

**SPELTHORNE  
OPEN SPACE, SPORT AND  
RECREATION STUDY**

**Summary of the study prepared for  
the Council by consultants PMP**



## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to summarise the findings of a study of Open Space, Sport and Recreation undertaken for the Council by consultants PMP.
- 1.2 The objective of the study was to identify what specific proposals for open space, sport and recreation might need to be included within the Council's Local Development Framework (LDF) and secondly to assist operational decisions about the future use and management of Council owned sites and facilities.
- 1.3 Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 'Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation requires authorities to undertake robust assessment of existing and future needs in their communities and sets out the way this should be done. The consultants have been required to follow the methodology of PPG 17. This will ensure a sound evidential base for this aspect of the LDF.
- 1.4 The purpose of this summary report is to explain the study method in general terms and the main findings and recommendations.

## **2.0 Study Methodology**

- 2.1 The Consultants have followed the five steps set out in PPG 17. These are:
  - Step 1 - Identify Local Needs
  - Step 2 - Audit Local Provision
  - Step 3 - Set Provision Standards
  - Step 4 - Apply the Provision Standards
  - Step 5 - Identify Proposals and Action Plan
- 2.2 The following sections look at each step in turn and explain the surveys undertaken and the findings of that work.

## **3.0 Identifying Local Needs (Step 1)**

- 3.1 This has concentrated on drawing out the views of local residents by way of sample surveys and invitations to make views known and from sports organisations on the adequacy of existing provision.
- 3.2 Several different surveys have been undertaken. These surveys have sought to establish views on a range of issues of which the main issues are:

- a) policy and demographic context.
- b) whether the amount of open space is sufficient.
- c) views on its quality.
- d) accessibility of open space and how people travel to it and by what means.

Where appropriate responses are related to specific open space types.

### 3.3 The survey's background work is as follows:

- a) An overview of existing Council policy documents including the Local Plan, Community Strategy, Parks Strategies 2003/08 and Leisure and Culture Strategy 2002/05. These documents are summarised in the main report and provide context to the study.
- b) Assessment of future population/demographic changes. The Council's latest projections suggest the total population may only increase by about 2,000 by 2016 from the figures of 90,300 in 2001. However, there is projected to be a slight fall in the 0-14 age range (about 7%) but a significant rise in those aged over 65 and in particular those over 85. Overall the study is able to assume a broadly stable active population, although possible changes in requirements of different age groups will need to be monitored.
- c) Consultation/Surveys
  - i) 5,000 household questionnaires are sent out across the Borough. 485 (9.7%) were returned. The absolute number provides a good general indication of public views but care would be required if undertaking detailed analysis of sub-parts of the response or involving assumptions about particular groups within the local community. This survey asked a range of questions about the types and location of open space visited, regularity and means of travel on visits, reasons for using particular types of open space, views on the quality of open space.
  - ii) All primary and secondary schools in the Borough were contacted and offered the chance for pupils to complete an on-line survey. The purpose was to engage young people. Five schools took part yielding 135 responses from children aged 6-15 - the majority were aged 9 and 10. The general scope of the questions were similar to the household survey but less detailed.
  - iii) Three 'drop-in' neighbourhood sessions were held at Ashford and Sunbury libraries and the Elmsleigh Centre.

The events were advertised via press releases and subsequent newspaper articles. About 100 people were interviewed.

- iv) Sports Club survey to all known sports clubs in the Borough. 13 clubs responded.

- 3.4 The views obtained from the consultation/surveys of public opinion are dealt with in the following paragraphs.

### **Sufficiency of open space**

- 3.5 Appendix A sets out in table form the general response of the public to the adequacy of provision of various types of open space in the Borough. Questions about allotments were asked but excluded from the table because this subject has been dealt with by a separate and more detailed study, specifically of allotments. Views on outdoor water sports facilities were not addressed in these surveys.
- 3.6 The % responses referred to in Appendix A provide a general indication of the level of satisfaction but also need to be understood in the context of the geographic distribution of facilities and how far people are willing to travel to them. Appendix B shows there is a wide variation in provision of open space in some parts of the Borough and this is confirmed, particularly when looking at the catchment areas for amenity green space and space for children and young people. This may in part explain why for several types of open space there are both large percentages of people happy with provision and also large percentages who are not.
- 3.7 So, for example, when in the case of amenity green space 46% feel provision is about right and 41% say there is not enough it would be incorrect simply to assume that on balance the figures average out and could be interpreted as suggesting nothing needs doing. It is evident that about half the Borough's population is in fact in areas with good provision, but some have little or no provision of this type of space. Similarly in the case of natural and semi natural green space most of the provision is in the Staines area and comprises the Staines Commons where as large areas of the Borough do not have this type of open space nearby. Nevertheless, these responses also need to be considered in the context of the findings summarised in Appendix A which also show that for certain types of space most people who responded are also prepared to travel some distance for certain types of open space.
- 3.8 What is clear from these figures is that only a fraction of responses suggest there is too much open space (eg 0.8% in the case of amenity green space). This is important when considering what 'standards' or 'measure' of minimum provision should be considered (this is dealt with

later). There is no case on the basis of this evidence to assume there is surplus open space in the Borough, which could be disposed of.

### **Quality of Open Space**

- 3.9 Each of the surveys provided the opportunity to draw out peoples' views on the quality of open space within Spelthorne. Nationally there are benchmark standards for open space in the form of 'Green Flag' awards. This study has not sought to judge which sites would meet this fairly demanding standard, but has identified the public's general opinions.
- 3.10 Public views reflected a number of issues many of which the Council is aware of and is already seeking to address. In summary views from different groups identified the following main issues:
- a) **Household Survey** - Concerns of significance were dog fouling (30%), vandalism/graffiti (28%), litter (27%), anti-social behaviour (23%). Quality of provision - 81% were satisfied with planted/grassed areas and 70% were satisfied with maintenance and management generally.
  - b) **School Internet Survey** - 30% thought open space was generally very good, 20% was good, 28% only fairly good and only 3% said poor or very poor. 17% said 'don't know'. 24% felt open spaces were well maintained but 21% said they were not well maintained and 54% said some are and some are not. Young people generally perceived amenity green space (grassy areas in housing estates) and play areas as the highest quality of all open space. Other open space types had fairly high levels of 'don't know'.
  - c) **Neighbourhood Sessions**. These raised a lot of anecdotal comments. Vandalism and litter issues were identified at Feltham Hill Road recreation ground and Greenfield Park. Anti-social behaviour by youths was a common theme and referred to specifically at the Shepperton Recreation Ground and Ashford Recreation Ground. Dog fouling was referred to generally and specifically at Laleham Park, Staines Park, Cedars Recreation ground and on the Thames towpath from Staines to Penton Hook. Lammas Park and Staines Park were seen as being well maintained.
  - d) **Survey of Sports Clubs**. 38% rated overall provision in Spelthorne as either poor or very poor, 31% felt they were good, 8% said they were average and 23% made no comment. 31% wanted more synthetic turf pitches and an equal number wanted more grass pitches. 23% wanted more sports hall provision and 15% identified the need for more youth related provision. Clubs also referred to cost of facilities/hire, need for more sponsorship,

poor changing/toilet and kitchen facilities. Some identified venues not being suitable for specific sports.

- 3.11 Officers views on these responses are that they do not suggest a fundamental problem with the quality of provision but it does emphasise the importance of the Council's on-going work, including the current Liveability Fund projects to continually maintain, improve and adapt provision to meet both specific and often changing recreational needs and public expectations of quality.
- 3.12 These findings on quality suggest the need for a more systematic assessment of public expectations in relation to the appearance, facilities and maintenance of different types of open space in the Borough and mechanisms to ensure that sites are maintained and their use adapted as necessary over time.

### **Accessibility of Open Space**

- 3.13 The surveys did ask people how far they were prepared to travel to different types of open space and how they usually got to the sites. For certain types of space people generally expected to be able to walk to it within 5 minutes eg amenity open space and some children's and young peoples provision. National guidance also supports this and it is already reflected in the current Local Plan. For other types of space such as sports grounds, equipment often has to be transported those who responded indicated a car drive of as long as 30 minutes being undertaken.
- 3.14 This response raises two important issues. Firstly, some types of open space need to be very local and therefore a good distribution of sites across the Borough is needed. In the case of outdoor sports and natural and semi natural green space, any location within the Borough would be within the travel times a large proportion of people found acceptable (10 minutes by car). Therefore, for these particular types of open space whilst the amount of provision is critical, the exact location within or even adjoining the Borough is much less of an issue to people than amenity green space.
- 3.15 The second issue, however, is the sustainability of expecting people to travel long distances for open space. In the case of Spelthorne the relatively compact nature of the Borough means that most forms of open space are more accessible than would be the case in a more dispersed settlement pattern. But for some types of open space and in some localities car use is necessary to get to open space. However, for sustainability reasons the mix of recreational opportunity, both formal and informal, available in each part of the Borough is important and there are challenges as to how a wide range of recreation activities can be best managed on sites to achieve this. This is an important dimension of the systematic assessment of the use and management of sites referred to earlier and dealt with later in the recommendations.

- 3.16 Based on the survey responses the following emerges as the accessibility ‘standards’ or patterns that respondents found acceptable, but in respect of the drive times should be regarded as an absolute maximum for the reasons explained above.

<b>Open Space Type</b>	<b>Realistic Mode of transport (from analysis)</b>	<b>Recommended Travel Time</b>	<b>Estimated Equivalent Distance</b>
Parks and Gardens	Walk	5 mins	0.4 km
Natural Open Space	Drive by car	10 mins	4 km
Amenity Green Space	Walk	5 mins	0.4 km
Play Spaces for Children and Young People	Walk	5 mins	0.4 km
Outdoor Sports Facilities	Drive by car	10 mins	4 km

#### **4.0 Audit of Local Provision (Step 2)**

- 4.1 An important part of the study has been ensuring we have a comprehensive audit of existing open space, sport and recreation provision. Inevitable changes are always occurring to available open space due to new provision as a result of major housing schemes and the introduction of new types of facility on existing sites as is occurring with the Liveability Fund initiative. Many facilities, including open space, are not necessarily owned or managed by the Council and it will be important that the records that have now been completed in both written schedules and graphic form on our GIS systems are maintained.
- 4.2 As referred to in the previous section, for the purposes of the surveys and general analysis, open space has been broken down into nine separate types to reflect the categories used in PPG17 and which in turn reflect the diversity of open space type found in all Boroughs. Every open space site in the Borough has been categorised according to its primary use except for children’s and young people’s facilities. These have been specifically identified within larger sites wherever they occur. Inevitably some sites can perform several secondary functions, for example a site might have an extensive area available for outdoor sports (eg Ashford recreation ground) but when not used for this purpose also functions as an area of amenity green space. Any

classification of sites can obscure the flexible way in which many are used and this has a bearing on the assessment of apparent deficiencies in specific categories of open space and how these may be met.

4.3 The nine types used, and the way they have been defined in this study, is as follows, (the number of sites and total hectarage in Spelthorne is also shown).

- a) **Parks and Gardens** - for the purposes of this study this only includes formally planted or managed parks eg Memorial Gardens, and the Walled Garden at Sunbury and other significant parts of sites. Small planted areas within larger sites are not included where this is not the overall site's primary use. However, the existence of such smaller areas and their contribution to the appearance and perceived quantity of sites as a whole is recognised. There are seven sites in this category in Spelthorne amounting to three hectares in total.
- b) **Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace** - these are more natural areas with no or limited formal management. This includes sites such as Staines Moor, Shortwood Common, Dumsey Meadow, Sunbury Park and Laleham Park. There are 18 sites overall in this category covering 195 hectares.
- c) **Amenity Green Space** - this includes recreation grounds and other managed (whether well or poorly managed) areas of open space but not sites used primarily for outdoor sports. There are 96 sites in the Borough covering some 131 hectares.
- d) **Children and Young People** - these areas include equipped play areas, skateboard areas and ball courts. There are 38 sites in the Borough of which most are within amenity green space sites. These areas cover some 3.5 hectares.
- e) **Outdoor Sports Facilities** - this includes both public and privately owned sites and includes secondary school playing fields and golf courses. Water sports are included in a separate category for this study. There are 56 sites in the Borough covering 214 hectares.
- f) **Allotments** - there are 15 sites across the Borough, although not all are used for allotment purposes. They cover about 20 hectares. This study has not examined this use in detail as it is the subject of a separate detailed study by consultants Bridge IMC whose report (April 2005) has considered issues not only of need but also the future management and promotion of allotments and will be reported to Members in due course.

- g) **Cemeteries and Churchyards** - studies include this category because of the incidental amenity value often associated with such sites. Demand is of course based entirely on burial space needs and any 'recreational' use is incidental to their primary purpose. There are seven cemetery sites in the Borough covering 14 hectares.
- h) **Green Corridors** - the study has mapped all statutory public footpaths including the towpath to the River Thames. They provide a valued form of access to open areas as well as an opportunity for exercise and recreation in their own right.
- i) **Outdoor Water Sports Facilities** - some water supply reservoirs and extensive areas of former gravel working provide the Borough with large areas of water used for fishing, sailing and other sports. There are sites used for sport covering an area of 471 hectares. Most of the sites are private with no general public access. This excludes the River Thames, which has a 15 mile frontage to Spelthorne.

4.3 In total there are 228 sites in eight categories and in addition there is an extensive network of green corridors. The total amount of land for open space, sport and recreation is 1051 hectares - but nearly half of this is water. Provision in each of these categories and distribution by ward is set out in Appendix B.

4.4 The ward based information in Appendix B shows that, even discounting the figures on water sports provision in wards varies from just 5.93 hectares in Ashford Common ward to 157 hectares in Staines ward. The following points need to be borne in mind:

- a) Wards are of varying sizes.
- b) Some are wholly urban whereas some have significant areas of open land.
- c) Some types of open space are by their nature generally found outside of urban areas eg natural and semi natural green space (sites such as Staines Moor and Laleham Park).
- d) Some types of open space are found in just a few locations eg again natural and semi natural green space.
- e) The boundaries of wards in many cases do not relate to whole natural communities and boundaries reflect more a need to secure a degree of uniformity in ward population and may result in open space not always being within the wards their natural catchment areas extend to. So for example, the Greenfield Recreation Ground, which is on the edge of the Royal Estate, Staines, which it primarily serves, is not in the Staines South

ward but in the Riverside and Laleham ward. A schematic map of ward boundaries is set out at Appendix C.

- f) Some wards in Spelthorne are also served by open space outside the Borough. For example, the consultation surveys showed that the Country Park at Bedfont Lakes in Hounslow (but abutting the Borough boundary) is used by many residents in the Ashford area.

4.5 Despite these qualifications there are nonetheless clearly some urban wards in particular where provision of open space is much more limited than other locations. The extent and significance of any deficiency is addressed in Section 6, which applies the standards set out in Section 5.

### **5.0 Set Provision Standards (Step 3)**

5.1 PPG 17 expects authorities to set local standards. Local standards are able to reflect local circumstances, demographic profiles of specific areas and the extent of build development compared to open countryside. It expects standards to include quantitative, qualitative and accessibility components. Agreed standards are required to be included in development plans.

5.2 The term 'standard' needs to be used with some care. At a simplistic level the concept of a 'standard' can be interpreted as implying that any provision above that standard is automatically surplus to requirements and not needed. The surveys undertaken in Spelthorne suggest that whilst many people are satisfied with the level of provision only a fraction of the responses indicated they felt there was too much.

5.3 It is therefore recognised that whilst the concept of 'standards' needs to be used, the meaning behind the terms needs to be clear. In the context of the responses received to the adequacy of space in Spelthorne any standard must be regarded as a 'measure' of the minimum provision required, rather than a statement of the adequacy in the amount of open space.

5.4 In Appendix D is a table setting out the 'standard' or 'measure' for each open space type having regard to responses on accessibility (acceptable travel distances) and quality. The 'standard' or 'measure' is expressed in terms of hectares per 1000 population and the figure taken is the average provision for each type except where no standard is proposed.

5.5 A judgement has been made in the light of the responses given from the opinions surveys that the 'standard' or 'measure' should broadly reflect the current provision of space per 1000 population. The locational standard, however, defines the catchment areas for existing

sites and enables shortfalls in particular localities to be identified. The following section looks at the application of the standards.

## **6.0 Applying Standards (Step 4)**

6.1 Overall the Borough has a significant area of various types of open space. However, the following analysis of the various open space types does show that in certain parts of the urban areas of the Borough there are significant shortfalls in the provision of amenity green space and children's and young people's facilities which need to be in fairly close proximity (400 metres - 5 minutes walk) of residential areas.

6.2 Each of the types is considered below:

- a) Natural and Semi-Natural Green Space - with a catchment area of 4 km, all parts of the Borough are well within 4 km of this type of space. The major sites are Staines Common, Laleham Park and Sunbury Park. Many residents also use the Bedfont Lakes Country Park which is an additional local area of semi natural green space, albeit just outside the Borough within Hounslow but which meets the needs of Ashford in particular which otherwise has no sites in this open space type. There is a pedestrian access via Challenge Road off Feltham Road but the access via Clockhouse Lane (with car park) does not have a safe pedestrian route from Spelthorne.
- b) Amenity Green Space - this has a critical location requirement. The catchment areas of all such sites have been plotted and there are residential areas of the Borough outside the 400 metre catchment areas. There are also areas of the Borough where there is provision but the amount of amenity green space is limited and below the level of 1.46 hectares per 1000 population. At Appendix E is a plan showing the catchment areas of amenity green space and children's and young people's facilities. Appendix F lists the areas with no provision. This list also identifies where deficiencies can be met by the allocation of any additional sites or existing space in other types could or does substantially meet the need for general local open space (amenity green space).
- c) Children's and Young People's Facilities - there are considerable gaps in the provision across the Borough. However, comparison with areas of amenity green space and account of the location of public sites used primarily but not exclusively for sports, suggests there is scope in land-use terms to substantially meet the gaps in provision on existing open space sites. The feasibility of meeting provision on specific sites depends however on what is required. For example, a toddler play area is relatively small and the nature of this type of facility can enable them to be satisfactorily accommodated on relatively

small areas of amenity green space. But at the other scale of provision, skateboard facilities require particular care because of their size, likely levels of attraction and potential for disturbance to any nearby residential property. The survey also showed that some people do travel more than 400 m to sites and that distance issues may be more critical in those parts of the Borough with greater levels of relative deprivation and less access to private transport. Officers are currently preparing a Play Strategy and will be undertaking further research on this provision. It is recommended that decisions on whether to locate additional children's facilities on existing sites and the exact form of that provision should be considered in detail in the context of that study with particular regard to the need to make a provision across the Borough for various specific age groups.

The Appendix F does identify a site at Wheatsheaf Lane, Staines which could provide for a shortfall of amenity green space and children's and young people's facilities in the south Staines area. It also identifies a site on the south side of the A30 at Ashford on a field to the west of Edward Way, Orchard Way and Desford Way area. Neither site are in the Council's ownership.

- d) Outdoor Sports Facilities - the nature of team sports in particular mean that people have to travel to play other teams and this is an accepted aspect of such recreation. No part of the Borough is outside a 4 km catchment boundary of existing outdoor sports facilities. However, responses suggest an unmet need for junior football and possibly some general unmet demand and desire for additional synthetic turf pitches. A synthetic turf pitch is proposed for Kenyngton Manor recreation ground as part of the Liveability Fund project and there are other existing open space sites where pitches have a limited use or could be re-introduced. This gives some flexibility in meeting demand without the need to acquire new sites. Officers judge that the amount of space available/planned is therefore about right to meet needs, but the particular use of sites and management of site use in response to changes in demand over time, needs ongoing consideration. We agree there is a need for additional provision for junior football which is to be given particular priority. The comments received from the clubs who responded to the survey support the need for a more detailed playing pitch assessment as a tool to ensure available pitch numbers and type match need. Subject to this, and the capacity/flexibility available to already meet some additional demand, no further sports pitch sites (public or private) appear to be needed at present.
- e) Allotments - allotment issues have been considered in a more detailed study by Bridge IMC (April 2005). It concluded no additional allotments are needed but action is required to

promote the use of the existing provision. There are also no surplus sites.

- f) Cemeteries and Church Yards - the recreational use is incidental to their primary purpose and future demand needs to be assessed in the light of the need for additional burial space. Burial space is a separate issue and not directly relevant to this study but officers are aware that longer term capacity is an issue.
- g) Green Corridors - no standard is proposed and neither is there any national guidance on minimum provision. The River Thames is a 'green corridor' of particular amenity value in Spelthorne and the towpath has obvious local recreational value as a linear open space as well as its rational role. Its contribution in meeting needs in areas otherwise deficient of other types of open space is relevant. There has been no public response via the surveys seeking additional 'corridors' although this does not preclude seeking additional appropriate routes by agreement in the context of new developments or enhancement of Green Belt sites including links to routes outside the Borough.
- h) Outdoor Water Sports - the extensive areas of water for a non-coastal authority are generally well in excess of what most generally urban local authorities might expect to have. The figures for Spelthorne do not include the River Thames, half the width of which lies in the Borough. No standards are proposed locally or exist nationally but the contribution to outdoor activities and general amenity need to be recognised although what exists in Spelthorne serves a catchment area well beyond the Borough's boundary. New sites are only likely to occur as a by-product of further mineral extraction or any possible longer term flood relief proposals. Any recreational use of the resultant water areas would be coincidental to the sites /facilities primary purpose. There is no identified need to create additional water sports areas.

## **7.0 Quality of Open Space**

- 7.1 As part of the opinion research surveys people were asked about their views on the quality of open space, sport and recreation provision. The consultants also assessed the quality of sites. The main consultants report includes a section on quality under each type and has also considered what quality standards might be set.
- 7.2 Overall the study has found a mixed picture. The respondents have specifically identified sites which they feel are good (Knowle Green, Laleham Park, Lammas Recreation Ground, Shortwood Common and Sunbury Park) but also a number of sites which are poor (Jordans

Close, Lauser Road, Gorden Road, Preston Road, Lime Crescent, Holywell Way, Shepperton Recreation Ground).

- 7.3 The consultants own assessment work has identified additional sites which are of a poorer quality (Grovelly Road, Hadrian Way, The Royal Estate).
- 7.4 Some of the sites referred to above are in parts of the Borough where there are higher levels of deprivation than generally found in Spelthorne and therefore also need to be considered in the wider context of resolving social exclusions.
- 7.5 Results from both the public and the consultants confirm a mixed position on quality. Other survey work of public opinion by the Council has confirmed general concerns about dog fouling, litter, anti social behaviour and security, which have all emerged in comments made.
- 7.6 For many of the Council owned sites the activities catered for and the way they are managed and maintained has not changed greatly over many years. There is no explicit management plan for most sites or accompanying maintenance plan to support defined management objectives for those sites. Some management plans have been developed for certain major sites eg Sunbury Park. It is this sort of work which is critical in both determining and then maintaining specific levels of quality to ensure public expectations are met and also ensuring consistency across the Borough.
- 7.7 The public comments received from the study and the consultants survey work is helpful in understanding the variability of quality and the importance the public attach to it. It will be important that the Council works toward establishing how each of its own sites are managed to meet a range of open space requirements and the standards of maintenance of these to ensure high and consistent quality across the Borough.
- 7.8 It is recommended that the Council works toward preparing appropriate management plans and maintenance programmes and measures to ensure open space needs are met to appropriate consistent standards across the Borough.

## **8.0 Indoor Sports and Recreation Provision**

- 8.1 Along side the main audit of open space a secondary audit of indoor sport and recreational facilities has been undertaken. The public's views on levels of provision have also been sought.
- 8.2 The audit has looked at:
  - a) swimming pools
  - b) sports halls

- c) health and fitness
- d) synthetic turf pitches (STP's)
- e) athletics tracks
- f) racket sports

8.3 The consultants have used a data base they hold of all facilities in this region and set out details on their report of facilities both in Spelthorne and within 3 kilometres of the boundary (1¾ miles). This has enabled provision in Spelthorne to also be understood in the content of facilities in the wider area.

8.4 Each of the categories of provision are dealt with in turn. All facilities whether public, private or dual use have been considered. However, particularly in the case of private facilities such as health clubs the cost of membership, usage and often restrictions against use by children mean that these are exclusive rather than inclusive and in practice preclude a large proportion of the Spelthorne residents. Care is therefore required in simply counting numbers of facilities.

a) **Swimming pools.** Overall there are 9 pools in the Borough of which 2 are public (Spelthorne Leisure Centre and Sunbury Leisure Centre – albeit Sunbury is also used by the Sunbury Manor School), 2 dual use (Bishop Wand School and Matthew Arnold School) and 5 private. While nationally 23% of people participate in swimming, 33% of respondents in the household survey stated that casual swimming is one of the most popular activities for Spelthorne residents. Operational experience at both Council leisure centres confirms high demands for swimming at popular times and challenges in meeting the needs of casual swimmers and clubs. National targets in 'Game Plan' are aiming at 50% participation rates by 2020. Future space requirements in part depends on future leisure times patterns and extent to which peak demand periods can be spread and needs therefore managed within existing facilities. It is concluded that, subject to careful management demands can be met and additional space is not needed. It also follows from the evidence in the study and operational experience there is certainly no case for reducing available pool space.

b) **Sports halls.** There are 18 facilities in Spelthorne of which 3 are public (Spelthorne and Sunbury Leisure Centres and Leadcroft Hall), 4 are dual use (Ash Technology College, Bishop Wand, Thamsmead School and Sunbury Manor) and 11 are private/club based. 23% of respondents to the sports club survey felt there should be more sports hall provision and the consultant's demand showed a need within the wider area. There are new/extended facilities with planning permission/or recently completed at Bishop Wand, Halliford School or Staines Preparatory School. The Councils two leisure centres are at capacity from 3pm-9pm most week days, although there is some

spare capacity during the rest of the day and at weekends. Peak demand coincides with after school periods and when people are not at work. Operationally it is recognised that continuing work on 'peak spreading' with concessionary charges can spread demand. In addition there is scope to provide some capacity by further encouraging dual use of school facilities. Indoor football is a significant user of main halls and 5-a-side astro turf pitches – albeit outdoors, can be an alternative and future provisions of these is likely to be an important part of the equation in managing demand for sports halls. A new astro turf is currently being provided at Kempton Manor Recreation Ground.

- c) **Health and Fitness.** There are 10 facilities in the Borough including 2 public (Spelthorne and Sunbury Leisure Centres), 1 dual use (Matthew Arnold School) and 7 private. One private facility has permission for extension. A number of private facilities have opened in recent years and the consultants work suggest some over supply in that sector but by virtue of price those are only realistically available to a small proportion of the local population. However, the existing facilities at Spelthorne College is due to close and will reduce supply to an extent. The Council's two fitness suites in its Leisure Centres are busy and an important and integral part of the overall recreational offer at these two sites. Some growth in demand at both site is beginning to emerge despite the level of provision in the private sector. At both sites officers, nevertheless, are satisfied there is currently sufficient flexibility to meet a growth in demand.
- d) **Synthetic Turf Pitches.** There are currently no publicly owned STP's in Spelthorne although one is to be constructed at Kenyngton Manor Recreation Ground. The three school/club based STPs have, however, each received some Council grant funding to support the wider contributions of each facility to the needs of the community. The club/dual use facilities are at Ashford Sports Association ground in Stanwell, Matthew Arnold School, Staines and Laleham Sports Ground and St Paul's School. Virtually all league hockey is played on STP's and a lot of football training also taken place on them. STP's can be used for many hours a day, 7 days a week and therefore can equate to many grass pitches which are normally only capable of use 23 times a week across the season. Some 33% of respondents to the sports club survey wanted more STP's free/too?. The Kenyngton Manor proposal will contribute to meeting this need.
- e) **Athletics Tracks.** There are no athletic tracks in Spelthorne and the National Athletics Facilities Strategy 1998-2004 commissioned by the Amateur Athletics Association of England recommends one six lane track per 250,000 people within 30 minutes drive time in urban areas. The nearest facility is at

Stompond Lane in Walton. There was no evidence from the survey to suggest additional facilities were required.

- f) **Racket Sports.** Squash facilities are available at four locations (Spelthorne Leisure Centre, Princes Ski Club, Meadhurst Club and Sunbury Sports Association). The only Council squash courts are at the Spelthorne Leisure Centre and are reasonably well used but need refurbishing. Officers are satisfied that the needs of squash are broadly being met and no additional capacity is needed. There are a range of public and private outdoor tennis facilities but not indoor tennis facilities. There are no further planned facilities. Consultation identified a demand for a covered tennis facility but major facilities can be very expensive to provide and whether viable proposals could be developed at a price people are prepared to pay is uncertain. There could be scope operationally for small scale proposals involving covering over existing courts with basic facilities and would not necessarily require new sites. The impact of such structures would need careful assessment and might significantly limit actual potential sites where this is feasible.

8.5 The above details cover a wide range of facilities but many leisure centres and clubs have many of these in single complexes. For certain activities the main halls can be used for a variety of sports and thereby have an inherent flexibility to respond to changing needs.

8.6 The key issues arising from the above information and supporting data in the consultants work are:

- a) Despite the large number of sites at which facilities exist availability to the general public is also a function of price and for indoor facilities the Council's two leisure centres have a crucial role in provision for most people.
- b) There is demand for additional provision in a number of sports categories albeit some facilities are very expensive to provide and aspirations for provisions, therefore, do not automatically mean the facilities could be funded or afforded when provided.
- c) There has been a significant expansion of indirect facilities generally in recent years mainly at existing sports sites including extensions to existing facilities. Officer's judgement is that, subject to demand and funding, there is scope for the extension of facilities at various sites and there is no need for the Local Development Framework to identify new sites for any form of indoor sports provision.
- d) The finding of the study alongside our own usage data confirms the particular importance and popularity of the Councils two leisure centres in indoor sports provision for local residents.

## 9.0 **Proposals in the Current Local Plan**

9.1 The current local plan does contain some open space proposals and the study findings provide a basis to assess whether these should be considered for taking forward into the Local Development Framework.

9.2 Unimplemented open space proposals from the Local Plan are:

- a) Children's equipped playgrounds;
  - i) Fordbridge Park, Staines (Proposal P28)
  - ii) Holywell Way, Stanwell (Proposal P29)
  - iii) Eastern end of Oakington Drive, Sunbury (Proposal P30)
  - iv) Land at Greeno Crescent, Shepperton (Proposal P31)
  - v) Land adjacent River Ash, off Wellington Road, Ashford – part of Fordbridge Park, north of Staines By-Pass (Proposal P32)
  - vi) Land at Wheatsheaf Lane, Staines (Proposal P33)
- b) River Ash Walk Proposal P34
- c) Bridleway on south side of Staines Moor Proposal P35

9.3 **Children's Equipped Play Grounds** All but the Wheatsheaf Lane proposal are on land owned or managed by the Council. Planning permission is not needed for play equipment on open space sites owned by the Council. There is no land use or planning reason therefore, to include playground proposals in the Local Development Framework unless the site is not already an open space use. For this reason only the Wheatsheaf Lane proposal would need to be taken forward into the Local Development Framework subject to the findings of the play strategy.

9.4 **River Ash Walk - Proposal P34** This proposal reflects a long held aspiration since the 1950's to create a continuous riverside walk from Staines to Sunbury. Much of the route exists with lengths at Staines from Priory Green to the Fordbridge Roundabout, at Shepperton Studios and from Old Charlton Lane\Nutty Lane to and including Donkey Meadow at Gaston Bridge Road, Shepperton.

9.5 The missing links include a long section from the Fordbridge Roundabout to Shepperton Studios Estate through land adjacent to the Queen Mary Reservoir, Littleton Pumping Station and the gravel processing area associated with the reservoir. There are security issues due to current gravel and water supply facilities as well as nature conservation conflicts given the undisturbed character of this large area. These issues alone are significant and the creation of a fenced route of some 2100 metres could be very costly to construct and maintain.

- 9.6 This locality near to the Royal Estate is not short of open space as Fordbridge Park and the Green Field Recreation Ground are close by and there are existing footpaths across farmland to the south. The public survey have not revealed a single mention either for the additional paths in this locality or for the proposal.
- 9.7 The second 'missing link' is between Littleton and Nutty Lane of 800 metres. This is a former mineral working area. There are no known nature conservation issues relating to the adjoining land but again the route would be costly to provide and maintain. This locality is not short of accessible open space and the surveys have no revealed any public interest.
- 9.8 The final link is from Donkey Meadow to Fordbridge Road, Sunbury. At this point there is no Thames towpath on this side of the Thames and the route would come to a dead end. It passes mainly through horticultural and grazing land. Public interest and costs issues are the same as the other sections.
- 9.9 The sections of 'walk' that do exist are used by the residents local to these sections and in some cases link to other paths and open spaces. Their value could not be said to be compromised by them not being part of a longer route and for people wanting extensive riverside walks the Borough has the River Thames. It is recommended this proposal is not carried forward into the LDF. However opportunities will continue to be take to upgrade the corridor if development schemes occur close by where "contributions" can be secured through Section 106 Agreements.
- 9.10 **Bridleway on south side of Staines Moor (Proposal P35)**. This proposal was intended to link to sections of Bridleway to the west and east of Staines Moor and thereby create a circular route. It originally emerged as a proposal as part of the initiatives associated with the Colne Valley Park.
- 9.11 As shod horses cannot be ridden on Staines Moor and a bridleway would require a strip of common land immediately to the north side of Staines-by-Pass to be removed from common land status, part of which is also an SSSI. This strip would need to be appropriately surfaced as a bridleway and also a footbridge for horses would need to be constructed over the River Colne.
- 9.12 There was no mention of the proposal in the surveys undertaken or reference by respondents generally to bridleway facilities in the Borough. The proposal would be very costly with common land and nature conservation implications.

9.13 The study has produced no evidence to justify seeking to take forward such a proposal at the present time, particularly given the known difficulties of implementation.

## **10.0 Conclusions**

10.1 The study has provided the basis for a comprehensive assessment of open space, sport and recreation facilities. Whilst the Borough has a lot of space overall, and has the added benefit of extensive water areas, there are some areas of shortfall of local open space (amenity green space and children and young people facilities in a number of areas).

10.2 'Standards' or 'measures' of provision have been identified in the table at Appendix D and are recommended in the next section. These should be used in assessing provision in local areas where development proposals come forward and when formulating policy in Local Development Framework.

10.3 Where there are shortfalls in provision, the availability of sites to make additional premises have been explored. It has been conducted that two sites could go forward for consultation as part of the 'Issues and Options' stage of the LDF. Other areas of shortage would be dealt with by a 'policy' approach.

a) Part of an open field at Wheatsheaf Lane, Staines (in the Green Belt) is best placed to meet the large area in the south Staines area. This could meet the need for amenity green space and children and young peoples facilities. The 'measure' in Appendix D equate to 1.5 hectares of space per 1000 population when both measures are combined. The population in this area outside the catchment area of other open space sites in 2034 (877 residential properties x average household size of 2.32 for the Riverside and Laleham Ward). This equates to a space requirement of 3 hectares. Due to the extensive length of River Thames towpath in this area (although not suitable for unsupervised play by young children) it could be reasonable to reduce the area required by 50% ie. to 1.5 hectares. This site as a whole is 4.17 hectares and therefore only about a third of the northern part nearest Wheatsheaf Lane would be required.

b) Part of an open field to the west of the Edward Way, Orchard Way, Desford Way area south of the A30 in north Ashford. The area is scrub and has some grazing use. This could meet the need for amenity green space and, subject to the findings of the Play Strategy Study, childrens and young peoples facilities. The population within the area without any open space provision within 400 metres of their homes is 1200 people. Some 675 of this population would come within 400 metres of the suggested site and on the basis of 1.5 hectares per 1000 population an

area of 1 hectare could be appropriate. The total site area of this field is 1.9 hectares.

- c) The shortfall in children and young peoples facilities should be considered further in the context of the current study for a Play Strategy to establish where and what type of provision can be made on existing public open space. There remain parts of the urban area where there is no or inadequate amenity green space provision and no sites exist which could be identified for future provision. Some areas of shortfall are in areas of relatively high deprivation in the Spelthorne context. It is proposed this should be addressed by:
  - i) Requiring some additional provision for open space in any redevelopment schemes for housing in or immediately adjoining those areas in addition to the provision of the housing scheme itself might require.
  - ii) Assessing how the quality of existing sites or sites adjoining areas of shortfall/no provision might be further enhanced to enable a greater quality of provision. This is recommended for assessment in the context of the study of the further management and maintenance of sites generally. The lack of maintenance should not be taken as an incentive to release open space for development purposes. Such an approach cannot be justified by the findings of the study.

10.4 In view of the recommended studies in connection with the Play Strategy and the maintenance and management of sites it needs to be recognised that the need for further proposals for the LDF might arise. Public consultation on the LDF might also reveal particular open spaces issues, including provision of sites requiring further consideration. The recommendations should therefore at this stage be regarded as an interim position.

## **11.0 Recommendations**

- 11.1 The following recommendations arise from the findings and conclusions of the study:
  - a) The open space sport and recreation standards set out in Appendix D of this report be agreed for use in the Local Development Framework, determining future planning proposals and informing decisions on the mix of open space use on individual sites.
  - b) To note the levels of existing open space provision and areas of shortfall in the Borough.

- c) The current study into a Play Strategy for Spelthorne considers what type and location of additional provision on existing open space sites be provided.
- d) A playing pitch strategy be prepared to assess how demand can best be accommodated on existing sites.
- e) A strategy should be prepared to identify the appropriate mix of uses on included sites and to deliver quality standards to ensure high standards and consistency across the Borough.
- f) A possible site at Wheatsheaf Lane for amenity green space and, subject to the findings of the Play Strategy, a possible children's and young peoples facility be consulted on for inclusion in the Local Development Framework.
- g) A possible site to the west of Edward Way and south of the A30 in north Ashford for amenity green space and, adjacent to the findings of the Play Strategy, a possible childrens and young peoples facility be consulted on for inclusion of the Local Development Framework,
- h) The Local Development Framework to include standards for the provision of open spaces which individual appropriate sized housing schemes and additional provision be required where feasible in and adjoining areas of existing deficiency is currently green space.
- i) To note the current local plan proposals that it is considered do not need to be taken forward onto the Local Development Framework or which are not required.



## PUBLIC VIEWS ON THE SUFFICIENCY OF OPEN SPACE

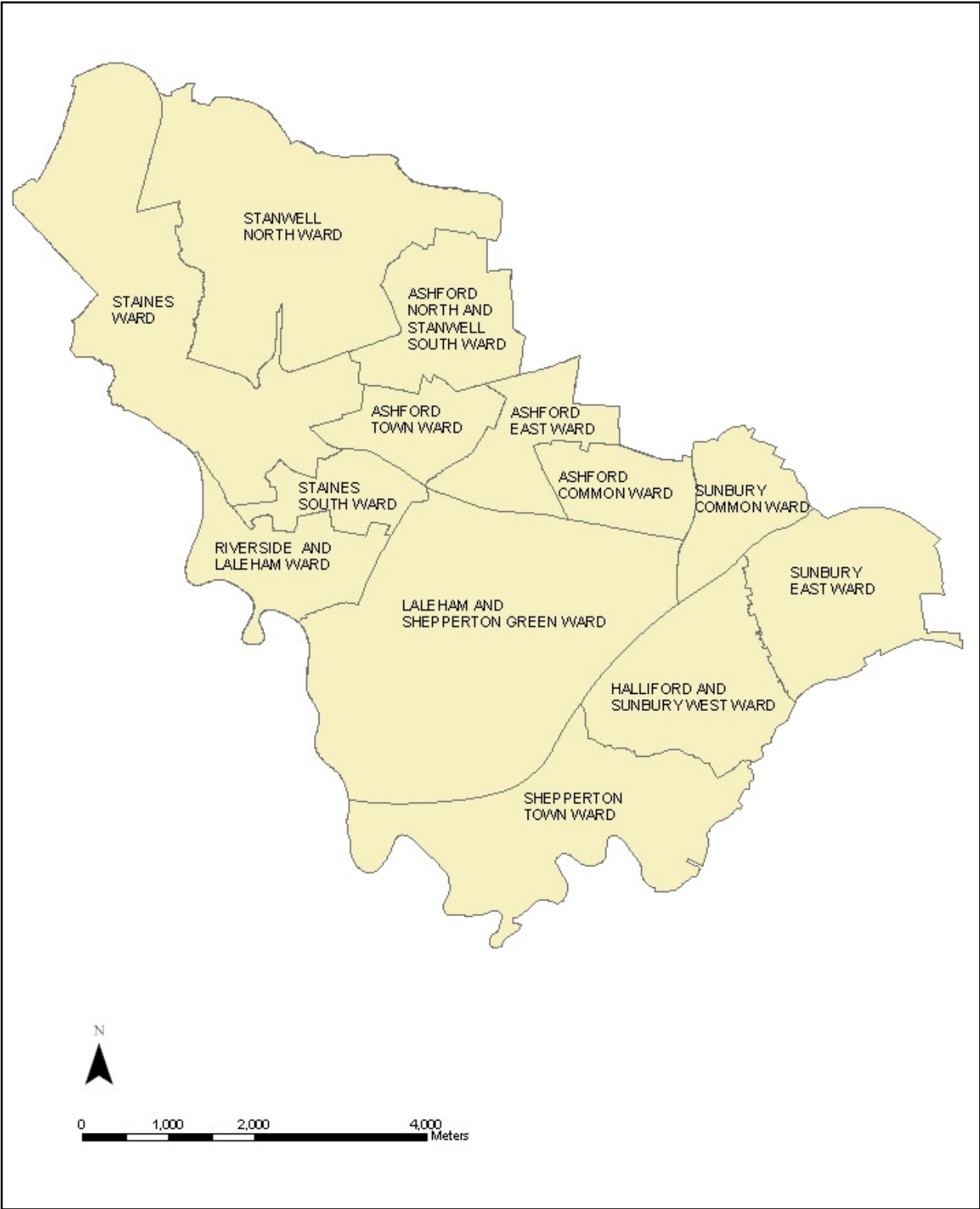
TYPOLOGY	PUBLIC/STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION FINDINGS
Parks and Gardens	70% feel provision is about right (household survey). 28% felt provision was not enough.
Natural and Semi Natural Green Space	47% feel quantity is about right (household survey). 49% say there is too little, 0% say there is too much.
Amenity Green Space	46% feel provision is about right (household survey). 41% say too little, 0.8% say too much.
Children and Young People	32% feel provision is about right, 60% feel provision is too low. More needed for older children.
Outdoor Sports Facilities	32% feel provision is about right. Lack of junior football pitches.
Outdoor Water Sports	This category was not surveyed
Green Corridor	58% thought provision was about right (household survey)

APPENDIX B

PROVISION OF OPEN SPACE BY WARD

Ward Name	Parks & Gardens	Natural & Semi-Natural Green Space	Amenity Green Space	Children & Young People	Outdoor Sports Facilities	Allotments	Cemeteries & Churchyards	Sub Total	Outdoor Water Sports	Total
Ashford Common	0	0	3.48	0.34	2.11	0	0	5.93	0	5.93
Ashford East	0	0	0.15	0.16	45.62	3.25	0.38	49.56	0	49.50
Ashford North & Stanwell South	0	1.88	15.18	0.23	26.76	0	3.19	47.24	37.63	84.87
Ashford Town	0	0	14.35	0.22	4.87	3.22	0	22.66	0	22.66
Halliford & Sunbury West	0.28	0.77	15.17	0.36	69.85	0.7	3.46	89.83	7.93	97.75
Laleham & Shepperton Green	0	28.09	8.77	0.57	12.77	0.85	0	51.05	379.12	430.17
Riverside & Laleham	0.06	4.09	5.39	0.16	6.04	0	0	15.74	0	15.74
Shepperton Town	0	12.99	17.98	0.26	11.74	1.63	0.74	45.34	46.38	91.72
Staines	1.02	126.78	18.29	0.52	0.66	4.82	4.91	157	0	157
Staines South	0	0	8.39	0	7.77	0	0	16.16	0	16.16
Stanwell North	0.97	4.68	11.82	0.24	0	2.22	1.26	21.19	0	21.19
Sunbury Common	0	0	8.94	0.44	3.52	4.17	0	17.07	0	17.07
Sunbury East	0.95	15.61	3.82	0	22.52	0	0	42.9	0	42.9
<b>Borough Wide Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>194.89</b>	<b>131.73</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>214.03</b>	<b>20.86</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>581.67</b>	<b>471</b>	<b>1052.67</b>
Provision per hectare per 1000 population	0.036	2.16	1.46	0.039	2.37	0.23	0.15	6.44	5.2	11.64

Ward Boundaries





**Proposed 'Standards' or 'Measures' for Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities in Spelthorne**

<b>Typology</b>	<b>Quantity 'Standard' or 'Measure'</b>	<b>Locational Standard</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Parks and Gardens</b>	-		No standard is propose but the value attached to planted areas in open spaces needs to be considered in the management of individual sites as appropriate
<b>Natural and Semi-Natural Green Space</b>	2.16	10 minutes drive by car = 4 km	
<b>Amenity Green Space</b>	1.46	5 minutes walk = 0.4 km	
<b>Children's and Young Peoples</b>	0.038	5 minutes walk = 0.4 km	
<b>Outdoor Sports Facilities</b>	2.37	10 minutes drive by car = 4 km	
<b>Allotments</b>	-		No standard is proposed. Allotments have been considered in a separate study which has identified a surplus of provision but scope for better marketing and use of allotments.
<b>Cemeteries and Church Yards</b>	-		No standard is proposed as any recreational use is incidental to the primary purpose of the sites and need for provision to reflect burial space requirements
<b>Green Corridors</b>	-		No standard is proposed but existing corridors are protected by virtue of being statutory rights-of- way. May be scope for additional corridors in the enhancement of Green Belt sites
<b>Outdoor Water Sports</b>	-		No standard is proposed.

### Schedule of Areas Deficient of Amenity Green Space and Children's/Young Peoples Open Space

Area Ref	Area Description	Proposals to Meet Need	Notes
1	Stanwell New Road, Staines	There is access via a signal controlled crossing across the A30 to Shortwood Common which is classified as Natural/Semis Natural Green Space but has short grass and gives scope for general recreation although no additional recreational facilities are or could be provided due to its SSSI status. Need for amenity green space is effectively met.	
2	Shortwood Avenue, Staines	Pedestrian access available from Shortwood Avenue onto Shortwood Common – see comments above. Need for amenity green space is effectively met.	
3	Ashford- around Stanwell Road immediately south of A30	No remaining open land within this urban area. Ash Technology College playing fields lie immediately to the east of this area and a field adjoining that. The field, which adjoins Edward Way has some grazing and part could be used for open space.	
4	Edward Way, Orchard Way, Desford Way Ashford	No remaining open land within this urban area. Field to the west could be used for open space.	
5	Harrow Road	No remaining open land within this small urban area. Adjoining the area is a small industrial area identified in the Housing Capacity study and with potential to also include an area of open space to meet both the needs of any residential use of that	

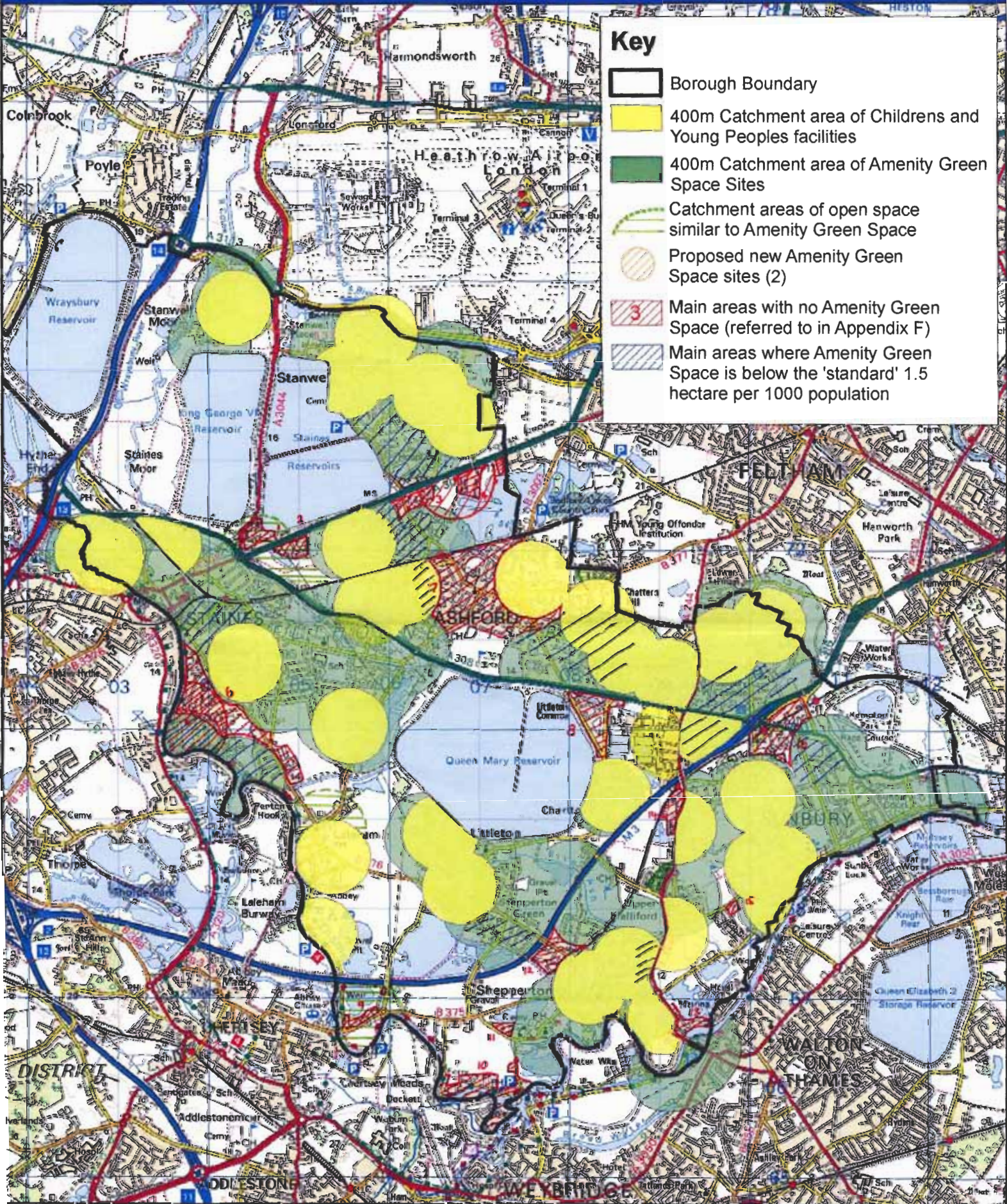
		<p>site and of Harrow Road. Open space provision should be pursued in the context of this scheme. The use of the field to the west of Edward Way could make a limited contribution to the needs of this area but is just over 400 metres away.</p>	
6	<p>South Staines- Penton Road – Wheatsheaf Lane area</p>	<p>This is a fairly extensive area. Adjoining the Thames to the south of this area are two area of amenity green space - Silvery Sands and Penton Hook - but being adjacent to the river they are unsuitable for unsupervised play for younger children. This means there is a large area of south Staines with no Amenity Green Space or Children's and Young Peoples Space. The area is characterised by larger houses, houses with larger gardens or flats in landscaped grounds. The River Thames towpath provides an extensive are of linear open space/.green corridor and, in part, mitigates to an extent the shortage of open areas. The Local Plan had a proposal for an equipped children's play are on the north edge of an open field on the south side of Wheatsheaf Lane (Proposal P33). The site is used for grazing. The site is designated Green Belt and is liable to flood therefore there is no prospect of development. Provision of Amenity Green Space and some provision for children at this site could meet the needs of a substantial part of this south Staines area.</p>	
7	<p>Central Ashford</p>	<p>This is an extensive area centred on Church Road Ashford and extending up to the railway line and down to the northern boundary of Ashford Golf Club. The only undeveloped areas are the</p>	

		playing fields to Spelthorne College in Church Road and St Michael's Catholic School in Feltham Hill Road. At both of these sites the open areas are not visible from nearby roads and no separate and secure public access from the schools building complex is achievable.	
<b>8</b>	Ashford Road - Cambridge Road (South of A308)	The only undeveloped area within this locality is land either side of the Thames Waters Reservoir Aqueduct. Because of the potential dangers of the aqueduct alternative use of any part of this site for open space could only realistically be contemplated if the reservoir aqueduct were no longer needed and could be filled in. There have been proposals in the past to replace the aqueduct by a deep bore pipe but there are currently no proposals by Thames Water to pursue this.	
<b>9</b>	Chertsey Bridge Road	Dumsey Meadow is opposite this housing area - site is categorised as Natural/Semi Natural green space which can not be altered due to its SSSI status and use for grazing. But the site does provide open space including a frontage to the River Thames – the north part of the site near the car park is some distance from the river. The needs of this small area are therefore effectively met.	
<b>10</b>	Towpath Shepperton	Low density housing area with large gardens adjoining the River Thames with extensive towpath on this bank. Nature of the area	
<b>11</b>	Chertsey Road, Shepperton	This is small area on the western end of old Shepperton Village. It is about 500 metres from nearby open space. There is a fishing lake	

		immediately to the north and the River Thames some 500 metres to the south. There is a restored gravel pit to the south of Chertsey Road.	
<b>12</b>	West Shepperton Town – Manor Farm Avenue, Shepherds Close, Shepperton Court Drive	This urban are has no undeveloped land within it. It is between 400 and 550 metres from nearby open space. To the south is a green corridor (Blackditch) and to the north of Laleham Road adjoining the M3 is a fields in agricultural use.	
<b>13</b>	East of Walton Bridge Road , Shepperton	This is a small residential area to the east side of Walton Bridge Road. Bishop Duppas Park is within 400 metres but is on the west side of Walton Bridge Road. Limiting issues is the busyness of the road.	
<b>14</b>	Old Upper Halliford Road Area adjacent to Halliford Halt	This are has no undeveloped land within it. Halliford Park is opposite and within 400 metres of the whole area but involves crossing a busy road.	
<b>15</b>	Highfield Road, Tadmore Close, Upper Halliford	This is a small residential area virally abutting the catchment areas of open space both to the west and east.	
<b>16</b>	Broomfield area south of Sunbury Station and Park Road area north of the A308.	This is an area in the northern part of Lower Sunbury. There are no undeveloped areas within it but St Paul’s School, London Irish grounds, Kempton Park and the Kempton Cricket Club (Lazards) sports ground adjoin the area. The first three sites to not have visibility from public roads or open land immediately adjoining them which is not used. The Kempton Cricket Club (Lazards) sports ground does have an open frontage to the Avenue.	



Amenity Green Space and Children's and Young People's Space



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