

Open Space Strategy

Consultation draft March 2020



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Checking:

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Cover picture: Late autumn 2019 in Melton Country Park.

Dedication: MD2 Consulting Ltd would like to acknowledge their deep gratitude to Tom Butlin for his work on this Strategy. Tom tragically lost his life in a mountain accident in February 2020 at the age of 37 during the conduct of this study. This strategy report is dedicated to his memory.

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Executive summary

This Open Space Strategy is an evidence-based report document produced to support delivery of policies in the Council's Local Plan, which was adopted in October 2018. Policy EN7 of the Melton Local Plan requires the provision of open space to meet identified deficiencies and to sustain quantity standards as the population grows. This growth is directly related to the creation of sustainable neighbourhoods in the town and aims to deliver the following:

- More new housing and affordable homes;
- Leisure and commercial development;
- Infrastructure, such as new roads and schools; and
- More jobs.

The new document replaces an Open Space Strategy which was completed in 2015 and which nevertheless remains useful as a reference document. Whereas the new Open Space Strategy deals solely with Melton Mowbray and not the whole of the Borough, those elements of the 2015 strategy outside of Melton Mowbray will remain valid until they are updated in due course, which is a recommended action based on the same methodology that has been adopted in this report. This would enable the Council to forward plan open space on a consistent basis using a commonly derived evidence base across the whole Borough.

As part of the task to produce the new strategy, a literature review and benchmarking exercise has been undertaken. This comparative exercise has been based on the Borough's "nearest neighbours" from a statistical perspective, to provide the evidence to establish new, updated Open Space standards. In some cases, the new standards are more challenging than those they replace, but they also reflect both good practice and the ever-changing needs of society.

Two categories of open space which deserve particular attention are the provision of '*allotments and community growing spaces*' and '*semi-natural greenspace*' where the evidence confirms that the town falls well below the required quantity standards. It should be noted that the standards identified for each identified category should not be regarded as any kind of maximum amount, but rather as a 'target minimum'. Therefore, whilst Melton Mowbray is ahead of the standard '*provision for children and young people*' this should not be used as a reason to reduce provision. It should be noted that until policy EN7 is updated that the 2015 standards remain in place.

To produce the strategy, a detailed survey of all sites within the study area was undertaken between October 2019 and January 2020. This showed that there is more open space in Melton Mowbray than previously thought. Whilst many of these sites are small, the number of sites audited has increased by nearly 60% from 84 to 133. The audit of sites has shown that quality in Melton Mowbray is very high. Those who provide open space services should celebrate this result. Our findings confirm that no sites were classified in the poorest category, which is exceptional and an impressive 19 sites were deemed to fall into the highest category. One finding of concern, however, is that Thorpe Road Cemetery is approaching capacity and that new provision will be needed soon. A separate report on this has been issued to the Council.

In terms of 'quantity' and 'access' to open space the findings are generally good and no area of Melton Mowbray falls outside an access standard. However, for certain open space types, there are access deficiencies notably in the very north west of the town (off Nottingham Road) and very south east of the town (off Burton Road). The largest single deficiency in open space quantity is for '*semi-natural greenspace*' which is 53% below standard and '*allotments and community growing spaces*' which is 47% below standard. During the life of the Local Plan (up to 2036) '*parks and gardens*' will also fall below standard, although this 'type' is marginally ahead of the quantity standard in 2020 due to the classification of Melton Country Park

as a 'park' as opposed to a 'semi-natural greenspace' since this most accurately reflects the major theme of onsite management.

The 'quantity' and 'access' findings have led to some headline themes in the strategy, namely that; (i) there is a need for more allotments and community growing spaces, some of which can be achieved by re-designing existing locations and by creating new ones in sustainable neighbourhoods where new 'community growing spaces' would be an attractive alternative to the creation of new 'semi-natural greenspace'; (ii) there is an identified need for 10 hectares of new urban parkland on one or more sites by 2036; and (iii) a requirement for large accessible semi-natural destination south of the town of circa 50 hectares. Included within this site would be a new Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP). The semi-natural greenspace with NEAP has been given the working title **Melton Mowbray Natural Park (MMNP)**. The MMNP would also be a visitor destination by offering within the Park some 'paid for' attractions of regional significance.

This Strategy report also champions a new town centre destination, which may be described as "**winter gardens with the inclusion of public facing microenterprises**". Unlike the MMNP this is a concept rather than a proposal, although both objectives require separate feasibility studies and associated business planning.

The strategy also includes updated recommendations on the collection of developer contributions, noting that these provide a key funding source to meet the needs of new residents in sustainable neighbourhoods and for the overall delivery of this Open Space Strategy. Developer contributions not only apply to new open space provision, but also to secure resources to maintain these open spaces. New open space created through the development process is recommended to be managed directly by the Council to ensure democratic accountability and because current management standards are identified as being high, unless circumstances dictate otherwise. Within the new sustainable neighbourhoods, there will be a need to provide local areas of play (LAP) and locally equipped areas of play (LEAP) but pooling of contributions should be sought to construct a NEAP for the proposed MMNP.

Overall Melton Borough Council, Melton Mowbray Town Estate and other land managers can be justifiably proud of their achievements. Whilst there is more to do on the delivery of 'quantity' for specified categories of open space, the findings on 'quality' are very good. As quality is the major driver for public enjoyment of open space, the overall picture is encouraging. Nevertheless, the Council should be aware of the need to prioritise the provision of new open space in the delivery of new sustainable neighbourhoods so that the overall quality of existing open space should not be allowed to fall. For that reason, audits of quality should be independently undertaken every five (5) years.

Finally, to accompany the new Open Space Strategy, there is a WebApp designed to give site information to members of the public. The functionality of the WebApp can be increased at a later date in the event that there is sufficient demand.

Clive Davies

Director
MD2 Consulting Ltd
17th March 2020

1: Introduction

1.1 MELTON LOCAL PLAN

Melton Borough Council adopted a new Melton Local Plan in October 2018. The plan covers the whole Borough and sets out the development strategy, policies and proposals including site allocations which will guide land use and development up to 2036. The plan has been prepared in accordance with legal requirements set out in the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and accords with the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

1.2 POLICY EN7

Policy EN7 of the adopted Melton Local Plan requires the provision of open space to meet identified deficiencies and to sustain quantity standards as the population grows. It opens the way for a more strategic, design-led approach to open space provision that focusses on enhancing and providing green infrastructure in the areas identified in the plan (Policy EN3 and EN7). This is a marked change from the previous approach which was to provide new open space on a pro-rata basis, which sometimes resulted in the creation of small open spaces. Inter alia, this strategy may not result in new open spaces serving their intended purpose and can sometimes precipitate anti-social behaviour problems arising from misuse.

Local Plan:

Melton Local Plan policy opens the way for a more strategic design-led approach to open space than was previously the case. This is an opportunity for the town.

1.3 CORPORATE PRIORITIES

The Council wishes to ensure that open space provision supports wider corporate priorities, such as:

- Sustaining the attractiveness of Melton Mowbray as a place to visit, including how a high quality well located 'destination' outdoor children's play facility could contribute to this; and
- Making sure that the overall portfolio of sites meets, at the very least, the minimum necessary and is of sufficiently high quality, of the right types, in the right amounts and in appropriate locations to meet people's needs and to delivery environmental gains;
- Working to ensure that any new open spaces required as part of new development are normally adopted by the Council, rather than third party organisations that are remote from local residents and users, and not accountable to them; and
- Responding to the declared climate change emergency, for example by increasing the level of tree planting and by ameliorating adverse impacts, such as the provision of more open spaces designed to manage flood risk, especially in new developments.

1.4 OVERALL OBJECTIVE

Council Officers believe that providing clarity and transparency in respect of open space provision will increase the Council's reputation for being open in the way it seeks contributions for infrastructure from developers. To achieve this the overall objective is to put in place a deliverable open spaces strategy and action plan for the main built up area of Melton Mowbray encompassing the proposed sustainable neighbourhoods to the north and south.

As well as guiding the size, type and distribution of open spaces that will be provided across the urban area, a well evidenced and transparent formula based approach to seeking developer contributions for the provision, enhancement, management and

Overall Objective:

Put in place a deliverable open spaces strategy and action plan for the main built up area of Melton Mowbray encompassing the proposed sustainable neighbourhoods to the north and south.

maintenance of open spaces, to ensure that the spaces provided are sustainable over the long term in required.

1.5 CEMETERY PROVISION

An extension to normal Open Space Strategy preparation is a requirement for the Council to identify suitable further cemetery land within or near to Melton Mowbray town. A separate report has been produced on this element of the study. It is clear that the Council's existing provision at Thorpe Road, which can be generally described as a 'conventional burial ground', is nearing capacity and that a new provision or an extension of the existing facility is expressly required.

Cemetery provision:

The Council's Thorpe Road cemetery is nearing capacity hence new provision is needed. The lack of space is a notable risk factor for the Council and should be addressed. A separate report identifies options.

1.6 SUSTAINABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS AND THE MELTON MOWBRAY DISTRIBUTOR ROAD (MMDR)

The creation of new sustainable communities and the opening of the MMDR represent major changes for Melton Mowbray. The Council's spatial strategy decrees that Melton Mowbray will see significant growth and hence an increased population; this is a consequence of central guidance on housing land supply. New growth will precipitate an increased need for accessible open space to meet future demand. One consequence of the MMDR will be increased mobility around the town by avoiding the town centre, wherever practicably possible. This is an important consideration in opening up the opportunity for a 'destination attraction'.

1.7 THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Melton Borough Council declared a climate change emergency on 17th July 2019. The resolution paved the way for the development of an action plan on how the Council will work towards ensuring its operations can become carbon neutral by 2030 and it will enlist the help of local partners and stakeholders to help deliver this goal.

With regard to the Open Space Strategy, it is notable that only five per cent of the Borough is currently woodland in contrast to other areas which have up to 26% woodland and tree cover. Trees naturally remove carbon from the air and significantly increasing tree cover would help reduce emissions to address the causes of climate change.

Addressing the climate emergency:

The Council can sponsor the creation of new urban and peri-urban woodland and provide more green infrastructure as part of its response to the climate emergency.

The Council can sponsor the creation of more urban and semi-urban woodlands, particularly if it pursues the development of a new visitor destination in the Borough. The Council can also take action to adapt to the consequences of climate change by the provision of new green infrastructure and the adaptation of existing open spaces to ensure more resilience to climate change impacts. For example, the provision of more soft landscaping, tree planting and provision of inbuilt flood attenuation measures in open spaces can ameliorate flooding and provide more shade.

1.8 UNDERTAKING THE STUDY

MD2 Consulting Ltd was appointed in October 2019 to undertake the preparation of the new Open Space Strategy and Action Plan. The practice specialises in open space and green infrastructure planning and has worked for many local authorities and government bodies, including Homes England.

1.9 EXTENDING THE STUDY TO THE WHOLE BOROUGH

The study, quality audit and new Open Space Strategy has been prepared for Melton Mowbray as the main urban settlement in the Borough, essentially to meet a need to plan for the main built up area of the town encompassing the proposed sustainable neighbourhoods to the north and south. To enable a general update of policies and to ensure that there as a single methodology applying to the whole of Melton it is recommended that as a next step the study is extended to cover the whole Borough.



Figure 1: Amenity open spaces at Chapel Street/King Street and Tamar Road/Ewden Close. Melton Mowbray has a significant number of small open space sites. Their value to local amenity should not however be underestimated as they are often greatly valued by local residents. Such sites however could be improved with minimal interventions such as seating and shrubbery or converted into community growing areas.

2: Methodology

A robust methodology developed by MD2 Consulting Ltd and tailored for use in Melton was used for the preparation of the Open Space Strategy and Action Plan.

STAGE	METHOD
1	<i>A desk study was undertaken of the local policy context as well as current national and international policy e.g. the 25-year environment plan. The interpretation of this evidence was synthesised and included in this main study strategy report.</i>
2	<i>A multi-method data collection and an analysis was undertaken by the Consultants to take into account the (i) existing published evidence of Open Space within Melton Mowbray, including the locations of the new sustainable neighbourhoods and the proposed new highway infrastructure intended to serve them, (ii) need for a properly informed, consistent and robust evidence base, (iii) existing and planned open space provision in settlements that closely relate to Melton Mowbray and (iv) need to support the Borough's climate change emergency goals.</i>
3	<i>The planned updating of the 2015 KKP Open Space evidence base proved impossible as the methodology used at the time was unavailable to the Council. In consequence, agreement was reached with Council Officers that a full refresh of audit data was required. This work was undertaken by the consultants between November 2019 and January 2020. Two experienced surveyors visited all sites in Melton using previous records, GIS datasets, field walking and discussions with local residents who were 'out and about' whenever possible to identify open spaces that were being used by the public. The net result is that there is a substantial increase in the number of sites being used by the public as open space in Melton Mowbray.</i>
4	<i>The consultants researched high-quality destinations elsewhere in England which could be a model for an equivalent development in Melton. These were compared with 'on-the-ground' realities including the role of the local authority, the MMDR and Sustainable Neighbourhood's locations. This was considered in the context of providing a counterpoint to the current country park provision in the north east of the town. In particular consideration was given to (i) location (preferred south of the town), (ii) a different 'offer' to the current country park, (iii) attractiveness to bring visitors from a 50-mile radius and (iv) facilities that could attract private sector investment and other external funding.</i>
5	<i>Inter alia, developer contributions will be required to provide a major new open space facility such as a new natural park. These funds will similarly be used to fund new open space provision and its future maintenance and management. Section 106 contributions will be the chosen delivery mechanism for developer contributions based on the requirements of Policy EN7 of the Melton Local Plan.</i>
6	<i>The consultants were invited to propose a new 'town centre' attraction which would attract visitors who might normally come to Melton Mowbray. This would help to a deficiency in the provision of an early evening economy (17.30 – 21.00) and now been factored into this consideration.</i>
7	<i>The consultants have also addressed future provision for burials in Melton Mowbray since it has become apparent that the main cemetery site at Thorpe Road is approaching capacity. As well as identifying suitable sites for potential increased provision, the supplementary report which accompanies the study addresses potential for green burials.</i>
8	<i>The CIFPA "Nearest Neighbour" algorithm, the Consultants compared the Borough of Melton with its 15 nearest neighbours based on nationally accepted comparative criteria. A desk study and web-based ingathering of data from these 15 authorities was done to provide comparative information. These were then tabulated and compared with the results of the survey and GIS mapping. New Standards were determined based on this evidence for inclusion in this Open Space Strategy. The new Standards are intended for adoption when the Melton Local Plan is next renewed but already act as a target for meeting the town's needs notably created by the development of the Sustainable Neighbourhoods.</i>
9	<i>New mapping was undertaken in a format compatible with the Council's GIS system to provide a resource for MBC as a 'planning resource' and also to determine areas of surplus and deficit in open space provision.</i>
10	<i>To aid public understanding of open space provision, a web-based applet was developed and populated with information on all the Open Space sites in Melton Mowbray. The applet can be extended to the rest of the</i>

	<i>Borough at a later date. A key feature of the applet is the ability for members of the public to understand the quality score for each site. The score was independently determined by the consultants in order to protect the Council from criticism. There are very few web applets of this type currently available, hence the Council can consider itself a front runner in this regard.</i>
11	<i>A spreadsheet of data backs up the survey and is summarised in this report. The spreadsheet is provided in its entirety to Council Officers. The Action Plan is a separate tab on the spreadsheet and is based on the quality scoring provided by the consultants and is in five categories. Where individual recommendations have been noted, these are included.</i>
12	<i>Consultation undertaken to support the new Open Space Strategy.</i>
13	<i>Training provided on the new Open Space Strategy for Council Officers.</i>

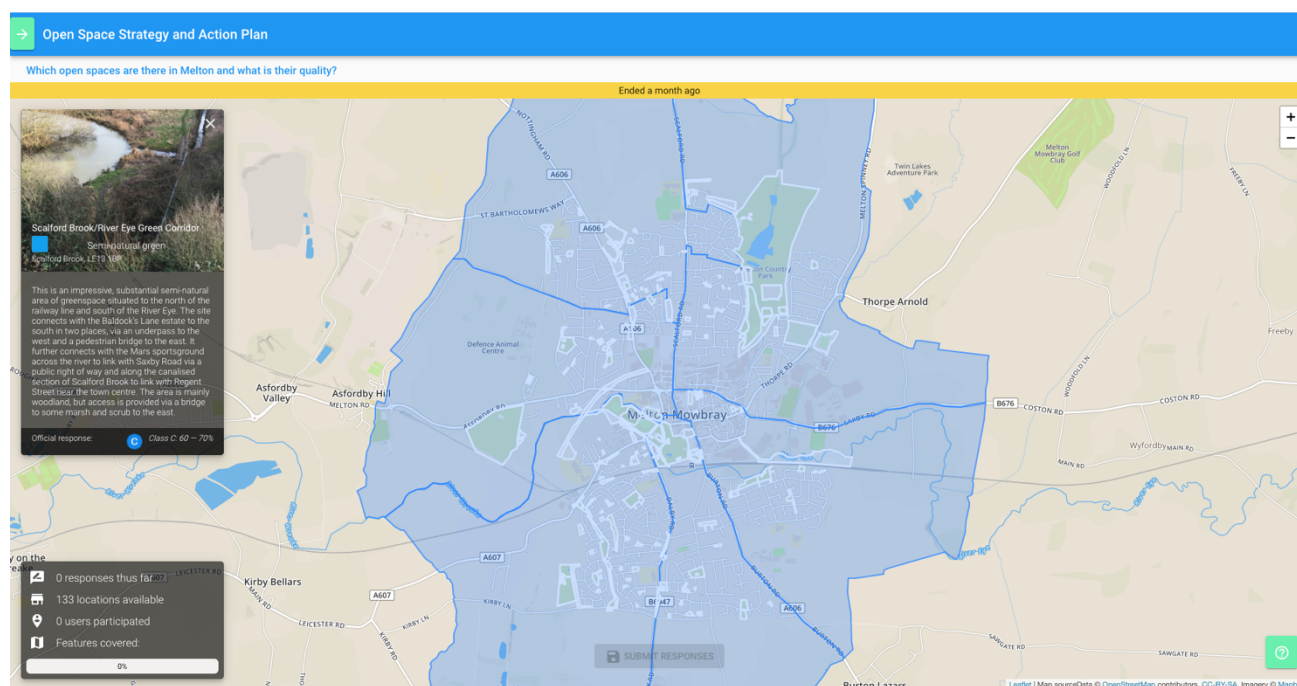


Figure 2: Screen shot of the WebApp produced for Open Space Strategy 2020. The app provides members of the public with information on each of the 133 sites covered in the site audit. Based on the powerful ‘PlaceChangers’ platform the WebApp can be upgraded in its functionality at a later date including interactive elements.

3: Planning context

3.1 BACKGROUND

This new Open Space Strategy is an evidence-based document to support delivery of the Council's Local Plan which was adopted on the 10th October 2018. The Local Plan will deliver more than 6,000 new homes and 50 hectares of new employment land, mostly in and around Melton Mowbray, but with enough development in the larger settlements of the surrounding rural areas to provide for a variety of opportunity and choice. In addition, the plan will deliver leisure and commercial development, includes policies to revitalise Melton Mowbray Town Centre as well as new infrastructure, such as new schools and new roads, including the proposed new Melton Mowbray Distributor.

3.2 2015 OPEN SPACE STRATEGY

The last Open Space Strategy was produced in 2015 on behalf of the Council by consultants KKP and formed part of a suite of reports that together make up the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study. Although this evidence is now dated and will be replaced by the new Open Space Strategy as well as a new Playing Pitch Strategy, it nevertheless contains useful reference information about the open space resource in the Borough and how it was assessed at the time. Therefore, the previous Open Space Strategy remains relevant in terms of the historical development of the evidence base.

3.3 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK (NPPF)

The original NPPF, which was introduced in 2012 was replaced in 2018 and further updated in June 2019. The overriding message continues to support new sustainable development without delay. It defines the role of planning in achieving sustainable development under three overarching objectives – *economic, social and environmental*, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways.

Various parts of the NPPF are relevant to the provision of open space, notably Parts 8 and 15.

Part 8, *"Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities"* addresses open space and recreation at paragraphs 96 – 101. In particular, Paragraph 96 states that *"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. 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"*.

Part 15, *"Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment"* states that the planning system should *"contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests, recognising the wider benefits of ecosystems, minimising the impacts on biodiversity, preventing both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from pollution and land stability and remediating contaminated or other degraded land, where appropriate"*.

3.4 NATIONAL PLANNING PRACTICE GUIDANCE (NPPG)

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) is a resource which brings together planning guidance on various topics into one place. It was launched in March 2014 and coincided with the cancellation of most outgoing Government Circulars which had provided previous guidance on many aspects of planning, including open space. The NPPF and NPPG together replaced Planning Policy Guidance 17 (PPG17), dating back to 2002. However, the principles and approach advocated by PPG17 are still viewed as good practice by many local authorities. Furthermore, the main purpose of undertaking local assessment remains to plan positively, creatively and effectively to ensure that there is adequate provision to meet the needs of local

communities and visitors with reference to accessibility, quantity and quality, a key factor in the determination of multifunctionality.

National Planning Practice Guidance continues to advise that it is for local planning authorities to assess the need for open space and opportunities for new provision in their areas. The definition given in the current guidance states that *"open space, which includes all open space of public value, can take many forms, from formal sports pitches to open areas within a development, linear corridors and country parks. It can provide health and recreation benefits to people living and working nearby; have an ecological value and contribute to green infrastructure, as well as being an important part of the landscape and setting of built development, and an important component in the achievement of sustainable development."*

3.5 FIELDS IN TRUST (FIT)

Fields in Trust is a British Charity established in 1925 as the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) which devised the so-called 'Six Acre Standard' Guidance. The recommended minimum standard for 'outdoor playing space' is 2.4 hectares per 1,000 population which is commonly referred to as the '**Six Acre Standard**'.

This standard comprises four acres for outdoor sport (specifically three acres for pitch sports) plus two acres for children's play. It is not so much a target, but instead a minimum requirement that needs to be provided to ensure that adequate open space is provided. It defines outdoor playing space as "space which is available for sport, active recreation or children's play, which is of a suitable size and nature for its intended purpose, and safely accessible and available to the general public." Within this definition, there is a distinction between 'sports / active recreation' and 'children's play', and accordingly a minimum standard is recommended for each of these broad headings. The 6 acre / 2.4 hectares per 1,000 population is for "Total Playing Space", but this figure comprises 1.6 to 1.8 hectares (per 1,000 population) for outdoor sport and, for children's playing spaces, between 0.6 and 0.8 hectares (per 1,000 population) is recommended.

The "Six Acre Standard" has long been acknowledged as the minimum benchmark standard for outdoor space provision by national and local government and play practitioners which should enable residents to lead active lives and participate in outdoor sport and play. The standard, which informed the development of PPG17, is currently set out in its publication "Guidance for Outdoor Sports and Play" released by Fields in Trust in 2015. This document provides guidelines for the quantity of green space per 1,000 people (minimum levels), accessibility of green space (given in walking distance) and quality of all types of recreational open space. It also includes recommended dimensions and buffer zones for a range of formal spaces, along with guidelines on how our benchmarks can be implemented in new housing developments.

FIT standards are sometimes used by Local Authorities in their entirety; however locally assessed standards based upon FIT standards are usually seen as preferable bespoke evidence-based documents produced on behalf of Local Planning Authorities to inform and guide their spatial strategies.

3.6 LOCAL PLAN POLICIES

Melton Borough Council's Local Plan includes a number of environmental objectives and priorities and has a suite of policies related to these aims. For example, Policy EN2 addresses 'Biodiversity and Geodiversity'; Policy EN3 'The Melton Green Infrastructure Network' advocates a strategic approach to the delivery, protection and enhancement of green infrastructure and Policy EN8 'Climate Change' focusses on this issue. However, the key policy relevant to this particular strategy is Policy EN7 'Open Space, Sport and Recreation' which requires the provision of open space to meet identified deficiencies in the quantity, accessibility and quality of provision and to sustain quantity standards as the population grows. This policy opens the way for a more strategic, design-led approach which focusses upon the provision and management of new and improved greenspace in those areas identified for new development in the plan. Policy EN7 stipulates that in circumstances where there are identified local deficiencies in the quantity, accessibility and/or quality of open space, sports and recreational facilities, new residential development of 10 dwellings or more will be

required to contribute towards their provision and/or enhancement, in accordance with figure 3 below, subject to viability considerations.

Open space typology	Standard (ha/1000 population)
Parks and gardens	1.92
Natural and semi-natural greenspace	1.38
Amenity greenspace	0.77
Provision for children and young people	0.13
Allotments	0.38
Playing pitches	Requirement (ha/1000 population)
Football pitches	0.41

Figure 3: Quantity standards and access standards included in Policy EN7. These are drawn from the 2014/15 Open Space Strategy. The old standards represent a benchmark but are out-of-date since playing pitches are no longer a recognised standard due to the introduction of new methodologies by Sport England. The new Standards set out later in this Strategy are those to be sought and incorporated into future Local Plan reviews.

To create the new Open Space Strategy, MD2 consultants has undertaken a detailed survey of identified sites focus on the main built up area of Melton Mowbray. The survey results, which have been carefully mapped, have precipitated a clear picture of the nature of the current open space resource and enabled advice to be given about its future provision.



Figure 4: (above) Melton Mowbray Community Allotment.

3.7 DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS

A separate document has been produced on behalf of the Council on Developer Contributions for the provision of new open space provision as well as its future maintenance and management. This is in accordance with relevant local planning policy and National Planning Policy Guidance. With regard to national guidance, The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 set the context for developer contributions within the plan making process. Section 106 agreements are drafted when it is considered

that a development will have significant impacts on the local area that cannot be moderated by means of conditions attached to a planning decision. Contributions must comply with the following “tests of soundness”:

- 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.

The Council has determined that S106 agreements are likely to be the main instruments to provide developer contributions through development. There are limits to how these can be applied these are that contributions:

- must be essential to serve a development directly;
- could not be provided on site; and could not be funded from existing sources ... including s106 funds already earmarked for the same or a similar project.

In terms of the Local Plan, Policy EN7 of the Melton Local Plan (2018) deals with open space, sport and recreation. As stated above, with regard to open space, where these are identified local deficiencies, new residential development of 10 dwellings or more will be required to contribute towards their provision and/or enhancement, in accordance with an open space typology and standard as per Figure 5 below, taken from Policy EN7, subject to viability considerations.

Open Space Typology	Standard (ha/1,000 population)
Parks and gardens	1.92
Natural and semi-natural greenspace	1.38
Amenity greenspace	0.77
Provision for children and young people	0.13
Allotments	0.38
Playing pitches	Requirement (ha/1000 population)
Football pitches	0.41

Figure 5: Open Space typologies and standards in Melton shown in Policy EN7: Melton Local Plan 2018

Since the Local Plan was adopted, the Council commissioned this new Open Space Strategy to ensure the evidence base for the plan continues to inform both planning policy and development management decisions well into the future.

In order to calculate open space standards that help to determine the level of contributions required as developer contributions under S106, this strategy set local standards based upon the existing typologies in Policy EN7 as well as Fields in Trust Guidelines. The draft standards were refined using population projections to establish local need, which were benchmarked against other similar local authorities using the CIFPA nearest neighbour dataset. The standards were further refined through consultation and with regard to a need to address the climate change emergency. The typologies, which are discussed in greater detail in Section 4 below, are used to set standards for each typology, which is addressed in Section 6 below. *It should be noted however, that until policy EN7 is updated that the 2015 standards remain in place.*

Section 9 below, sets out the proposed new guidelines for S106 contributions based upon the scale of development as well as proposed capital and revenue contributions.

4: Open Space typology

4.1 OPEN SPACE, GREEN SPACE AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

In this Strategy the terms ‘open space’ and ‘green space’ are used interchangeably. However, the term ‘green infrastructure’, also mentioned in this Strategy is notably different. As stated above, Melton Borough Council has separate policies for green infrastructure and open space (EN3 and EN7 respectively). However, ‘open space’ is a key component of Melton’s green infrastructure network so both policies are closely linked.

4.2 TYPES OF OPEN SPACE

For this strategy, a typology was adopted that cover all the types of open space found in Melton Mowbray (see figure 6 and 7).

Typology name	Notes
Allotments	Includes recognisable allotment gardens along with community growing spaces.
Amenity greenspace	Planned or incidental open space often (but not only) grass – amenity use, and visual appearance are key considerations.
Churchyard and cemeteries	These are considered only when they are publicly accessible areas and have a significant greenspace component.
Non-pitch sport facility	These are sites that may be missed in a Sport England compliant Playing Pitch Strategy which focuses on a small number of ‘key sports’.
Parks and gardens	Accessible parks and gardens, normally a formal landscape.
Provision for children and young people, e.g. play areas	Also referred to as playgrounds and play spaces ¹ .
Accessible natural greenspace	Wide ranging description for space that is for people and nature. ² An increasingly important component of green infrastructure and necessary to adapt to climate change.

Figure 6: Typology used in the 2020 Melton Mowbray Open Space Strategy

It should be noted that Sport England now require Playing Pitch Strategies (PPS), hence pitch sports have been removed from the 2020 Open Space typology. Melton Borough Council is due to commission a PPS to provide this evidence base.

¹ In line with national practice four types are identified. LAPs – local areas of/for play, LEAPS – local equipped area of/for play, NEAPS – neighbourhood equipped areas of/for play, MUGA – multiuse games area.

² Note that some local authorities count riverbanks, canal banks, old railway lines as a separate category called Green Corridors, but in Melton these are included in the Accessible Natural Greenspace category.



Typology example: Allotments and community growing spaces.
Site: Doctors Lane allotments



Typology example: Amenity greenspace.
Site: Norfolk Drive/Durham Close Amenity Greenspace



Typology example: Provision for children and young people.
Site: Sunny Brook Play Area.



Typology example: Churchyards and cemeteries (publicly accessible), Site: St Mary's Parish Church



Typology example: Non-pitch sport facility, Site: Dieppe Way Sports Court



Typology example: Public park or garden, Site: New Park.



Typology example: Semi-natural greenspace, Site: Clover Drive

Figure 7: Illustrated typologies from Melton Mowbray



Figure 8: The River Eye is an open space, with footpath access and also acts an important green infrastructure corridor. One 'site' can often contain many types of open space. In this Strategy larger sites have been disaggregated to show the key open space types included. The premier example is the Melton County Park.



Figure 9: Provision for children and young people is another important open space category. Quality is especially important, and sites should be regularly refreshed or renewed.

5: Overview of open space provision in Melton Mowbray

5.1 LOCAL CONTEXT

The tourist specialist GoLeicestershire describes Melton Mowbray as a “quintessential English market town”. Despite urban growth over the last century, the town can take pride in its long historical narrative and success in retaining its ‘market town’ identity. As a market town, the setting for Melton Mowbray is unquestionably agricultural, but that does not diminish the significance of open spaces within the town to either residents or visitors. Melton Mowbray’s open spaces should be considered as much part of the town’s ‘signature’ as its grey (urban) infrastructure of buildings and roads.

Town signature:

Melton Mowbray’s open spaces should be considered as much part of the town’s ‘signature’ as its grey (urban) infrastructure of buildings and roads.

5.2 DISTRIBUTION OF OPEN SPACE

The plan at Figure 11 shows the distribution of Open Space in Melton Mowbray. The black line on the plan shows the study boundary and extent of the Open Space audit 2020 and Open Space Strategy. In relation to open space, the plan allows some visual observations to be made:

- The large number of small open space sites in the town;
- The lack of connectivity between sites which means that their role as green infrastructure is poor. There are however two exceptions to this; (i) Melton Country Park and (ii) the complex of closely connected parks including Egerton Park, New Park and Wilton Park managed by Melton Mowbray Town Estates. Both of these areas provide access to the countryside and other open spaces via the Public Rights of Way network;
- The absence of a large publicly accessible open recreational space to the south of the town; and
- The importance of the River Eye and the track bed of the former Nottingham and Melton Mowbray Branch of the Midland Counties Railway as green corridors.

Otherwise the distribution of open space is widespread with a tendency for the north east and the south west of the town to be best served.

5.3 OWNERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF OPEN SPACE

The ownership and management of open space in Melton Mowbray fits into six broad categories.

- Land held and managed by Melton Borough Council;
- Land held and managed by Melton Mowbray Town Estate;
- Land held or managed by private sector developers or their contractors;
- Land held or managed by institutional landowners which for the most part is not publicly accessible and outside the scope of this Strategy (e.g. school grounds);
- Land held by private individuals, small companies and/or agricultural land, which for the most part is not publicly accessible; and
- People volunteering informally to undertake site management without the knowledge of the Council or the landowner.

5.4 MELTON MOWBRAY TOWN ESTATE

Whilst not unique, it is nevertheless uncommon for there to be a historic ‘Trust’ responsible for a significant proportion of the Town’s open spaces. The Melton Mowbray Town Estate states that it “contributes some £200,000 per year in the maintenance of the public parks and recreational grounds that it owns on the

Townspeople's behalf and is the custodian of the town centre parkland ensuring the perpetual availability of this unique facility for the enjoyment of all".

This historic trust should not be confused with a new generation of 'Parks Trusts' which have emerged in recent years through 'asset transfer' schemes. An 'asset transfer' scheme is not recommended for Melton Mowbray as, arguably, it diminishes democratic accountability.

Park's Trusts:

This historic Melton Mowbray Town Estate should not be confused with a new generation of 'Parks Trusts' which have emerged in recent years through 'asset transfer' schemes. An 'asset transfer' scheme is not recommended for Melton Mowbray as, arguably, it diminishes local democratic accountability.

5.5 GREEN FLAG AWARD

The Green Flag Award® scheme recognises and rewards well managed parks and green spaces, setting the benchmark standard for the management of recreational outdoor spaces across the United Kingdom and around the world. The purpose & aims of the award are:

- To ensure that everybody has access to quality green and other open spaces, irrespective of where they live;
- To ensure that these spaces are appropriately managed and meet the needs of the communities that they serve;
- To establish standards of good management;
- To promote and share good practice amongst the green space sector; and
- To recognise and reward the hard work of managers, staff and volunteers.

In 2020 there are two Green Flag awards in Melton Mowbray – Melton Country Park and Thorpe Road Cemetery.

5.6 CREATIVITY

There are a number of instances of creativity in Melton Mowbray's open space offer. Notable examples of creativity and uniqueness are areas within Melton Country Park such as the 'climbing forest', 'community allotment' the 'sensory garden', where the Prince's Trust was involved, and the 'Baby Memorial Garden'. However, a general observation is that 'creative uses' of open space are relatively few and that there is scope for more. Accordingly, greater multi-functionality on existing sites should be sought, especially to enhance the public benefit that may be derived from the large number of small amenity greenspaces.

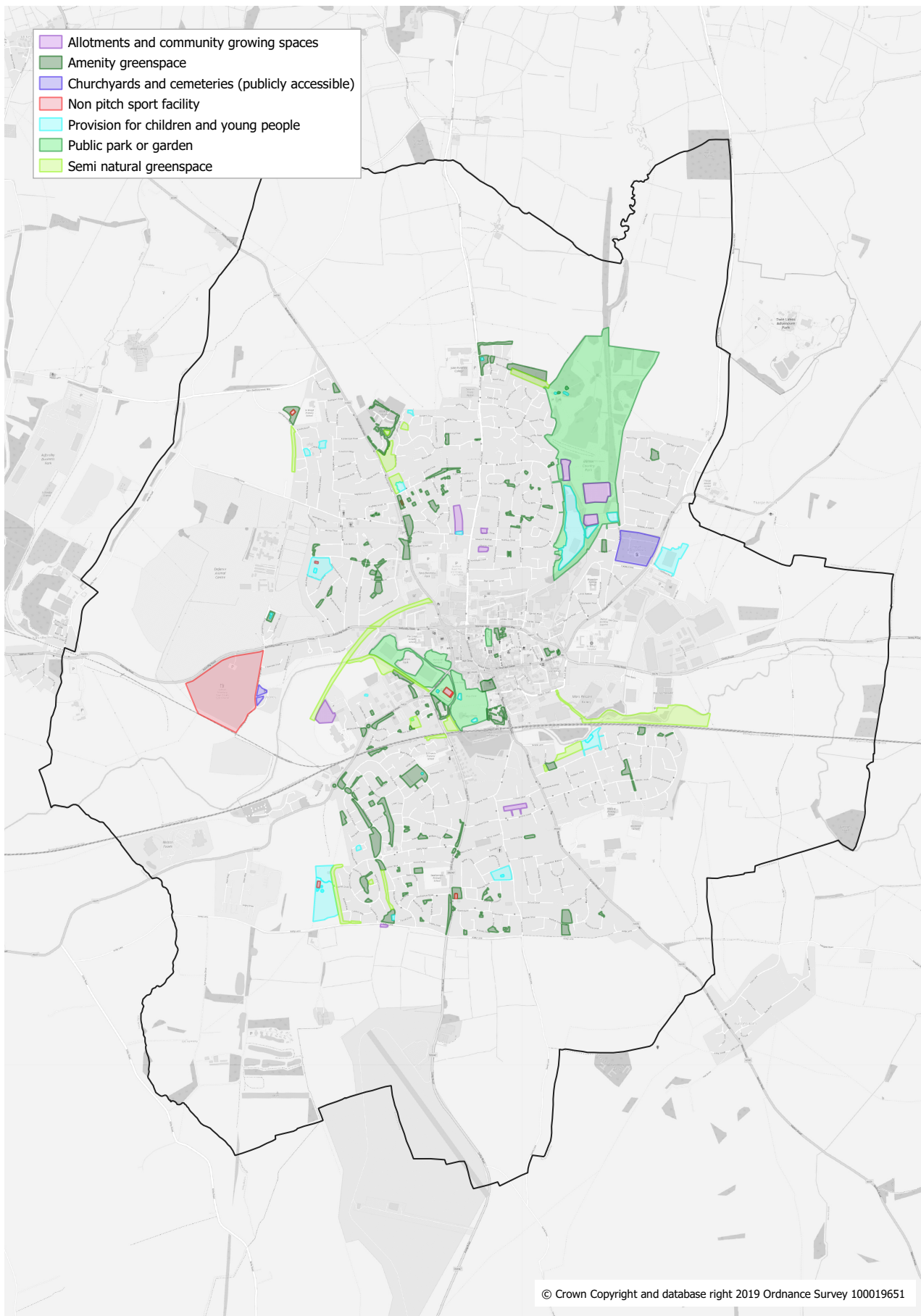
More creativity is needed:

There are instances of creative thinking in Melton Mowbray notably at Melton Country Park. However, there is scope for more creativity which can lead to greater multifunctionality and enhanced public benefit. This does not necessarily imply greater cost but does require review processes and external inputs.



Figure 10: The Baby Memorial Garden at Melton Country Park is a fine example of creative thinking. The garden has soft planting to produce an element of beauty and healing and is relatively secluded yet still accessible. Various other initiatives are linked to this initiative including Baby Loss Awareness Week, held annually every October.

Figure 11: next page – Typology and distribution map of Open Space in Melton Mowbray



6: Open space standards

6.1 SOURCES

The evidence base for the open space quantity and access standards are drawn from the following major sources:

- Benchmarking with national guidance: sources consulted to identify recommended standards. Notable in this regard are 'Fields in Trust' Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play: Beyond the Six Acre Standard guidelines;
- Benchmarking with other local authorities using the CIFPA database to comparative local authorities;
- Reflecting existing provision and quality assessment derived from the audit of sites;
- Amended through consultation; and
- A review of existing relevant documents in Melton especially the previous Open Spaces Standards paper (2015).

Our evidence base reflects an estimated population of 51,100 for the Borough of Melton and 27,158 for the town of Melton Mowbray (2019 figures).

6.2 ASSUMPTIONS

When having to translate national standards expressed on a per household basis reference published rates have been used³.

6.3 FIELDS IN TRUST GUIDELINES

A key source for open space standards is the Guidance for Outdoor Sports and Play: Beyond the Six Acre Standard⁴. The most recent update of the standards no longer differentiates between urban and rural areas. Using this current guidance helps ensure that the provision of outdoor sport, play and informal open space is of a sufficient size to enable effective use; is located in an accessible location and in close proximity to dwellings; and is of a quality that maintains longevity and to encourage its continued use. Beyond the Six Acre Standard recommends that Equipped/Designated Play Spaces be promoted in the form of:

- Local Areas for Play (LAPs) aimed at very young children;
- Locally Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs) aimed at children who can go out to play independently; and
- Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs) aimed at older children.

These can be complemented by other facilities including Multiuse Games Areas (MUGAs) and skateboard parks etc.

Figures 12 and 13 below set out the Fields in Trust benchmark guidelines for open space and equipped play areas and recommendations for informal recreation. These benchmarks reflect the findings of the survey of local standards for open space applied by local planning authorities.

³ For allotments, the National Society of Allotments and Leisure Gardeners' national average of 2.2 persons per household.

⁴ 75% of local authorities adopt this or an equivalent standard (2014 Fields in Trust / David Lock Associates Survey). Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play was updated in 2015 to reflect policy changes including the National Planning Policy Framework and now includes recommendations on the provision of amenity and natural green space (source Fields in Trust).

Accessibility guidelines are provided as walking distance from dwellings. Indicative walking distances can be determined from the accessibility guidelines as set out below.

- 250m = 2 – 3 minutes' walk
- 400m = 5 minutes' walk
- 800m = 10 minutes' walk
- 1,200m = 15 minutes' walk
- 1,600m = 20 minutes' walk

It should be recognised that when applying these benchmarks, local features and obstacles to pedestrian and cycle movement should be taken into account. In doing so, accessible and sustainable play and sport facilities will be maximised.

OPEN SPACE TYPOLOGY	QUANTITY GUIDELINE (Hectares per 1,000 pop.)	WALKING GUIDELINE
Playing Pitches	1.20	1,200m
All outdoor sports	1.60	1,200m
Equipped/Designated Play Areas	0.25 (additional criteria for recommended minimum sizes)	LAP's – 100m LEAP's – 400m NEAP's – 1,000m
Other outdoor provision (MUGA & skateboard parks)	0.30	700m

Figure 12: Fields in Trust recommendations for formal sports areas and play taken from Guidance for Outdoor Sports and Play: Beyond the Six Acre Standard (2015).

OPEN SPACE TYPOLOGY	QUANTITY GUIDELINE (Hectares per 1,000 pop.)	WALKING GUIDELINE
Parks and gardens	0.80	710 metres
amenity green space	0.60	480 metres
natural and semi natural	1.80	720 metres

Figure 13: Fields in Trust recommendations for informal recreation taken from Guidance for Outdoor Sports and Play: Beyond the Six Acre Standard (2015).

6.4 OVERVIEW OF EXISTING QUANTITY AND ACCESS STANDARDS

The April 2015 quantity and access standards covering green space types for the Borough of Melton are summarised in Figure 14 below.

OPEN SPACE TYPOLOGY	Quantity standard (Hectares per 1,000 population unless indicated otherwise)	Access standard (measured in straight line)	
Amenity Green space	0.63	10 minutes or 800 metres	
Parks and gardens	2.08	15-minute walk or 1,200 metres	10-minute drive in rural areas
Allotments	0.26	15-minute walk or 1,200m	15-minute drive in rural areas
PROVISION FOR CHILDREN and YOUNG PEOPLE.	0.13	10-minute walk or 800m	10-minute drive in rural areas
Natural and semi-natural greenspace	0.29	10-minute walk or 800 metres	20-minute drive in rural areas
TOTAL open space (sum of above)	3.39	Not applicable	Not applicable

Figure 14: Overview of existing quantity and access standards

6.5 COMPARISON WITH NEAREST NEIGHBOURS

To establish robust standards the consultants used the CIPFA⁵ nearest neighbour algorithm to research the statistically most similar local authorities to Melton. Each of these authorities' standards were then tabulated and compared with those set for Melton in 2015. These are shown in figure 15.

LOCAL AUTHORITY AREA	QUANTITY STANDARD – TOTALS HECTARES PER 1,000 POPULATION.
FOREST OF DEAN	NONE OR NOT COMPARABLE
NORTH DORSET	NONE OR NOT COMPARABLE
RICHMONDSHIRE	NONE OR NOT COMPARABLE
MALDON	1.16
STROUD	3.22
MELTON	3.39
BABERGH	3.40
MID SUFFOLK	3.40
HINCKLEY & BOSWORTH	3.75
MID DEVON	5.03
EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE	6.06
TEWKESBURY	10.63
NORTH KESTEVEN	10.78
WEST LINDSEY	10.78
HARBOROUGH	13.70
LICHFIELD	24.48

Figure 15: Comparison between Melton and its Nearest Neighbours (CIPFA 2015)

⁵ CIPFA: The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy

6.6 DISCUSSION ON SETTING STANDARDS

Care should be taken when making comparisons as some local authorities set standards for more Open Space types, thereby adding to their quantity standard (QS). It is good practice to remove the outliers from analysis, which in this study mean that Maldon (QS 1.16) and Lichfield (QS 24.48) are excluded.

The Melton District QS is 3.39, making it the second lowest (Stroud is lower) and close to Babergh and Mid Suffolk (note that both of these studies were undertaken by the same consultant). This is a lower quartile position against a median of 5.03. Hence the 2015 figures indicate a deficit position in the QS in comparison with the Nearest Neighbours.

Examination of the access standards of the Nearest Neighbours and those of Fields in Trust also positions Melton in a lower position. Taken overall, there is a strong argument that quantity and access standards in Melton should be enhanced. Some areas stand out for improvement with respect to the declaration of the climate emergency too.

The minute-drive standard is inappropriate in the face of the climate emergency given that it directs users to drive to sites. An alternative is to set a 'cycle time' although it should be noted that this has implications for future cycle infrastructure in both urban and rural areas.

The standard for natural/semi natural space is very low, yet this type of open space is essential to climate adaptation. It is therefore recommended that this category receives significant enhancement which implies the creation of new 'semi-natural areas.' If implemented in association with connectivity and multifunctionality considerations, it will also enhance the Green Infrastructure network.

Inappropriate standards:

The minute-drive standard in rural areas is considered inappropriate in the face of the climate emergency given that it directs users to drive to sites. An alternative is to set a 'cycle time' although it should be noted that this has implications for future cycle infrastructure in both urban and rural areas.

When applying standards for walking distance (a linear measure), the calculation should take into account approved pedestrian crossing points. Hence, a site that is within a distance boundary but nevertheless requires a walk that is much greater is not fully compliant confirming that every site needs to be considered on an individual basis rather than simply relying on GIS mapping.

6.7 POPULATION PROJECTIONS

CURRENT POPULATION FOR MELTON MOWBRAY (SEE BOUNDARY OPPOSITE):	27,158
CURRENT POPULATION FOR MELTON BOROUGH:	51,100
POPULATION PROJECTIONS FOR 2025	31,600 URBAN, 58,600 DISTRICT
POPULATION PROJECTIONS FOR 2036	36,230 URBAN, 66,100 DISTRICT

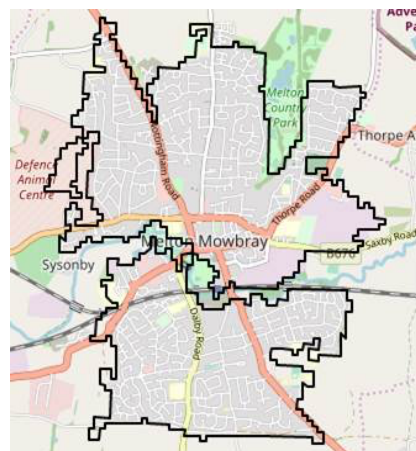


Figure 16: Population projections for the Melton Urban area and whole Borough.



Figure 17 (above): Thorpe Road Cemetery. With a growing population the demand for cemetery space will increase. The current cemetery is nearing capacity and a separate study has shown the need for expansion or an alternative provision elsewhere within the town.



Figure 18 (left): Collingwood Crescent Play Area. The slide is clearly suffering from weathering. Equipped play areas require regular replacement of equipment to maintain quality. When play equipment deteriorates use of a site falls and it becomes more likely to attract anti-social uses as it is less well appreciated by the local community. An annual programme for the replacement of time expired play equipment is required and should be a feature of the Council budget. There is no 'hard and fast' rule on how long a piece of play equipment can last as this reflects the standard of construction and often the level of weather exposure and use that a site receives, however 15 years is not untypical. Regular monitoring of the equipment is necessary.

6.8 RECOMMENDED STANDARDS 2020.

The recommended quantity and access covering open space types for the Borough of Melton 2020 are set out in figure 19 below:

Open space typology	Quantity standard 2015 (hectares per 1,000 population)	Access standard 2015 (measured in straight line)		Recommended quantity standard 2020 (hectares per 1,000 population unless indicated otherwise)	Recommended access standard 2020 (measured in straight line)	
Allotments and community growing spaces	0.26	15-minute walk or 1,200m		15-minute drive in rural areas	0.30	
Amenity Green space	0.63	10-minute walk or 800 metres		0.60	10-minute walk or 800 metres	
Parks and gardens	2.08	15-minute walk or 1,200 metres	10-minute drive in rural areas	2.08	10-minute walk or 800 metres	15-minute cycle ride in rural areas
Provision for children and young people.	0.13	10-minute walk or 800m	10-minute drive in rural areas	0.25	10-minute walk or 800m	15-minute cycle ride in rural areas
Semi-natural greenspace	0.29	10-minute walk or 800 metres	20-minute drive in rural areas	1.80	10-minute walk or 800 metres	20-minute cycle ride in rural areas
Total open space (sum of above)	3.39	Not applicable	Not applicable	5.03	Not applicable	

Figure 19: Recommended standards for 2020 which apply to the whole Borough. Recommendations are based on a combined consultant's analysis, national standards and the nearest neighbour exercise. Standards are local and reflect local requirements and needs.

7: Quantity and access in Melton Mowbray

7.1 VARIANCE ANALYSIS.

Figure 20 shows the previous standards as they have been incorporated in policy EN7, the recommended new standards as well as areas of surplus and deficit in relation to the quantity strategy. It must be stressed that the standards are a recommended minimum rather than a maximum and that exceeding standards is a desirable position. The population figures are projections being used by Melton Borough Council for forward planning purposes.

7.2 INTERPRETING THE VARIANCE ANALYSIS

Referring to figure 19 the following columns and cells show the following:

- A1 to A8 are the typologies used in the Melton Mowbray 2020 Strategy;
- A9 – A11 are from the 2015 Open Space Strategy are no longer counted in open space strategies and are referred to the Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS);
- Column B is the number of sites identified in the 2020 audit;
- Column C is the area in hectares identified in the 2020 open space audit;
- Column D is the ratio of population to typology area for 2020;
- Column E is based on no increase in open space between 2020 and 2025 (no decrease either) based on the estimated population of Melton Mowbray in 2025;
- Column F is based on no increase in open space between 2020 and 2036 (no decrease either) based on the estimated population of Melton Mowbray in 2036;
- Colours in Columns D, E, F indicate where the provision is below recommended minimum level (red) or ahead of the recommended minimum level (green);
- Column G are the quantity standards applied in policy EN7 which are derived from the 2015 Open Space Strategy;
- Column H gives the access standards derived from the 2014/15 Open Space Strategy;
- Column I gives the 2020 Open Space quantity standards recommended for the next policy EN7 update;
- Column J gives the 2020 Open Space access standards recommended for the next policy EN7 update. Note that red text is for the urban area of Melton Mowbray and green text for rural areas. This study and Strategy are for Melton Mowbray town, so these are for inclusion in the next rural Open Space Strategy update. For provision for children and young people that shown is for Neighbourhood equipped areas of play (NEAP's), for local areas of play (LAP's) it is 100m walking distance and locally equipped areas for play 400m walking distance;
- B11 is the total number of sites in the 2020 audit;
- C11 is the total area of open space in the 2020 audit;
- I11 is the total open space quantity recommended for Melton Mowbray.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1	Typology	No. of sites	Area (Ha)	2020 Provision (total ha) per 1000 Head of population based on a population of 27,158.	2025 Provision (total ha). Assume open space stays static at 2020 level based on anticipated population of 31,600	2036 Provision (total ha) Assume open space stays static at 2020 level based on anticipated population of 36,230	Policy EN7 Open Space Quantity Standard	2015 Access Standard	2020 Open Space Quantity Standard	2020 Open Space Access Standard
2	Allotments and community growing space	9	5.73	0.21	0.18	0.16	0.38	15 min walk/1200m or 15 min drive (rural)	0.30	15-minute walk or 1,200m 20-minute cycle ride in rural areas
3	Amenity Green Space	59	21.26	0.78	0.67	0.59	0.77	10 min walk or 800m	0.60	10-minute walk or 800 metres
4	Cemeteries	2	4.79	0.18	-	-	No standard	No standard	No standard	No standard
5	Non pitch sports facility	8	15.83	0.58	-	-	No standard	No standard	No standard	No standard
6	Parks & Gardens	9	65.11	2.40	2.06	1.80	1.92	15 min walk/1,200m/10 min drive (rural)	2.08	10-minute walk or 800m 15-minute cycle ride in rural areas
7	Provision for Children & Young People	29	11.79	0.43	0.37	0.33	0.13	10 min walk or 800m, 10 min drive (rural)	0.25	10-minute walk or 800m 15-minute cycle ride in rural areas
8	Semi-natural Greenspace	17	18.01	0.66	0.57	0.50	1.38	10 min walk/800m/20 min drive (rural)	1.80	10-minute walk or 800m 20-minute cycle ride in rural areas
9	Playing Pitches (refer to PPS)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Requirement (ha/1,000 pop)	n/a	n/a	n/a
10	Football pitches (refer to PPS)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0.41	n/a	n/a	n/a
11	TOTAL	133	142.52						5.03	

Figure 20: Variance analysis and comparison between 2015 standards and 2020 standards. Note that the Provision for children and young people standard is shown for NEAP's. For LAP's the figure is 100m and LEAP's 400m. Colour coding as follow; Red is a reduction, Grey stays the same, Green is an increase, Blue is a new standard entirely.

7.3 QUANTITY – ALLOTMENTS AND COMMUNITY GROWING SPACE

Despite the fact that the 2020 Open Space standard is 0.08 ha/1,000 lower than that in 2015, in all scenarios Melton Mowbray has a deficiency of allotment and community growing spaces. This is an area for early improvement. At present, provision is 30% less than standard and unless there is new provision, would be 47% below standard by 2036. There are opportunities for the Council to redesign some of its excess of amenity greenspace to create new allotment(s) and especially community growing spaces. Nationally, there is evidence that the demand for shared 'community growing' space is increasing, and it can be linked to health and wellbeing agendas.

Allotments and community growing spaces:

in all population scenarios Melton Mowbray has a deficiency of allotment and community growing spaces. There are opportunities for the Council to redesign some of its excess of amenity greenspace to create new allotment(s) and especially community growing spaces.

Amenity greenspace:

Even with a reduction in the Standard Melton Mowbray will not be below standard until 2036 and then only marginally. There is an opportunity to reconfigure existing amenity green space to other typologies which are deficient – notably allotments and community growing spaces or semi-natural greenspace.

7.4 QUANTITY - AMENITY GREENSPACE

The standard for the 2020 Open Space standard has been reduced from 0.77 to 0.60, even with this change Melton Mowbray will not be below standard until 2036 and then only marginally. As discussed in section 7.3 this presents an opportunity to reconfigure existing amenity green space to other typologies which are deficient – notably allotments and community growing spaces or semi-natural greenspace. The process of converting amenity greenspace to semi-natural greenspace is called 're-naturing' and this has natural links to the Council's decision to declare a 'climate emergency' along with assisting in the delivery of policy EN3 (Green Infrastructure).

7.5 QUANTITY - CEMETERIES

There is no standard for cemeteries but the separate report on cemetery provision has shown that the municipal site at Thorpe Road is nearing capacity and that an extension or new provision is required. A site for an extension has been identified and a potential location for a new provision. These are presented to the Council in a separate report.

7.6 QUANTITY - NON-PITCH SPORTS FACILITY

The Sport England methodology for undertaking a playing pitch strategy (PPS) is strongly focused on popular pitch-based sports activities. When commissioning a PPS study local authorities often add to that study other sports that are locally popular such as Bowls, Tennis etc which might not be picked up in the standard Sport England compliant methodology. Since the introduction of the contemporary PPS methodology in 2013 there is anecdotal evidence that some non-pitch sports have been under-recorded in Open Space audits, falling 'between studies'. This can leave a gap in understanding local provision. To ensure that this does not occur in Melton Mowbray the consultants included in their quality review non pitch sports facilities which were independent of sport destinations. There is however no quantity standard for non-pitch sports however eight (8) sites were picked up in the audit.

7.7 QUANTITY - PARKS AND GARDENS

The Open Space standard for 2020 has increased from 2015. Presently Melton Mowbray is ahead of standard but will be marginally behind by 2026 and extremely so by 2036. A new urban park(s) will be needed within this time frame, likely between 2025 – 2030 if the standard is to be maintained by the end of the local plan period.

A material factor in this result is the decision to classify Melton Country Park as a 'Park' rather than as a 'Semi-natural greenspace', which might have more usually been expected. The justification for this was that whilst there are some areas that could be defined in this way, within the Country Park the majority of the space is managed on more traditional grounds.

Parks and gardens:

Presently Melton Mowbray is ahead of standard but will be marginally behind by 2026 and extremely so by 2036. A new urban park(s) will be needed within this time frame, likely between 2025 – 2030 if the standard is to be maintained by the end of the local plan period.

Reclassification of the Country Park would also leave Melton Mowbray in a notable deficit of parkland and require a significant shift in the management regime of the Country Park which might not find favour with current users. Should this be considered a 'transitional plan' would be required.

The typology decision on Melton Country Park has consequences elsewhere and suggests that a new facility south of the town, which is proposed in the strategy, should be more 'semi-natural' in its appearance, featuring for example, significant areas of species rich meadowland and semi-natural broadleaved woodland. There is a notable shortage of woodland in Melton Mowbray

Provision for children and young people:

in all scenarios Melton Mowbray will still be ahead of standard by 2036. However, care is needed in distribution as in new sustainable neighbourhood's local areas of play (LAPs) or locally equipped areas for play (LEAPs) will still be required for younger children in line with the access standards.

7.8 QUANTITY - PROVISION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

This is a good result. Even though the Open Space standard has been increased from 0.13ha/1,000 in 2015 to 0.25ha/1,000 in 2020, in all scenarios Melton Mowbray will still be ahead of standard by 2036. However, care is needed in distribution as in new sustainable neighbourhood's local areas of play (LAPs) or locally equipped areas for play (LEAPs) will still be required for younger children in line with the access standards.

7.9 QUANTITY- SEMI-NATURAL GREENSPACE

The standard had been increased between 2015 and 2020 in line with the benchmarking exercise. However, even using the previous standard Melton Mowbray is very significantly deficient in semi-natural greenspace. If there is not a major improvement by 2036 Melton Mowbray could have less than a 1/3 of the recommended standard.

This is a serious concern due to the lack of natural areas for residents to get close to nature, the general decline in nature across Britain and the vital role semi-natural greenspace plays in respect of soil preservation, nutrient cycling, groundwater management and climate change adaptation. To reach standard by 2036 there will need to be an additional 47.2 hectares.

Semi-natural greenspace:

There is a serious deficiency of semi-natural greenspace in Melton Mowbray and to reach the Standard an additional 47.2 hectares will be needed by 2036.

7.10 PLAYING PITCHES AND FOOTBALL PITCHES

In line with Sports England advice these are now considered as part of a Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS).

7.11 MEETING THE OPEN SPACE QUANTITY STANDARD 2020

Analysis based on robust factual information which been ground tested through an audit and a comprehensive benchmarking exercise suggests the following means are required to meet the 2020 open space quantity standards during the life of the local plan. The following are so called 'take home' messages.

<i>a.) A new urban park or several parklets totaling 10 hectares is needed in Melton Mowbray,</i>
<i>b.) That some existing amenity greenspaces which could be converted to either allotments/community growing space or semi-natural greenspace within the period 2020 – 2025.</i>
<i>c.) That the deficiency identified in mapping shows the need for a major new accessible 'semi-natural greenspace' south of the town. Rather than distributing the semi-natural greenspace more widely there are benefits to having it focused on a key new site.</i>
<i>d.) The main exception to c.) above is the importance of green corridors to green infrastructure connectivity which is presently weak and when possible the opportunity to link green areas together should be taken.</i>
<i>e.) In support of c.) above a large 'semi-natural greenspace' site has much greater potential for biodiversity and recreational activities such as horse riding that require 'more space'.</i>
<i>f.) It is recommended a new accessible semi-natural greenspace of at least 47.2 (say 50) hectares is created to satisfy c.) above. As will be seen in the strategy section, the further recommendation is that this element is freely accessible to the public (targeted at Melton Mowbray residents) but that a larger site (>50 hectares) site is created with fee paying regional attractions included as a tourist/visitor resource.</i>

Figure 21 shows the quantity of open space needed to meet the Open Space standards based on the current population of the Borough of Melton in 2020 and predictions for 2025 and 2036.

Open space typology	Quantity standard 2020/ hectares per 1,000 population	2020 URBAN	2020 DISTRICT	2025 URBAN	2025 DISTRICT	2036 URBAN	2036 DISTRICT
Amenity Green space	0.60	16.29	30.66	18.96	35.16	21.74	39.66
Parks and gardens	2.08	56.49	106.29	65.73	121.89	75.36	137.49
Allotments and community growing spaces	0.30	8.15	15.33	9.48	17.58	10.87	19.83
Provision for children and young people.	0.25	6.79	12.78	7.90	14.65	9.06	16.53
Natural and semi-natural greenspace	1.80	48.88	91.98	56.88	105.48	65.21	118.98
Total open space	5.03	136.60	257.03	158.95	294.76	182.24	332.48

Figure 21: Application of quantity standards based on the population projections.

7.12 ACCESS

Plans have been used to determine how the proposed new standards apply to Melton Mowbray at the present time. They show the distance to site boundaries by typology and can be seen in a sequence of figures 24 – 28. A further plan (figure 29) shows the typologies combined and a final access plan (figure 30) that links access provision to the Government's index of multiple deprivation (IMD). The index of multiple deprivation is maintained by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government and is a statistic on relative deprivation in small areas in England.

7.13 INTERPRETATION OF THE CURRENT ACCESS SITUATION ON OPEN SPACE

It is clear from figures 24 to 28 that access to open space is for the most part good to very good in Melton Mowbray. Some care is needed as the GIS maps do not take account for the crossing of busy main roads which is a material factor in some cases and can make 'on-foot' journeys somewhat longer.

Access:

Access to open space is for the most part good to very good in Melton Mowbray.

Access to allotments and community gardens:

There is an uneven distribution and there is a need for new provision especially in the south of the town and west of Nottingham Road.

7.14 ACCESS TO ALLOTMENTS AND COMMUNITY GROWING SPACES

The current distribution of allotments and community growing spaces (figure 24) is uneven with a notable concentration in the north of the town, however as previously shown the quantity (see 7.3) of provision is low and could decline further. Hence there is a need for new provision with areas south of the town centre and west of Nottingham Road in the north west of the town being key foci.

7.15 ACCESS TO AMENITY GREENSPACE

The current distribution of amenity greenspace (figure 25) is very good and in the short term there is opportunity to reconfigure some sites to other typologies through changes to management. Generally, these shifts should not be large as Melton Mowbray could fall behind its quantity standard of amenity greenspace by 2036.

Access to amenity greenspace:

There is good access and short term opportunities to reconfigure some sites to address deficiencies in other types of open space.

Access to provision for children and young people:

There will be a continuing need for Local Areas of Play (LAPs) and Locally Equipped Areas of Play (LEAPs) for younger children in new sustainable neighbourhoods. However, Neighbourhood Equipped Areas of Play (NEAPs) and Multiuse games areas (MUGAs) should be focused on larger settings notably in the south of the town.

7.16 ACCESS TO PROVISION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The current distribution of the provision for children and young people (figure 26) is very good and Melton Mowbray should remain in front of its quantity standard still in 2036. However, there will be a need to create new Local Areas of Play (LAPs) and Locally Equipped Areas of Play (LEAPs) for younger children in new sustainable neighbourhoods. NEAPs and MUGAs should be focused on larger settings notably in the south of the town.

7.17 ACCESS TO PARKS AND GARDENS

The current distribution of parks and gardens (figure 27) is very dependent on three geographical clusters within the town; Melton Country Park, the group of urban parks near the Town Centre managed by the Melton Mowbray Town Estate and Kirby Fields Park in the south. An area of Nottingham Road in the North West of the town is outside of the access standard. There is a clear need for more parkland during the life of the Local Plan. In the short term it may be possible for an area of amenity greenspace to be reclassified through a different management regime, but this can only be considered as a short term fix. A total of 10 hectares are needed and considering the distribution and access this could either be one large site or possibly two or more smaller sites. Key locations to be considered would be west of Nottingham Road in the north west of the town and between Sandy Lane and Burton Road in the south east.

Access to parks and gardens

The current distribution of parks and gardens is very dependent on three geographical clusters within the town. Key locations to be considered for new provision would be west of Nottingham Road in the north west of the town and between Sandy Lane and Burton Road in the south east.

7.18 ACCESS TO SEMI NATURAL GREENSPACE

Access to semi-natural greenspace

Melton Mowbray has a limited quantity of accessible semi-natural greenspace and what provision there is limited in terms of its connectivity

Melton Mowbray has a limited quantity of accessible semi-natural greenspace (figure 28) and what provision there is limited in terms of its connectivity. This is limiting in terms of the benefits that connected semi-natural greenspace can bring in terms of ecosystem services. Whilst most areas of the town fall within the access standard parameters the lack of connectivity also means that these areas provide little opportunity for people to move from one semi-natural area to another. Where the opportunity exists, a key focus should be to link semi-natural areas together.

7.19 ACCESS TO OPEN SPACE

It is unlikely that any equivalent town could claim to have an ideal pattern of access and whilst there are concerns in some areas too, taken as a whole, Melton Mowbray offers its residents good opportunities to access open space. The plan (figure 29) demonstrates that there are no areas of Melton Mowbray without some level of access. This is a result of considerable effort on behalf of the local agencies over many years. The Borough Council and the Melton Mowbray Town Estate are notable in this regard.

7.20 ACCESS AND THE INDEX OF MULTIPLE DEPRIVATION (IMD)

The index of multiple deprivation (figure 30) shows only a weak correlation between being more deprived and access to open space, which is a good result. Despite the presence of Melton Sports Village more accessibility to informal open space would be beneficial in the south east of the town along Burton Road, A606.



Figure 22: Increasing multifunctionality of sites is a theme in this Open Space Strategy. This site near Leicester Road/Edendale Road is a good illustration. A management plan for this small area could turn it from an amenity greenspace to an attractive semi natural area. Additions could be to wider the stream making shallows for a reed bed, the planting of indigenous shrubs and small trees to provide habitats for birds and the introduction of a small nature watching facility such as small bridge.



Figure 23: Celebrating nature - near Salford Brook.

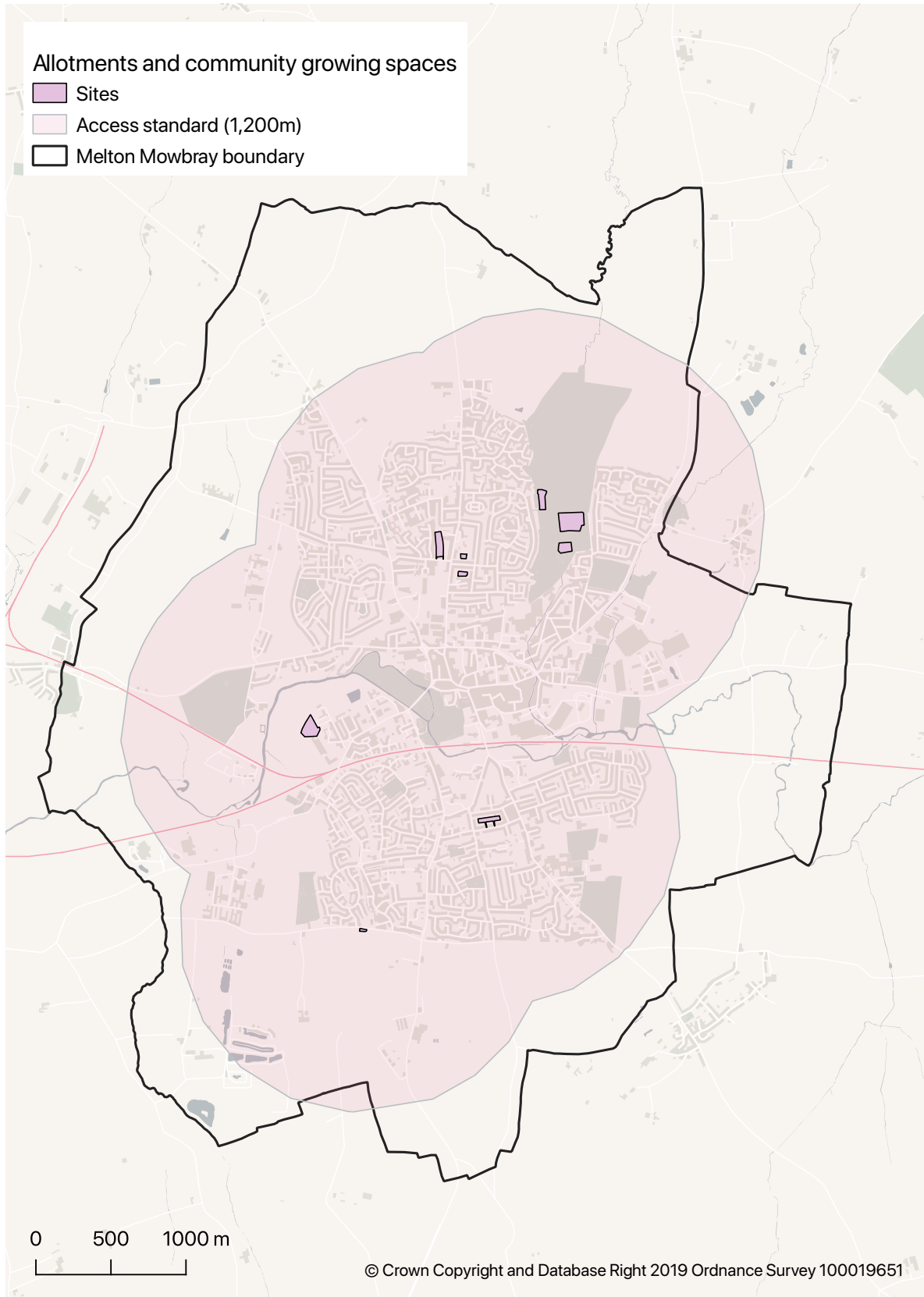


Figure 24: 2020 access standard applied to allotments and community growing spaces

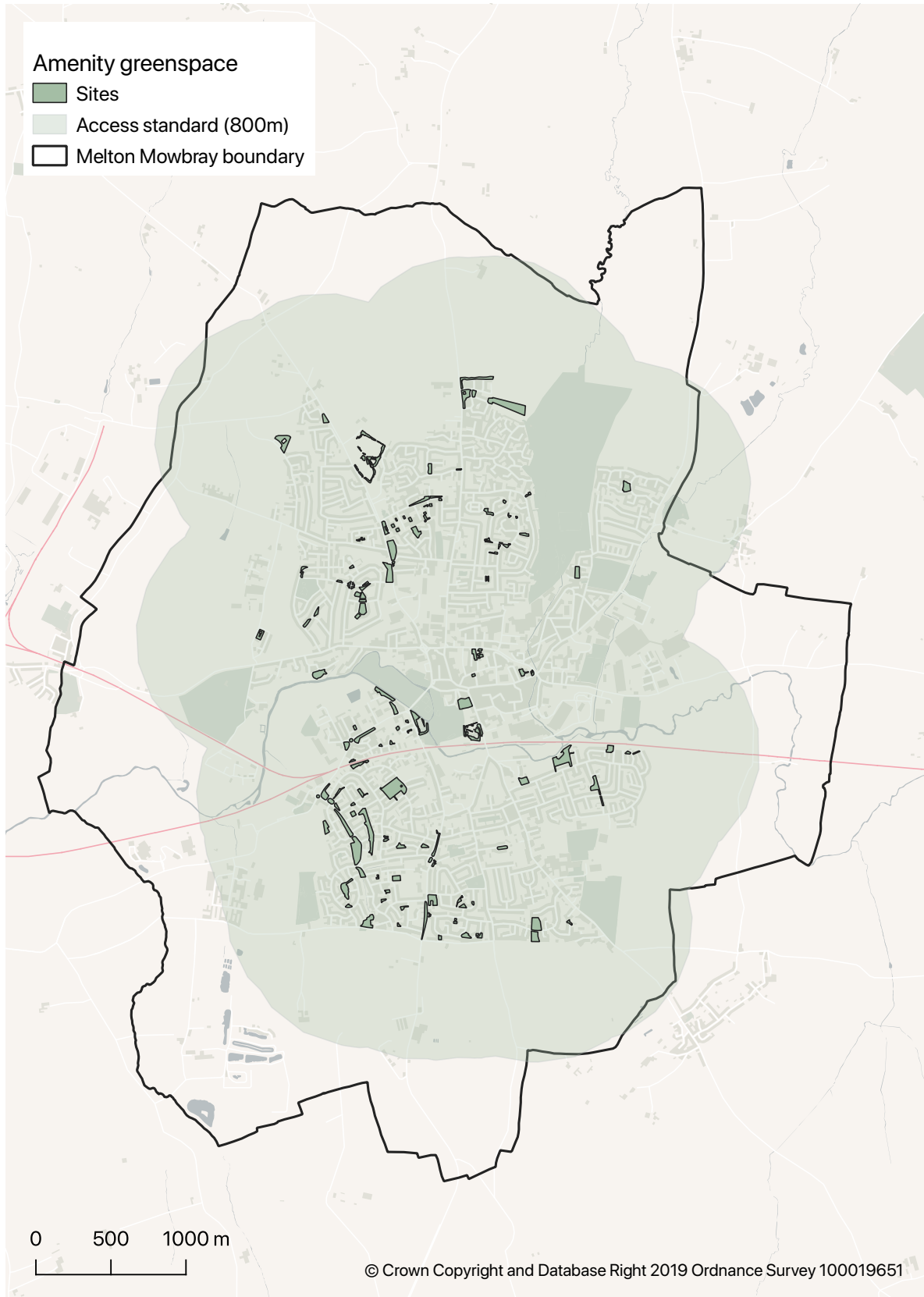


Figure 25: 2020 access standard applied to amenity greenspace

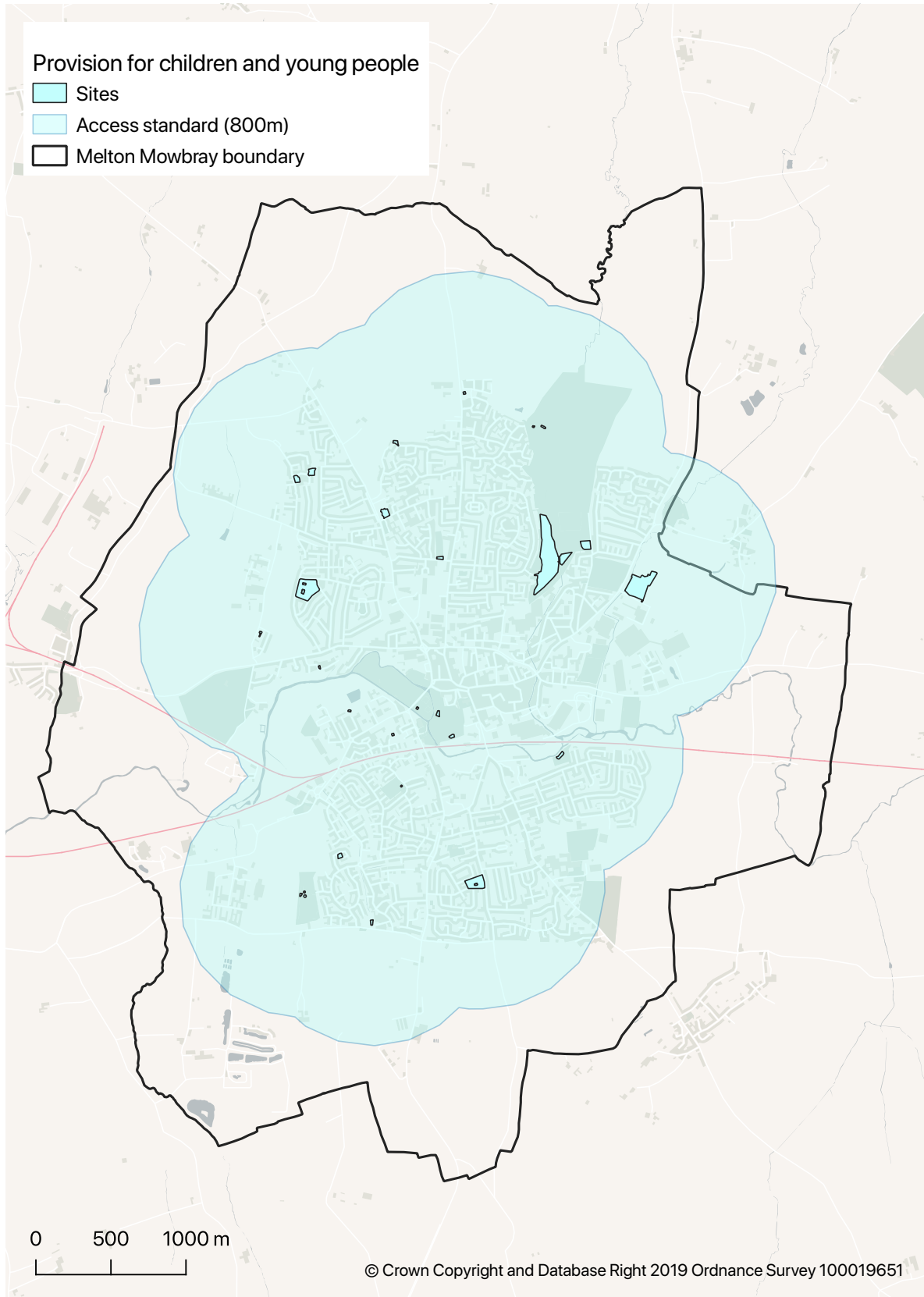


Figure 26: 2020 access standard applied to provision for children and young people

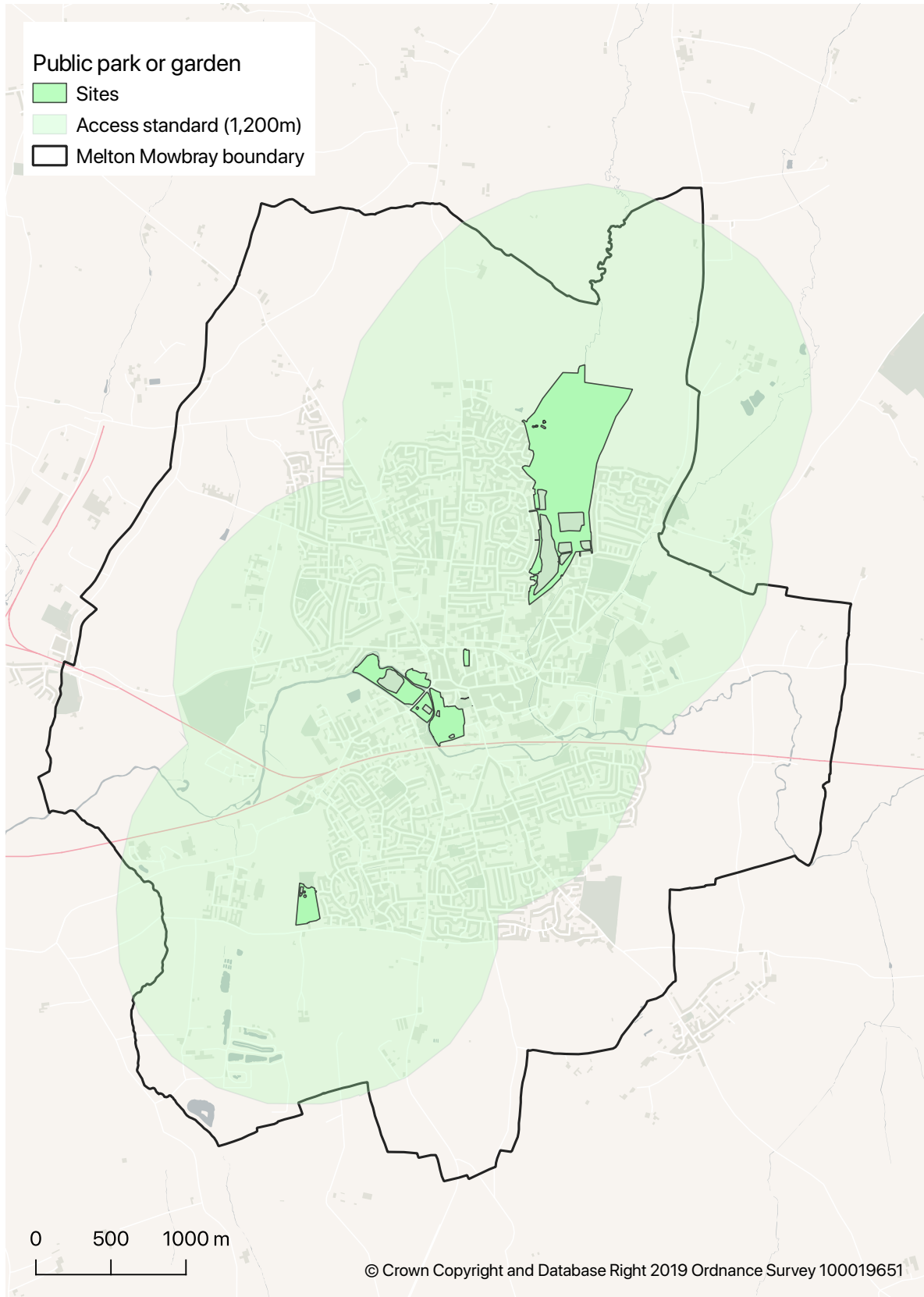


Figure 27: 2020 access standard applied to parks and gardens

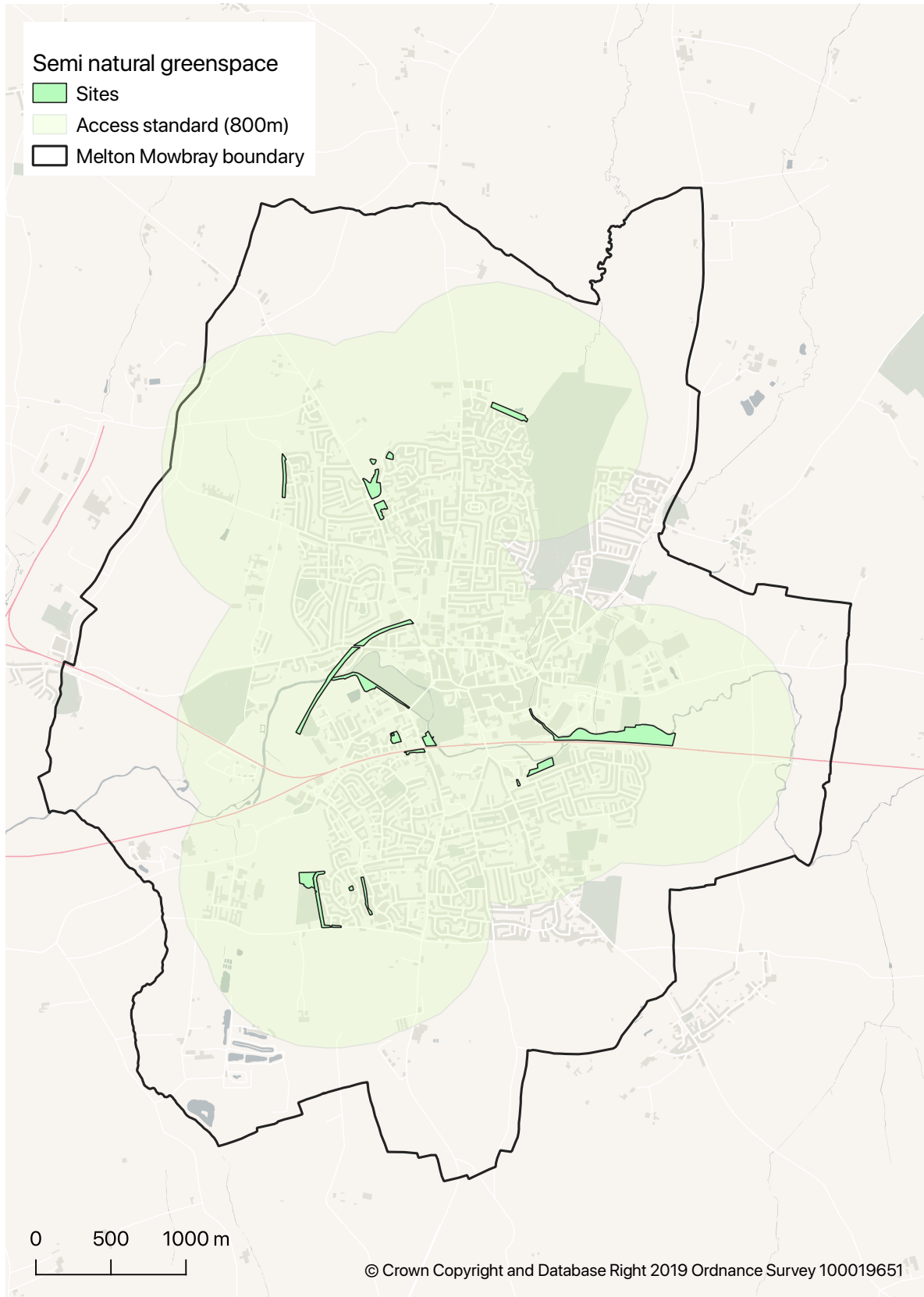


Figure 28: 2020 access standard applied to semi-natural greenspace

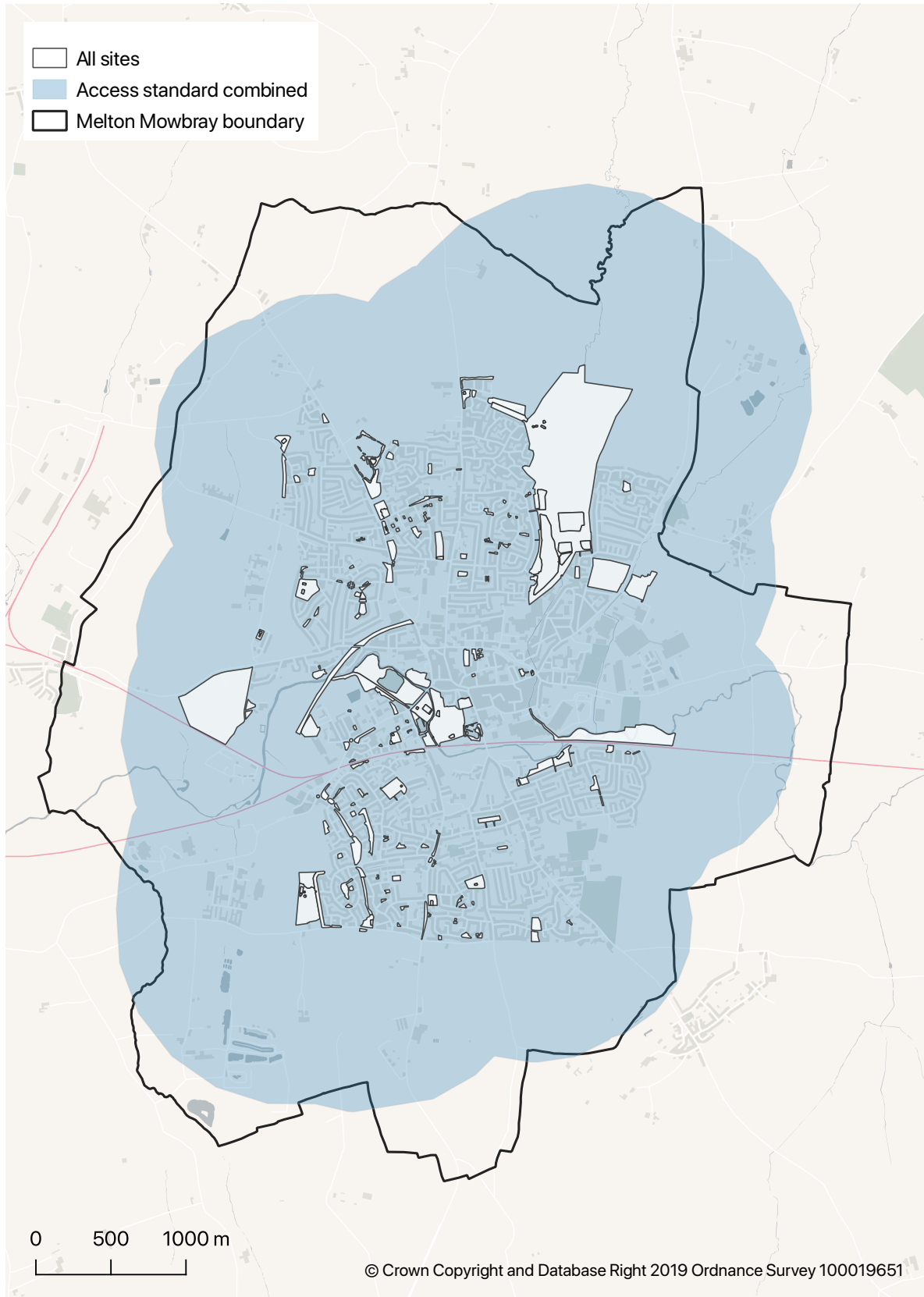


Figure 29: 2020 access standard applied to all open spaces.

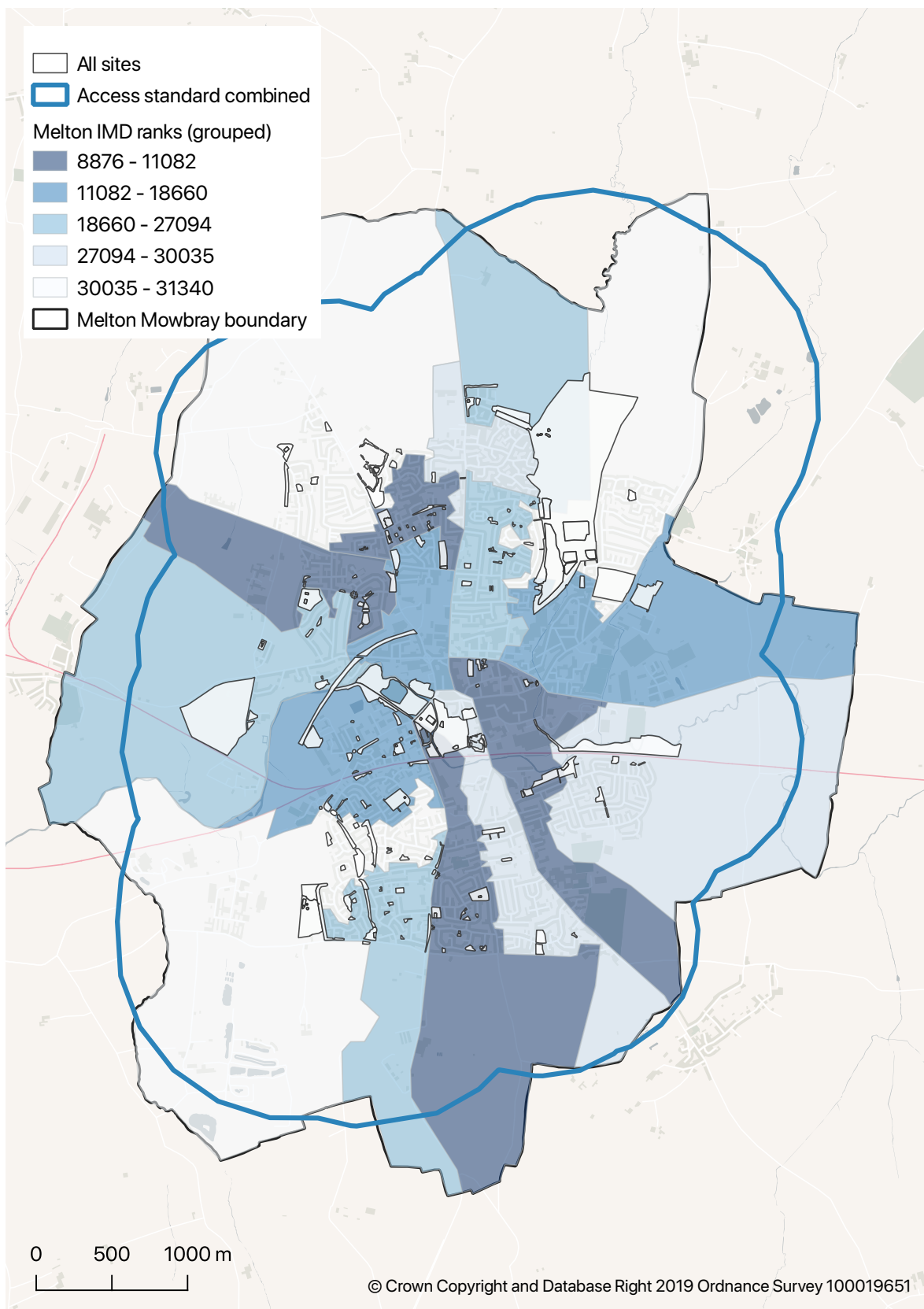


Figure 30: 2020 access standard compared to all open space at the index of multiple deprivation (IMD)

8: Open space audit

8.1 OPEN SPACE QUALITY AUDIT 2020

In the audit, sites were categorized into five (5) bands ranging from Band E (poor) to Band A (outstanding) as illustrated by Figure 31. Quality is generally considered as the main factor in public enjoyment, although multifunctionality is another key driver. Quality drives the use of open space; hence it is natural that band A is the desired target for all sites. It is considered unrealistic to expect that all sites could achieve this standard, but it is nevertheless a standard which the Council and other land managers should aspire to. Strategically, a move towards more Band A sites and a general upwards momentum in quality scoring between successive open space audits is recommended.

Strategic component	Band	Statement
Quality	Band A; 80% plus	Outstanding equivalent to 'green flag' or 'green pennant' standard
	Band B; 70 – 80%	Very good with small deficiencies. Normally small investments and management changes can raise the site to the 'outstanding' category.
	Band C; 60 –70%	Good with a few more notable deficiencies. Sometimes these sites may be 'aged' and require refreshing.
	Band D; 50 – 60%	Average with notable deficiencies and requiring more notable interventions.
	Band E: <50%	Poor , there are presently none in this category in Melton Mowbray. Sites in this category require detailed site investigation, planning which can lead to proposals to rejuvenate or dispose of the site.

Figure 31: Open space audit banding and statement.

8.2 RESULTS OF THE QUALITY AUDIT 2020

Figure 32 summarises the results of the open space quality audit 2020. The results are encouraging as zero (0) sites were found in Band E and only five (5) in Band D. The biggest category was Band B (very good) and a notable 19 sites in Band A (outstanding), this is a strong performance and one what all stakeholders should feel satisfied about. A standalone spreadsheet of the audit exists as a background resource to the Open Space Strategy and is a basis for future reviews and action planning.

Band	Scoring	Total No. of Sites	% of Audited Sites	No. of sites per typology						
				Allotment (Total = 9)	Amenity Greenspace (Total = 59)	Cemeteries (Total = 2)	Non pitch Sports Facility (Total = 8)	Park & Gardens (Total = 9)	Provision for Children & Young People (Total = 29)	Semi Natural Greenspace (Total = 17)
A	Scores > 80%	19	14	0(0%)	3 (5%)	1 (50%)	2 (25%)	6 (67%)	7 (24%)	0 (0%)
B	Scores 70 - 79%	60	45	2(22%)	23 (39%)	1 (50%)	5 (63%)	3 (33%)	20 (69%)	6 (35%)
C	Scores 60 - 69%	49	37	6 (67%)	32 (54%)	0 (0%)	1 (12%)	0 (0%)	2 (7%)	8 (47%)
D	Scores 50 - 59 %	5	4	1 (11%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0(0%)	0 (0%)	3 (18%)
E	Scores < 50%	0	0	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	Total	133	100	9	59	2	8	9	29	17

Figure 32: Results of the quality audit 2020.

9: Open space strategy

9.1 VISION STATEMENT

Ensure that during the life of the Melton Local Plan that open spaces in Melton Mowbray deliver the most benefits to residents and visitors whilst simultaneously contributing to the town's green infrastructure network, especially to benefit nature and help the town address the challenges of climate change.

9.2 INTRODUCTION

The definition of a strategy "is a plan of action designed to achieve a long-term or overall aim". Hence the aim of this strategy is to outline the actions necessary to achieve a stated open space aim. The strategies are therefore set out as follows:

- Aim;
- Discussion; and
- Strategies.

9.3 QUALITY STRATEGY

Aim

To maintain and whenever possible enhance open space quality.

Discussion

Quality is the main determinant of user satisfaction in open space. Since a key focus of open space is amenity and recreation then 'quality' should be regarded as the first priority ahead of quantity and access where funding and management choices are required.

The audit of existing open space undertaken in the preparation of this strategy has been banded in categories from A (best) – E (worst) (figure 33).

Since the quality of sites in Melton Mowbray is above average to outstanding, this is a strong foundation for maintaining quality. There are good reasons to maintain high quality:

- Site usage, as measured by the number of visits and repeat visits, is higher when the site is of a good quality, this brings wider benefits in respect of community health and wellbeing;
- A greater mix of people use sites of good quality, hence there is less social exclusion;
- It is a lower cost to maintain a site in a good condition than to let it decline and then invest a large amount of money to return it to a good quality;
- Good quality sites are more likely to secure the interest and involvement of community volunteers in its maintenance and in running events;
- Larger good quality sites are a tourism asset and hence contribute to the visitor economy and
- Quality allows the Council and its partners to seek recognition in the form of awards and grants and which, in turn, builds 'pride-in-place' in the community.

'Fields in Trust' have issued quality guidelines and these are recommended as the principles of quality management. The list below is an embellishment version of these guidelines:

- Parks should be of 'Green Flag' status or equivalent. This should include not only premium parks but all formal parks and gardens. This can be considered as a litmus-test of the Council's resolve to place quality about quantity;

- Open Space should be appropriately landscaped for example by appropriate use of trees and shrubs (the 'right tree in the right place') and in pursuit of the Council's green infrastructure strategy and declaration of a climate emergency also managed multi-functionally;
- Consideration should be given to minimise hard surfaces and open space soils should be carefully managed for porosity and other ecosystem service benefits. For example, heavy machinery should not be used without ground protection to spread weight loads;
- There should be positive (as opposed to reactive) management in place for all sites and regular reviews. A review implies a discussion about how to maximise the benefits of each site;
- Open space sites should include the provision of paths; and
- Fear of crime or harm should be designed out, wherever practicably possible.

Awards such as the Green Flag should be pursued whenever advantageous as a mark of success. The checklist for 'Green Flag' is recommended as an ongoing tool for quality assurance even when the award is not sought.

- A welcoming place;
- Healthy, safe and secure;
- Clean and well maintained;
- Sustainability;
- Conservation and heritage;
- Community involvement;
- Marketing; and
- Management.

The current situation in Melton Mowbray is the result of management decisions, investments and regular maintenance over many years. Notwithstanding existing skill sets, Figure 33 gives recommendations on maintaining quality.

Audits	<i>A quality audit should be undertaken of all open space on a regular basis to check that quality is being maintained. It is suggested that an independent quality audit is undertaken every five (5) years. This does not imply a full strategy review. Site reviews should take place regularly to consider how to maximize the benefits each site can provide. To manage and forget is not a good strategy as needs and opportunities change with time.</i>
Celebrations	<i>Using open space for civic pride also drives up quality. Aspiring for awards and recognition is not limited to the largest sites. Key sites above the 80% threshold should be considered for the Green Flag or Green Flag Community award. The Borough Council could consider setting up its own community award scheme targeted at local groups.</i>
Community engagement	<i>There are many reasons beyond simple maintenance of quality, why community engagement is beneficial. Volunteering does for example, lead to more social connectivity in neighbourhoods which can help reduce personal isolation. In addition, physical exercise out of doors can improve health and well-being. Volunteers should not be exploited or given tasks beyond their means, nor should they be asked to simply undertake repeated mundane tasks, such as litter-picks (although these may be part of it), especially when their skill sets can achieve more added value. 'Friends of' groups where they exist, should be supported by the Council and where they are none present, the Council could consider supporting the creation of new groups. Small grants can help local groups (for example to purchase hand tools). The Trust for Conservation Volunteers (TCV) offers an insurance scheme for local groups that become members.</i>
Contractors	<i>The use of contractors to meet specialist needs (such as high-level tree pruning) is desirable if such activities can be programmed in advance. Contractors should hold all necessary certificates for works and commissioners should ensure that the contractor operates good employment policies and has health and safety policies in place.</i>

Equipment	<i>Playground equipment should be replaced regularly before deterioration starts to impact on site usage. There is no 'hard and fast' rule on replacing equipment and assessment of sites should take place on an ongoing basis. However, play equipment typically has a life of 15 years, although this varies with the type of equipment, quality of construction, levels of use and exposure to weathering.</i>
Events and activities	<i>Open space is already used for events and activities which can create a sense of ownership in sites as well as a desire to see quality maintained. Furthermore, it can be argued that events and activities are in themselves an inherent element of site quality.</i>
Inhouse open space services	<i>Having an in-house service for the management of open space is of notable value to the Council. It allows for quick reaction time when problems are reported as well as the acquisition of 'deep knowledge' over time. The high quality of open space found in this audit bears witness to this approach. Accordingly, the Council is strongly advised to maintain an in-house service.</i>
Multifunctionality	<i>Open space often does much more than the merely providing access to local residents. Placing a value on open space can be complicated, but some of the less apparent services (sometimes referred to as ecosystem services) can be highly beneficial in justifying investment in site quality. For example, soils on open space sites offer significant benefits to local areas during periods of localised flooding as 'soak away areas'. Multifunctionality of all sites can be improved often by marginal changes and at very little cost. Melton Borough Council could commission a follow up study to see how multifunctionality and change could be instituted on sites in their ownership.</i>
New sites linked to development	<i>Melton Mowbray will see considerable urban growth in the next 15 years resulting from the creation of new sustainable neighbourhoods. Within these neighbourhood's, there will be new open space created. Management of open spaces should be considered not only in the short term (1 – 10 years) but beyond. If the management is to be undertaken by contractors', developers need to be held to account for the quality of the management. This is a duty of inspection that will fall on Melton Borough Council. If the open space is to be transferred to the Council in the short term or long term, adequate financial provision should be made through developer contributions to meet the Council's future management costs.</i>

Figure 33: recommendations on maintaining the quality of open space in Melton Mowbray

Strategic component	Band	Statement	Proposal and trajectory
Quality	Band A; 80% plus	Outstanding equivalent to 'green flag' or 'green pennant' standard	Maintain standard
	Band B; 70 – 80%	Very good with small deficiencies. Normally small investments and management changes can raise the site to the 'outstanding' category.	Plan and invest to move up to Band A within 5 years
	Band C; 60 – 70%	Good with a few more notable deficiencies. Sometimes these sites may be 'aged' and require refreshing.	Plan and invest to move up to Band A or B within 5 years
	Band D; 50 – 60%	Average with notable deficiencies and requiring more notable interventions.	Investigation required leading to plans to move up to band C, B or A.
	Band E: <50%	Poor , there are presently none in this category in Melton Mowbray. Sites in this category require detailed site investigation, planning which can lead to proposals to rejuvenate or dispose of the site.	Detailed Investigation – investment to move up to band C, B or A or disposal and re-invest elsewhere.

Figure 34: proposal for upward movement in quality scores

Quality Strategies

Quality strategy 1:

It is recommended that Melton Borough Council commission independent quality audits of open space every five (5) years to make sure that site quality is progressing in accordance with the trajectory recommended in Figure 33 and especially that site quality is not deteriorating. Note that this recommendation does not imply that an updated Open Space Strategy will be required every five (5) years unless the results of the independent audit show worrying trends or that there are other planning or corporate strategy related reasons for doing so.

Quality strategy 2:

It is recommended that owners of key sites (i.e. larger and most prominent sites) that are above the 80% quality score in the 2020 audit seek 'Green Flag' status and for smaller sites 'Green Flag Community Award' where there is notable community participation. The checklist for 'Green Flag' (see section 9.3) is recommended as an ongoing tool for quality assurance even when the award is not being sought.

Quality strategy 3:

It is recommended that Melton Borough Council seeks to increase the number of community volunteers involved in open space site care including supporting these groups with 'small grants' and providing access to technical knowledge, hand tools, safety training, skills training and group insurance.

Quality strategy 4:

It is recommended that Melton Borough Council have a procedure in place for annual quality review of sites in its ownership which inter alia links to an annual programme of quality improvements. With respect to the quality bands (B - E *there are presently none in E*) as shown in the audit spreadsheet 2020, the aim is to seek to increase quality (refer to figure 33) within five (5) years. At the end of the five year period implement quality strategy 1.

Quality strategy 5:

It is recommended that open space schemes associated with new development should be quality assured by the Council through annual development control visits. It may be necessary for development control officers to be given training in open space assessment. Failure by developers to meet quality obligations should either be penalised when legally possible or their company's named and shamed.

Quality strategy 6:

It is recommended that open space providers should seek to replace equipment (i.e. play equipment, signage etc) prior to them becoming visibly deteriorated or excessively weathered.

Quality strategy 7:

It is recommended that the management of new sites provided through development should be vested in the Council with finance to meet management costs provided in line with the Developers Contributions strategy. This removes variability from development to development and also brings with it democratic oversight.

9.4 QUANTITY STRATEGY

Aim

To exceed whenever possible the quantity standard for each open space 'type' identified in the 2020 open space strategy by 2036.

Discussion

New standards have been set for the quantity of open space in Melton Mowbray based on a benchmarking exercise. The new standards are not intended to be sector leading as this is considered spatially and financially unrealistic. Nevertheless, the quantity standards, which should be considered as a minimum rather than a maximum, present challenges to meet and deliver. It is anticipated that some of the quantity standards can be fulfilled by reclassification of sites (see Figure 35). The potential 'candidate sites' will however require further investigation and community consultation. Other new sites will need to be delivered through development schemes and/or attracting private sector investment, new public expenditure by the Council; by attracting lottery funds; or via some combination of all of these delivery mechanisms.

2020 Audit site Site No.	Site Name/Location	Current Classification	Potential re-classification if site was re-planned	Advantages	Comment
3	Blyth Avenue	Amenity greenspace	Semi-natural greenspace or allotments/community growing area	Large site which could easily accommodate allotments/community growing space and semi natural greenspace	Plenty of space for both uses and space presently is mainly for visual benefit.
4	Chadwell Close	Amenity Greenspace	Semi-natural greenspace or allotments/community growing area	No allotments exist locally, so demand likely.	Current benefits of site are mainly visual
8	Egerton View	Amenity Greenspace	Semi-natural greenspace or allotments/community growing area	Medium sized site. Plenty of parks and gardens nearby.	Part of site could be allotments/community growing space and part semi natural greenspace or else all semi natural greenspace
24	Country Park Cricket/Multi-use games area	Provision for children and young people	Loss of a MUGA although use appears lo hence possible change to cemetery provision or semi-natural greenspace.	Very close to existing cemetery, so spin-offs are possible if used as an annex site. Sufficient additional parking.	Council has placed a restriction on the title that might prevent its prospective use for cemetery land. Semi natural greenspace is a possible alternative use.
25	Norfolk Drive/Durham Close Amenity Greenspace	Amenity Greenspace	Semi-natural greenspace or allotments/community growing area (both sides of road)	Large site. Could be split allotments /semi natural either side of road.	Would make better use of what is a bland uninteresting space. No allotments locally at present.
26	Nottingham Road/Staveley Road	Amenity Greenspace	Semi-natural greenspace	Large site. Would remove grass cutting liability.	Could make better use of site which has no paths currently and current benefit is mainly visual.
27	Nottingham Road/The Crescent	Amenity Greenspace	Semi-natural greenspace (North of The Crescent).	Large site. Would remove grass cutting liability.	Could make better use of site which has no paths currently and current benefit is mainly visual. Wet woodland mix on part of site that floods, as well as rides/ trails.
56	Buckminster Close	Amenity Greenspace	Semi-natural greenspace	Medium/large site	Space not used much except its visual benefit as on a slope.
57	Winstor Crescent	Amenity Greenspace	Semi-natural greenspace	Large site	Present benefit is mainly visual and as a through route.
75	Birds Estate	Amenity Greenspace	Allotments/community growing area	Series of small sites	Robin Crescent has potential for allotments

85	Thorpe Road MUGA	Children & Young People	Semi-natural greenspace	Large site. Makes sense if site floods and alternative pitches are available or can be made available nearby e.g. in Country Park	Wet woodland, wetland scrapes mix and trails.
97	Leicester Road/Edendale Road North	Amenity Greenspace	Semi-natural greenspace (Tamar Road /Kennet Road)	Medium sized site	Parts of site only.
98	Edendale Road South Amenity Greenspace	Amenity Greenspace	Semi-natural greenspace	Large site. Already part semi natural along watercourse	Part of site floods already. Wet woodland mix.
126	Winchester Drive	Amenity Greenspace	Semi-natural greenspace	Benefits are visual as it is a flood overflow area.	Site floods, so wet woodland mix

Figure 35: Candidate sites for reclassification. Each site would need a change management plan and consultation with local residents to ensure local sensibilities are taken fully into account.

First priority has been given to ‘quality of open space’ in this Open Space Strategy. Therefore, any new open space created to meet the quantity standards should be able to be properly managed, not just in the short term, but the longer term too. This is especially important when it comes to schemes delivered through development of the new sustainable neighbourhoods, where the Council clearly has a lead role to ensure that where open space is provided. Delivery can be through, for example, S106 funding, so that the open space created is not only suitable for community use, but is multifunctional, achieved through approved designs and is also affordable to manage over the long term.

Developers should also be strongly encouraged to provide new open space connected to the town’s fragmented green infrastructure network as well as new include functional green infrastructure in site design. These measures are normally referred to as ‘Nature Based Solutions’ (NBS) of which sustainable urban drainage is best known.

It would be undesirable, for Melton Mowbray to fall below the quantity standard for a given type of open space, especially if the consequence of an increase in quantity was to reduce quality overall.

There are two key findings related to the quantity of open space. The first is the need for a significant new provision of semi-natural greenspace in Melton Mowbray for the following reasons: (i) to balance spatial distribution in Melton; (ii) the proposed location of sustainable neighbourhoods; (iii) the route of the Melton Mowbray Distributor Road (MMDR), and (iv) because of the wider benefits that green infrastructure can deliver, there is a powerful argument to create a new semi-natural greenspace site south of the town in excess of 50 hectares. To avoid confusion with the existing Melton Country Park, this area is being referred to as ‘Melton Mowbray Natural Park’ (MMNP). The term Melton Mowbray Nature Park was considered but was discounted as it might imply that it is a zoological garden, although conceivably this might be included should an investor wish to do this. It is beyond the terms of reference for this Strategy to provide a site specification, although some ideas are included in this Strategy. Once a suitable location is identified and a vision agreed, consultants will need to be engaged to design the site and seek investment partners.

The second key finding is that the distribution of open space is fragmentary from a green infrastructure policy perspective (EN3). Green infrastructure has become a major theme in planning and is seen as a way of tackling some notable challenges in both urban and rural areas. In the urban context of Melton Mowbray included amongst these are halting the decline of biodiversity, providing alternative off-road routes for walkers and cyclists, and better protection from the impacts of climate change. The key recommendation in terms of open space is to link these together as much as possible. Consequently, in both planning and design new open space should be used to link existing open space locations together. Where there is a choice, the most connected open space should be preferred.

Quantity Strategies

Quantity strategy 1:

It is recommended that Melton Borough Council use the Open Space 2020 Action Plan to guide the redesign and reclassification of selected amenity greenspace sites to meet existing deficiencies in quantity in other typologies. Although ahead of standard it is NOT recommended that provision for children and young people is included in this exercise since standards are considered as a target minimum and the good provision for children and young people in is considered a key selling point for the town. The opportunity therefore exists only in the category of 'amenity greenspace', to reclassify to either (i) allotments & community growing spaces and (ii) semi-natural greenspace. If these options are pursued a re-design brief for each location will be required and consulted on with local residents before a final scheme is progressed.

Quantity strategy 2:

It is recommended that Melton Borough Council put in place plans to increase the multifunctionality of sites in its ownership as a response to Green Infrastructure policy EN3 and the declaration of the climate emergency. The first target for treatment being amenity greenspace sites. Where new sites are delivered either through development or by other means first priority should be given to the creation of sites that offer the most multifunctionality and connectivity so as to assist in the delivery of policy EN3 and well as EN7 and second priority to meeting deficiencies in typology or location.

Quantity strategy 3:

It is recommended that a new urban park or several smaller urban parks are created within the timeframe of the Local Plan totalling circa 10 hectares. A minimum size of 2 hectares is considered necessary if new parks are to act differently to amenity greenspace. Parks can be considered as excursion destinations whereas amenity greenspace is essentially local amenity for neighbourhoods.

Quantity strategy 4:

It is recommended that Melton Borough Council commit to the creation of a major new urban fringe countryside site (referred to as Melton Mowbray Natural Park [MMNP]) on the southern outskirts of the town, the exact location to be identified through a land search or further consulting commission involving a land agent as required. The ideal location would be accessible on foot or bicycle from new sustainable neighbourhoods by a footbridge over the MMDR with access also by car and public transport. The site to be of approximately 50 hectares or more. The character of the site to be semi-natural greenspace but with attractions co-financed with private operators or funding through the national lottery.

Quantity strategy 5:

It is recommended that developer contributions beyond those required for maintaining quality are focused on (i) meeting deficiencies in open space typologies that are below the quantity standard and with a preference for sites that provide green space connectivity, (ii) LAPs and LEAPs within sustainable neighbourhoods, noting however that NEAPs can be co-located with new urban parks (see quantity standard 3) and (iii) pooled when possible to deliver quantity standard 4.

Quantity standard 6:

It is recommended that developers should seek to use nature based solutions (NBS) in their developments which could be used as open space beyond normal developer contributions, but would not apply to the quantity formula. This would be evidence of developers taking the term 'sustainable neighbourhoods' seriously. There are many proven turn-key NBS technologies available.

9.5 ACCESS STRATEGY

Aim

To ensure that throughout the life of the Melton Local Plan that residents of Melton Mowbray have sufficient access to open space to meet their needs.

Discussion

Access to open space is vital because the benefits that can accrue to individuals and communities include health and well-being, sensory experiences and being close to nature. Plans produced for this strategy show that all of Melton Mowbray has access to open space of different types regardless of where they live in the town. Although this is a good position, we observe that areas to the South East of the town near Burton Road have insufficient access to natural greenspace and parks & gardens and areas to the north west of the town near Nottingham Road also have insufficient access to parks and gardens.

It should be noted that the historical development of Melton Mowbray has resulted in a radial road pattern from the town centre, meaning that journeys on foot to access open spaces frequently require users to cross main roads. The situation precipitates pedestrian safety issues, with extended journeys to traverse roads at formal, safe crossing points. Hence the method applied in this study needs refinement to consider routes to access open spaces.

Access standards for Melton Mowbray are based upon 'distance on foot'. Although this Strategy does not cover the rest of the Borough, it was nevertheless considered to be beneficial to set an access standard elsewhere in the Borough to be used in future. This is based on a cycling distance rather than a driving distance, which is a reflection of the declared climate emergency and the need to encourage modal shift to reduce carbon emissions. Realistically however, it should be assumed for planning purposes that many users will continue to access larger open space sites by car and this trend might become even more pronounced with the opening of the MMDR. The consequent recommendation is that adequate on-site parking will be needed at key sites, including new sites, otherwise feeder roads will become heavily congested and resident complaints are likely to rise.

With regard to provision for children and young people, the distance standard for LAPs and LEAPs will precipitate a need for new accessible provision within the sustainable neighbourhoods, even though the quantity standard suggests that provision overall in the existing urban area is good. The situation with NEAPs is however different and our advice is that such sites should be focused into honeypot locations, such as larger urban parks run by the Council or by Melton Town Estates as well as the proposed new Melton Mowbray Natural Park. In this new "honeypot location", our advice would be to recommend wood and woodland type play equipment to reflect the semi-natural greenspace setting. (Figure 36).



Figure 36: Wood/woodland type play equipment shown here at Hamsterley Forest (Forestry Commission). This type of equipment would be ideal for the proposed Melton Mowbray Natural Park. Image credit: Infinite playgrounds.

Access Strategies

Access strategy 1:

It is recommended that Melton Borough Council adopts the new access standards in this Open Space strategy for future planning of open space provision in Melton Mowbray and in respect of the new sustainable neighbourhoods.

Access strategy 2:

It is recommended that in decision making on the locations of new urban parks and semi natural greenspace, as advised in the Open Space Strategy, that localised deficits are considered in the location planning process for these.

Access strategy 3:

It is recommended that new LAPs and LEAPs are located in the sustainable neighbourhoods but that NEAPs are focused on key larger locations including urban parks and the proposed new Melton Mowbray Natural Park (MMNP).

Access strategy 4:

It is recommended that in the detailed planning of new provision that strong consideration is given to non-motorised access and especially in securing a location for the Melton Mowbray Natural Park that a footbridge/cycle bridge is provided over the MMDR with non motorised distributor routes converging on this crossing point.

9.6 FINANCIAL STRATEGY

Aim

That there is sufficient finance available between 2020 and 2036 to ensure that existing open space is maintained to the highest quality, that progress in improving quality where it is deficient is available and that there are monies available for new provision.

Discussion

Open space functions are mostly non-statutory and across England there is evidence to suggest that they are vulnerable to spending cuts. However, investment in Open Space is generally modest in comparison with other infrastructure and the return in terms of health, wellbeing and community benefits are very significant. Furthermore, investments are normally popular with residents. Income generation can help offset some costs especially when it comes to capital expenditure but is unlikely to wholly bridge funding gaps; in short, the Council and in Melton Mowbray the Town Estate too, will remain the main source of revenue expenditure for the foreseeable future.

Commercialisation can generate 'offset funds' and bring increased activities to larger open spaces There are numerous ways to achieve this and some of the most popular are already present in Melton Mowbray. Examples already in Melton Mowbray and from elsewhere include:

- Cafes and restaurants,
- Sport and recreation minor retail outlets (of a scale suited to the sensibility of the space) – such as skateboard, rock climbing and bouldering, BMX and mountain biking shops,
- Paid for attractions (e.g. high ropes courses),
- Outdoor markets such as street food, flea markets, art markets,
- Music and theatre including promenade events and festivals,

- Sponsorship of open space by companies who can promote their marketing information at key visual points and can also use the open space for corporate events ranging from entertaining business guests through to staff development.

Meeting future challenges:

The Council should be entrepreneurial in meeting future challenges with respect to its Open Space service. This is generally characterised by increasing its role as an enabler, facilitator and commissioner of services, being adept at partnership working especially with private operators, strong on marketing and communications and focused on attracting grants and funds from outside the area, which are normally secured through competitive processes

The Council should be entrepreneurial in meeting future challenges with respect to its Open Space service. This is generally characterised by increasing its role as an enabler, facilitator and commissioner of services, being adept at partnership working especially with private operators, strong on marketing and communications and focused on attracting grants and funds from outside the area, which are normally secured through competitive processes.

Capital reinvestment in facilities is needed to maintain quality. In respect of play equipment, signage and seating, it is recommended that these are normally replaced after 15 years. The Council should also practice full cost recovery when offering services both internally and externally. The full cost of an activity or output or project is the direct costs of the activity and the appropriate portion of all other costs of that service. There will always be exceptions to this a discretionary approach is always needed.

Financial Strategies

Financial strategy 1:

It is recommended that there is an increase in commercial activity in open spaces but only to a level which does not compromise free access or devalue a sites attractiveness. The Council should maintain a good understanding of total cost and practice 'full cost recovery' in delivering services and site usage and ensure that its internal processes are entrepreneurial in there approach.

Financial strategy 2:

It is recommended that the Council should avoid irreversible decisions so whilst in principle it is acceptable to transfer land management of municipal open space to alternative providers the Council should unerringly retain the ownership of sites.

Financial strategy 3:

It is recommended that a plan for replacement of 'time expired' play and other equipment on Council owned or operated sites is maintained and funded by the Council. The Council should actively seek external funding for capital projects.

9.7 EVENTS STRATEGY

Aim

That there is support for the use of Open Space for events and other activities and that this is encouraged, as it builds civic pride and fosters public engagement with individual open spaces.

Discussion

Open space such as urban parks, allotments and natural sites (i.e. semi-natural green space) are highly suited as event venues. Events can perform a wide range of functions; the most important of which could:

- Introduce new users to sites, to encourage repeat visits. There is some research evidence that this approach can lead to increased participation by hard to reach groups; it can perform an educational and training role, especially in raising understanding of the facilities available in each open space; it can foster environmental education (e.g. forest schools); it can lead to family and ‘fun’ events, which deliver social cohesion; it can promote demonstration events like handicrafts and the promote the work of local micro-businesses; it can encourage introductory sessions for new activities that people can participate in, such as growing plants and saplings and learning about basic horticulture; and can provide venues for skills training, especially manual dexterity, horticulture and urban forestry.
- Lead to festivals, theatre, music and arts performances, which attract large regional audiences, and which support the visitor economy;
- Precipitate greater awareness of local authority services and support local studies;
- Increase community pride;
- Attract visitors from outside of the locality by providing a ‘show-casing’ opportunity with associated economic benefits through visitor spending;
- Providing a social function for children and families in particular, whose economic means do not normally allow them to holiday away from home.

Event Strategies

Events strategy 1:

It is recommended that events are encouraged as a key feature of municipal and other open space. Since events organisation and provision directly by the Council and through third parties will be an ongoing activity creative thinking will continue to be needed throughout the life of the Strategy. Events that might become a nuisance to residents should be subject to careful planning and mitigation. However, for events that might attract a significant number of day visitors from outside of the town any restrictions should not be so extreme as to force organisers of events to look elsewhere as the town may then lose the economic benefits of visitor spend.

9.8 DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS STRATEGY

Aim

Ensure that developer contributions meet the appropriate public open space and recreation needs of the community in the short and longer term.

Discussion

Developer contributions should be sought to provide a key funding source to meet the needs of new residents and for the delivery of this Open Space Strategy. This not only applies to new open space required by the Council but also resources needed to maintain and manage open spaces. In particular, the Council’s Development Management function must ensure that new open space provision should be integral to a development and not just be provided by developers as an afterthought, or to use up left over areas of land. Credence must also be given to the potential connectivity between new open spaces, existing open spaces and the wider green infrastructure network.

A key aspect of new provision will be to meet typology deficits as shown in this report (figure 20 above). However, some analysis of this approach is required in relation to developer contributions.

- The two notable areas of deficit relative to the standards are 'semi-natural greenspace' and 'allotments and community growing areas'. With regards to the provision of semi-natural greenspace, we advocate that unless there is an on-site opportunity to provide connectivity to other green infrastructure, then it is better for contributions to be 'pooled' and applied to a larger semi-natural greenspace that is off site but still in general proximity, such as the proposal for the Melton Mowbray Natural Park. With respect to allotments and community growing areas, it is normally better to pool contributions for a new allotment funded by several developments. On the other hand, smaller community growing areas are recommended to be within the new developments as far as practicably possible.
- With respect to provision for children and young people, Fields in Trust guidance should be used (figure 37). Normally LAPs, LEAPs and MUGAs should be located within a development, but contributions may be pooled for NEAPs within a larger facility, such as an urban park or larger semi-natural location such as the proposed Melton Mowbray Natural Park (MMNP).

Open Space Typology	Minimum size	Minimum dimensions	Buffer Zones
<i>Local areas for play aimed at very young children (LAPs)</i>	0.01 ha	10 x 10 m minimum activity zone of 100sqm	5 m minimum separation between activities in the boundary of dwellings
<i>Locally equipped areas that play aimed at children who can go out to play independently (LEAPs)</i>	0.04 ha	20 x 20 m minimum activity zone of 400sqm	20 m minimum separation between activities own and the habitable room façade of dwellings
<i>Neighbourhood equipped areas for play aimed at older children (NEAPs)</i>	0.10 ha	31.6 x 31.6 m Minimum activity zone of 1000 m ² comprising an area of the play equipment and structures and a hard-surfaced area of at least 465 m ² the minimum needed to play five aside football.	30 m minimum separation between activities and the boundary of dwellings
<i>Multiuse games areas and skateboard parks. (MUGAs)</i>	0.10 ha	40 x 20 m	30 m minimum separation between activity zone and the boundary of dwellings.

Figure 37: Size, dimensions and buffer zones in respect of the provision for children and young people recommended for this strategy and based on Fields in Trust guidelines.

The scale of contributions is based on the nearest neighbour comparison, with reference to examples from elsewhere in England and knowledge of local needs as they apply to Melton Mowbray (figure 38). Figures 39 and 40 consider capital and revenue contributions respectively.

Scale of Development

Scale of development	Local area for play (LAPs)	Locally equipped area for play (LEAPs)	Neighbourhood equipped areas for play (NEAPs)	Multi-use games area (MUGAs)
10 – 49	*	*		
50 – 99	*	*		Contribution
100 +	*	*	*	Contribution

Figure 38: Benchmark guidelines for the provision of equipped/ designated play space in Melton. The guidelines relate to residential and mixed-use developments involving non-specialist residential use. The standards will be reviewed if there are high levels of student housing or sheltered accommodation. A financial contribution maybe space in lieu of on-site or adjacent provision for larger scale play spaces, or where existing play spaces live within the walking distance guideline of a proposed development.

Capital contributions

Typology	Standards (sqm) per person	Cost of provision	
		£ Cost/sqm	£ Contribution per person
Allotments	10	32.00	320.00
Amenity greenspace	8	15.00	120.00
Parks and gardens	15	85.00	1,275.00
Play space, LAP, LEAP, NEAP including MUGA – compound figure.	1	195.00	195.00
Semi-natural greenspace	8	15.00	120.00
TOTAL COST	42	-	£2,030.00

Figure 39: Capital contributions for the provision of new open space in Melton. The guidelines relate to open market residential and mixed-use developments involving non-specialist residential use. The standards can be amended by agreement between the Council and the Developer if there are high levels of low-cost housing, sheltered accommodation or exceptional viability issues.

Revenue Contributions

Typology			Cost of provision		
	£ average cost/sqm per year	£ contribution/sqm for 15 years	Inflation if paid annually	£ paid and walkaway sum + 3% annual compound interest	Note
Allotments	0.13	1.95	+RPI	3.04	-
Amenity greenspace	0.62	9.30	+RPI	14.49	-
Parks and gardens	4.59	68.85	+RPI	107.27	-
Play space including MUGA	5.30	79.50	+RPI	123.86	-
Semi-natural greenspace	0.62	9.30	+RPI	14.49	-

Figure 40: Revenue contributions for the management provision of open space in Melton, per annum and as a commuted sum for 15 years if management is handed over to Melton Borough Council. The above figures represent a transfer to the Council once a site is established to the Council's satisfaction.

Developer Contributions Strategies

Developer contributions strategy 1:

It is recommended that for new developments in the scale bands shown in figure 38 that developer contributions are sought for open space provision based on figures 39 and 40.

Developer contributions strategy 2:

It is recommended that where NEAPs are required for the scale of development that these are pooled and applied to a NEAP within a new urban park or the proposed Melton Mowbray Natural Park.

9.9 NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Melton Mowbray Town Centre

Consultants were asked to consider options for improving the town centre offer. The objective is to stimulate the (i) the early evening economy (17.30 – 21.00) and (ii) retain visitors for a longer stay in the town centre to encourage increased spending, and hence increased visitor spending. Having considered various options and possibilities, the consultants recommend further consideration of the idea to construct and operate a 'micro-enterprise' with a 'Winter Gardens' theme in the town centre. This may be described as an indoor facility housing tropical plants, accompanied by associated outdoor space. A facility of this kind can enable a micro-enterprise hub to prosper with the plants essentially 'setting the scene' for small scale commercial and cultural activities. In Melton Mowbray a facility of this kind could be developed either by the conversion of a suitable existing building or else through the bespoke creation of an architecturally appealing 'new build' in glass and wood. The central feature would be a collection of large tropical plants, shared mingling/seating space and culturally influenced micro-enterprises that would appeal to younger professionals with spending power. Examples of such enterprises include:

- Bistro, vegan/vegetarian eatery, noodle bar etc;
- Craft bakery, specialist tea emporium, coffee roasters, internet office etc;
- Gallery for the sale of artworks and artist/craft materials;
- Gelato/High quality ice cream outlet;
- Local farm and home produce outlet;
- Microbrewery outlet; and
- Pop-up stalls and craft shows.

An equipped central stage could host regular cultural performances ranging from arthouse films, musical recitals and stand-up acts. Development of the idea would be via the establishment of a strategic partnership between the Council and a commercial developer. Operation would also rest with a commercial provider and businesses operating within the building would do so on a commercial basis, renting or purchasing space as may be appropriate. Should this concept be taken forward a feasibility study would be an early requirement



Figure 41: Sheffield Winter Gardens demonstrates what is possible. However, in this case there is no microenterprise aspect as proposed for Melton Mowbray.

Melton Mowbray Natural Park

This is a working title for a new open space destination proposed for the south of Melton Mowbray. The site should preferably be located adjacent to the MMDR (southern section) and close to proposed new sustainable neighbourhoods. The site would be a counterpoint to the existing Melton Country Park in the north of the town and if developed successfully, it would make a major contribution to the achievement of recommended open space standards. The facility should be in excess of 50 hectares, with a predominantly semi-natural character. Given the proposed general location and landscape character of this area, it is considered that the main semi-natural attributes could be:

- A large area of newly planted mixed broadleaved woodland comprising indigenous species that are selected as being tolerant to ongoing and increased climate change. Melton Mowbray has low woodland cover, so this prospective addition would be highly valuable for both people and nature. The woodland area could also feature ornamental specimen trees included as an arboretum and seasonal feature trees;
- Areas of open water and seasonal wetland scrapes in what is historically a low-lying flood plain area; these could be focused on nature's needs rather than recreational requirements, especially to address the needs of amphibians which are in notable decline;
- Areas of species rich grassland, to be managed as wildflower meadows. These could be a combination of colourful annual seedings and permanent grassland. Some areas can be set aside for picnicking and other informal recreation however; and
- A Neighbourhood equipped area of play (NEAP) themed on natural materials.

The area would also accommodate a network of paths, cycleways and horse-riding routes, which might be 'type' separated to avoided conflicts between different types of user. Ideally these would connect to the Public Rights of Way Network (PRoW) and a safe crossing point over the MMDR (preferably a green bridge). Car parking and coach parking would be required with overflow parking for large scale events. Accessibility to and from the location using public transport is strongly desirable.

It is recommended that the basic facility is free to use, although the site would be developed so that location appropriate commercial ventures can be located within it. The purpose of this is to spread the cost of site creation but also for it to become a regional attraction, sufficient to attract day visitors from Leicester and Nottingham and further afield. Possible commercial facilities include:

- Butterfly world or similar;
- Festival/events ground;
- Exhibition hall;
- Open air museum;
- High ropes course; and
- Bouldering and rock training.

To develop the concept further a two-stage consulting commission is proposed.

Stage 1 would be a feasibility study, a landscape design, a land-options search, and at

Stage 2, a business plan with costings would be needed and to secure a commercial development partner.

If the two-stage feasibility process is successful, then a project team would be assembled to carry forward the development.

Funding assembly could include lottery funds, grants from public organisations (such as Forestry Commission for tree planting provision) co-funding from commercial providers and developer funding through pooled S106 contributions.

It is likely that leadership would be needed from Melton Borough Council including strong 'member' support, along with a preparedness for the Council to make a significant capital contribution.

Figure 42 (next page) shows a montage of images of features that could be incorporated into the MMNP, some on a commercial basis.

- Top left: climbing boulders used for practice – these are manufactured from a type of concrete sprayed onto a frame. They are very robust but light (site Whickham Thorns);
- Second top left: the 'air trail' is a commercial facility of ropes and beams;
- Second bottom left: 'forest live' is an example of the popularity of outdoor summer events in a semi-natural (woodland) area. The MMNP could be a venue for outdoor events of this kind organised through a musical promoter;
- Bottom: A NEAP at Summerhill a semi-natural country park. A climbing boulder of the type shown at top left is visible;
- Middle right: A viewing tower at Aude in Switzerland;
- Top right: Butterfly world – this is indicative of a commercial attraction with regional appeal. Such a development at the MMNP would be possible and could attract visitors from a 50-mile radius.



Figure 42: Photomontage of features that could be incorporated at the proposed Melton Mowbray Natural Park MMNP

Acronyms and other terms used in this document

Action Plan	A freestanding appendix to the Open Space Strategy.
Biodiverse/biodiversity:	The variety of natural life.
CIPFA:	The Chartered Institute for Public Finance & Accountancy.
FiT:	Fields in Trust.
GIS:	Geographical Information Systems (Mapping Tool)
Green Flag/Green Pennant:	Nationally recognised quality awards.
Green Infrastructure	Green infrastructure is a network of multifunctional green space, urban and rural, which can deliver a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities. Green infrastructure is not simply an alternative description for conventional open space. As a network it includes parks, open spaces, playing fields, woodlands, but also street trees, allotments and private gardens. It can also include streams, canals and other water bodies and features such as green roofs and walls.
Ha or HA:	Hectare.
LAPs:	Local Areas for Play
LEAPs:	Locally Equipped Areas for Play
NEAPs:	Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play
Local Plan and Joint Local Plan:	Statutory document which sets out a vision and a framework for the future development of the area.
MUGA:	Multi Use Games Area
NPPF:	National Planning Policy Framework
NN:	City and Local Authority Nearest Neighbour Comparator Exercise
NSALG:	National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners
PPG:	Planning Practice Guidance issued by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. Replaces planning policy guidance notably PPG 17
PRoW	Public right of way
S106:	Planning obligations under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)
SPD:	Supplementary Planning Document
TCV	Trust for Conservation Volunteers

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