreational open space within the Borough, evaluating the typology, function and quality and accessibility of each site.

Typology and function

- 3.2 All open spaces were considered in terms of typology which is set out in the ward profiles. The function of the site was considered to inform the ward's strengths and opportunities.

Quantity

- 3.3 In order to calculate the quantity of open space within each amended ward, Geographical Information Systems (GIS) software was used to work out the total area of the open space sites within each individual ward. Where sites were divided between two or three neighbouring wards, the area of each section was measured and apportioned to the appropriate ward. Any additions and losses as a result of the revised ward boundaries have been taken into account when calculating the overall ward quantity figures and have also been listed within the relevant ward profile.
- 3.4 The quantity of open space has been considered in terms of open space area per ward population, to determine the overall provision of open space per ward. This has further been broken down to consider overall open space provision in terms of General Recreation, Playspace, Outdoor Sports (including Playing Pitches) and Allotments. The

standards applied to determine open space provision per ward derive from saved Policies R5 / R6 of the adopted Swindon Borough Local Plan 2011 (2006). These same standards are also proposed within the draft Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026.

For information, where Country Parks and golf courses with public value exist, they have been listed in Part B: Ward Profiles, however they do not contribute towards overall open space provision on the basis that they are strategic areas of open space serving the recreational needs of the Borough and surrounding areas.

Quality

- 3.3 A major part of the previous review (2011) was to assess quality of open space across Swindon Borough, in line with the Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy vision of a network of interconnected and multifunctional green space (open spaces). The data aggregated from that review (2011) has been used in this update (2013).

Accessibility

- 3.4 An assessment of accessibility of open space was undertaken by officers using MapInfo (GIS system) to spatially determine accessibility of open space across a ward, also taking in to consideration open spaces within adjacent wards. Accessibility was determined in terms of poor, average and good.

4. Audit and Assessment Results

- 4.1 Part B of this Report sets out the Open Space Audit and Assessment Ward Profiles. A summary of quantity, quality and accessibility of open space per ward is set out below:

Summary of Quantity Assessment

Ward	General Recreation	Playspaces	Outdoor Sports Facilities	Allotments	Total
Blunsdon and Highworth	Over	Under	Over	Under	Over
Central	Over	Under	Under	Over	Under
Covingham and Dorcan	Over	Under	Under	Under	Over
Eastcott	Under	Under	Under	Under	Under
Gorse Hill and Pinehurst	Over	Under	Under	Under	Under
Haydon Wick	Over	Under	Under	Under	Under
Lawn and Chiseldon	Over	Under	Under	Under	Over
Liden, Eldene and Park South	Over	Under	Under	Under	Over
Lydiard and Freshbrook	Over	Under	Under	Under	Over
Mannington and Western	Over	Under	Under	Over	Over
Old Town	Over	Under	Under	Over	Over
Penhill and Upper Stratton	Over	Under	Over	Under	Over
Priory Vale	Over	Under	Under	Under	Over
Ridgeway	Over	Under	Over	Under	Over
Rodbourne Cheney	Over	Under	Over	Over	Over
Shaw	Over	Under	Under	Under	Over
St Andrews	Over	Under	Under	Under	Over
St Margaret and South Marston	Over	Under	Under	Under	Over
Walcot and Park North	Over	Under	Under	Under	Under
Wroughton and Wichelstowe	Over	Under	Under	Over	Over

Summary of Quality Assessment

Ward	General Recreation	Playspaces	Allotments	Total
Blunsdon and Highworth	Average	Average	Above	Average

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Central	Average	Average	Average	Average
Covingham and Dorcan	Average	Average	N/A	Average
Eastcott	Average	Average	N/A	Average
Gorse Hill and Pinehurst	Average	Average	Average	Average
Haydon Wick	Average	Average	Above	Average
Lawn and Chiseldon	Average	Average	Below	Average
Liden, Eldene and Park South	Average	Average	N/A	Average
Lydiard and Freshbrook	Above	Average	N/A	Average
Mannington and Western	Average	Average	Average	Average
Old Town	Average	Average	Average	Average
Penhill and Upper Stratton	Average	Average	Average	Average
Priory Vale	Average	Average	N/A	Average
Ridgeway	Above	Below	Average	Average
Rodbourne Cheney	Average	Average	Above	Average
Shaw	Average	Average	N/A	Average
St Andrews	Average	Average	N/A	Average
St Margaret and South Marston	Average	Average	Above	Average
Walcot and Park North	Average	Average	Below	Average
Wroughton and Wichelstowe	Average	Average	Average	Average

Summary of Accessibility Assessment

Ward	General Recreation	Playspaces	Outdoor Sports Facilities	Allotments	Total
Blunsdon and Highworth	Average	Poor ¹	Average	Poor	Average
Central	Good	Average	Average	Average	Average
Covingham and Dorcan	Good	Average	Average	Poor	Average
Eastcott	Average	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor
Gorse Hill and Pinehurst	Good	Poor	Good	Average	Average
Haydon Wick	Good	Average	Average	Average	Average
Lawn and Chiseldon	Good	Poor ²	Poor ³	Average	Average
Liden, Eldene and Park South	Good	Average ⁴	Average	Poor	Average
Lydiard and Freshbrook	Good	Average	Average	Poor	Good
Mannington and Western	Good	Average	Average	Average	Average
Old Town	Good	Average	Average	Average	Good
Penhill and Upper Stratton	Good	Average	Good	Good	Good
Priory Vale	Good	Average	Poor	Poor	Average

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Ridgeway	Average	Poor	Average	Average	Average
Rodbourne Cheney	Good	Poor	Average	Average	Average
Shaw	Good	Average	Poor	Poor	Average
St Andrews	Good	Good	Average	Poor	Good
St Margaret and South Marston	Average	Average	Good	Average	Average
Walcot and Park North	Good	Poor	Average	Good	Average
Wroughton and Wichelstowe	Good	Average	Good	Average	Good

1. Highworth – Poor, Blunsdon-Average
2. Lawn – Poor, Chiseldon – Average
3. Lawn – Poor, Chiseldon – Average
4. Park South - Poor

- 4.2 For further details on the above standards, see Appendix 1: Open Space Standards and Definitions.
- 4.3 The Open Space Audit and Assessment Ward Profiles will be used to inform policy requirements of the Adopted Swindon Borough Local Plan 2011 (2006) and the emerging Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026, once adopted.

References

- A Green Infrastructure Strategy for Swindon 2010-2026. Updated, March 2011. Swindon Borough Council.
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