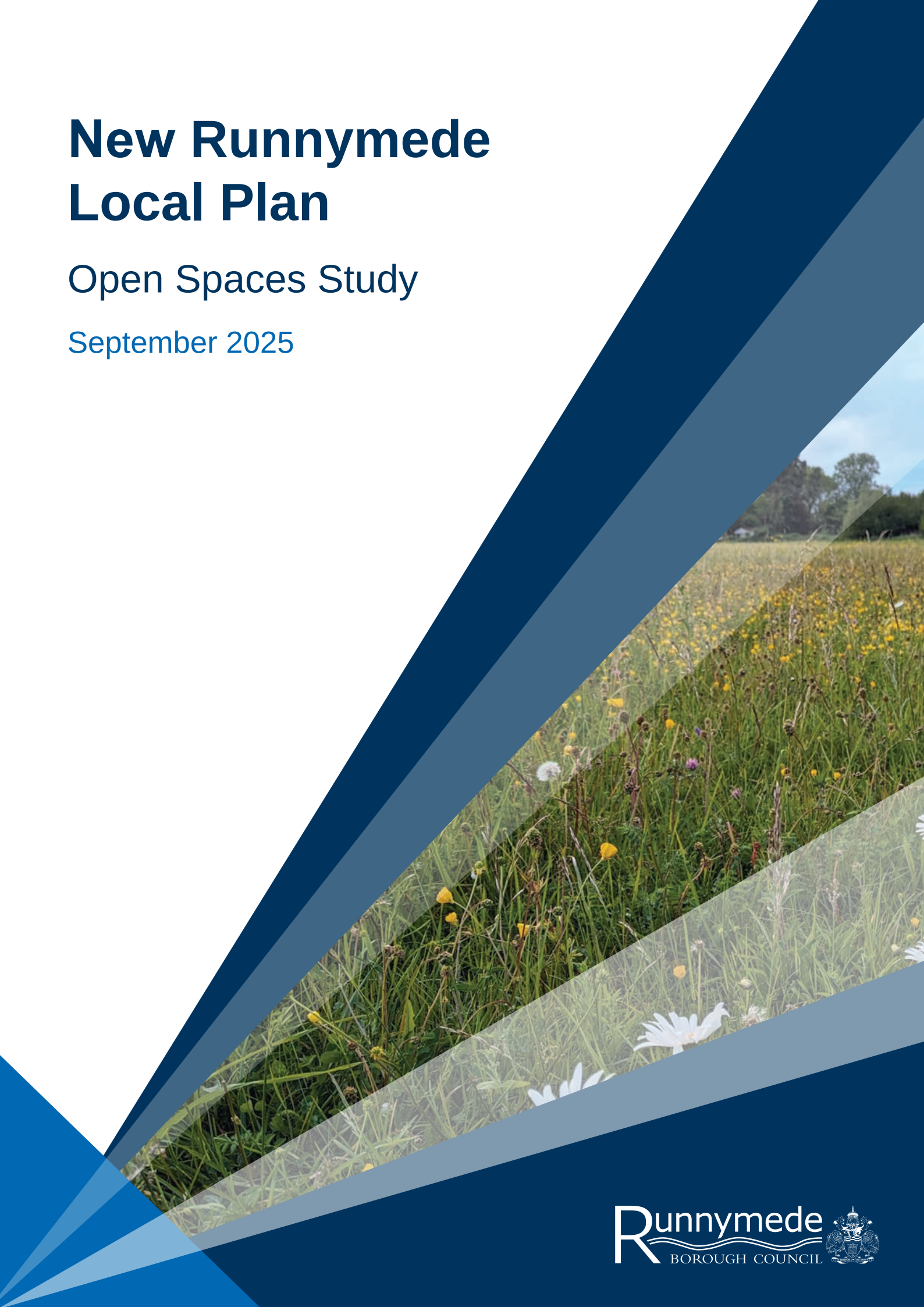
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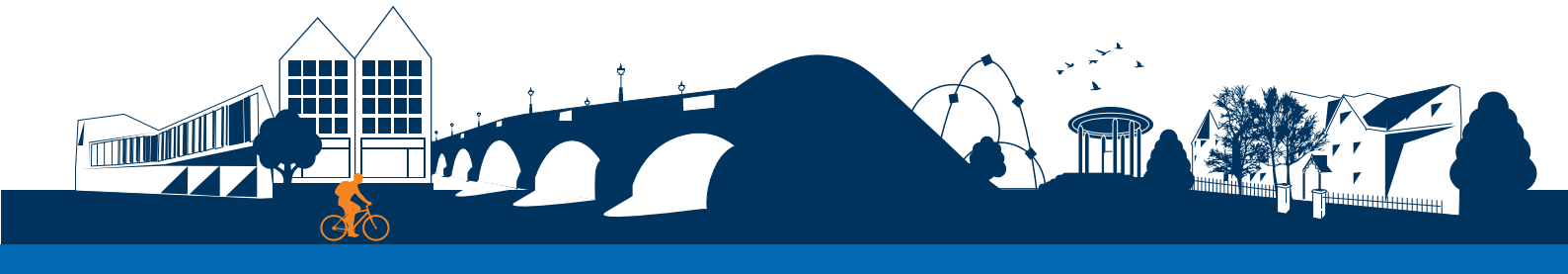
Open Spaces Study

September 2025



Runnymede BOROUGH COUNCIL

What should **Runnymede** look like in the **future?**



Runnymede Borough Council Open Space Study (2025) (V2 September 2025)

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Version control

Version	Date of publication	Author	Purpose / changes
V1	20/06/2025	MC	N/A
V2	01/10/2025	MC	To reflect updated population change data published in the Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA).

Glossary of Terms

Term	Meaning
ANG	Accessible Natural Greenspace
Buffers	Straight-line distances (as the crow flies) of varying distances depending on site size and type which set out the 'catchment' in which it is expected that most people would travel to / be able to use a facility
Catchment	The area in which it is expected that most people would come from to use an open space.
CIL	Community Infrastructure Levy
FIT	Fields in Trust (originally known as the 'National Playing Fields Association')
GI	Green Infrastructure
GIS	Geographic Information System
LAP	Local Area for Play
LEAP	Local Equipped Area for Play
LPA	Local Planning Authority
MUGA	Multi Use Games Area
NEAP	Neighbourhood Equipped Play Area
NEWP	Natural Environment White Paper
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
(N)PPG	National Planning Practice Guidance
PPG17	Planning Policy Guidance Note 17
PPS	Playing Pitch Strategy
RBC	Runnymede Borough Council
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

1.1.1 This Open Space Study (OSS) has been undertaken to guide Runnymede Borough Councils' decision-making processes in relation to matters related to open space, including applications proposing the loss of or new provision. This 2025 OSS replaced the previous 2017 version.

1.1.2 The National Planning Policy Framework[1] (NPPF 2024) (paragraph 103) recognises that access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. It requires local planning authorities (LPAs) to set out policies to help enable communities to access high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation. These policies must be based on a thorough understanding of the local needs for such facilities and opportunities available for new provision.

1.1.3 This study has been carried out in line with the NPPF, which was updated in December 2024 following on from updates in July 2018, February 2019, July 2021 and September 2023 (having been first published in 2012). The NPPF and its supporting Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)[2] replaces but does not include many of the elements of Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17) including its suggested methodology for conducting open space assessments. Whilst the Government has not published anything specifically to replace this document, there is however, still a clear reference made in the NPPF and PPG to the principles and ideology established within PPG17. As such the Runnymede Open Space Study has been informed by the former guidance provided in '*Planning Policy Guidance Note 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation'*[3], and its Companion Guide '*Assessing Needs and Opportunities*'[4], which is a tried and tested methodology and takes a consistent approach with many other LPAs.

1.1.4 It should be noted that due to changes in the methodology since the previous OSS (see Chapter 2 for more detail) such as removing certain types of sites (such as school playing fields), and merging / adjusting open space categories, this has resulted in approximately 100 sites being removed from the assessment that were present in the previous 2017 version. In addition, the Council undertook a desktop exercise, and informal consultation with local councillors and the Borough's Neighbourhood Fora, to identify additional spaces not identified in the previous version, which primarily includes new open spaces that have been created (often as part of new residential developments) which has resulted in a further 44 sites being added in. Therefore, this report is not directly comparable to the 2017 version.

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[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2

[2] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities-public-rights-of-way-and-local-green-space

[3] https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20120920042539mp_/http:/www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/ppg17.pdf

[4] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/assessing-needs-and-opportunities-a-companion-guide-to-planning-policy-guidance-17

1.2 Purpose of the Open Space Study (OSS)

1.2.1 The overall assessment aims to provide a robust and up-to-date evidence base in terms of the need for publicly accessible open spaces in Runnymede. It identifies specific needs and quantitative and qualitative deficits or surpluses in the Borough.

1.2.2 The key purposes are:

- To provide evidence to help protect and enhance existing open space provision, which is a key part of other major Council strategies such as the Climate Change Strategy[5], which aims to 'where possible improve the biodiversity of our parks and open spaces'. In addition, the Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy[6] acknowledges that 'Through our parks and open spaces, we provide access to recreation and exercise for residents. This includes provision of play and exercise equipment, sports pitches…'.
- To inform the development and implementation of planning policy in the Council's updated Local Plan, in accordance with paragraph 103 of the NPPF which states that 'Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space'.
- To inform the assessment of planning applications.
- To provide justification for setting Section 106 (S106) contributions and to inform priorities for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding.
- To provide evidence to help prioritise and inform strategic site maintenance and management plans.

1.2.3 To achieve these outcomes, the OSS aims to:

- Provide an up-to-date analysis of publicly accessible open space provision and demand in Runnymede.
- Identify quantitative and qualitative deficits or surpluses in meeting current and future needs.
- Establish recommendations and actions to address any key issues identified and to support the delivery and maintenance of any new provision.

1.2.4 It should be noted that the OSS should be read in conjunction with the Council's most up to date Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS)[7]. This strategy provides a baseline for current and future supply and demand needs assessments for each of the sports being considered and also sets out a strategy for playing pitch provision in the Borough in the short, medium and long term. It sets out clear sport area-specific and site-specific recommendations, and a prioritised action plan. The PPS focuses on the need for specific sports pitch provision, whereas the OSS focuses on more general and multi-use spaces. Therefore, the OSS does not assess in any detail the supply or need of/for outdoor sports provision, as this is covered comprehensively by the PPS.

1.3 Structure of the report

1.3.1 The OSS follows the five key stages as summarised below:

[5] https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/downloads/file/1533/climate-change-strategy
[6] https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/downloads/file/1537/health-and-wellbeing-strategy
[7] https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/planning-policy/planning-policy-evidence-based-documents/8

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

1.4 The Study Area – Runnymede Borough

Overview

1.4.1 Runnymede Borough is in Northwest Surrey just 20 miles from Central London and includes the junction of the M25 and M3 motorways. It has excellent road and rail connections to the capital and by road to Heathrow Airport. There is good access to the wider South East Region by the motorway network and the Reading – Waterloo and Weybridge – Waterloo railway lines.

1.4.2 Runnymede is a small Borough when compared with most of the other Surrey authorities, measuring only eight miles from north to south. Approximately 74% of its area is within the Green Belt. The Borough has three main towns: Addlestone, Chertsey and Egham, alongside a range of local centres, the two largest being in Virginia Water and Woodham/New Haw. The Borough also contains two smaller centres at Englefield Green and Ottershaw, and the village of Thorpe.

1.4.3 The Borough also contains a number of nationally and internationally important nature conservation sites, including Windsor Forest and Great Park to the northwest which is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The Runnymede Meadows to the north of the Borough include an SSSI (Langham Pond), and the remainder is a Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI). A small part of Runnymede (on its western side) is also within 400m of Chobham Common SSSI, an integral unit of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBHSPA). The Borough contains a number of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs) to encourage walkers and dog walkers away from the Special Protection Area (SPA). There are also two Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) at Chertsey Meads and the Riverside Walk at Virginia Water, and well as areas of ancient woodland and priority habitat spread across Runnymede. The Borough also has a number of other types of open space covering a number of categories including parks and recreation grounds, children and teenagers play space, allotments, amenity greenspace, civic spaces and cemeteries and churchyards.

Study areas

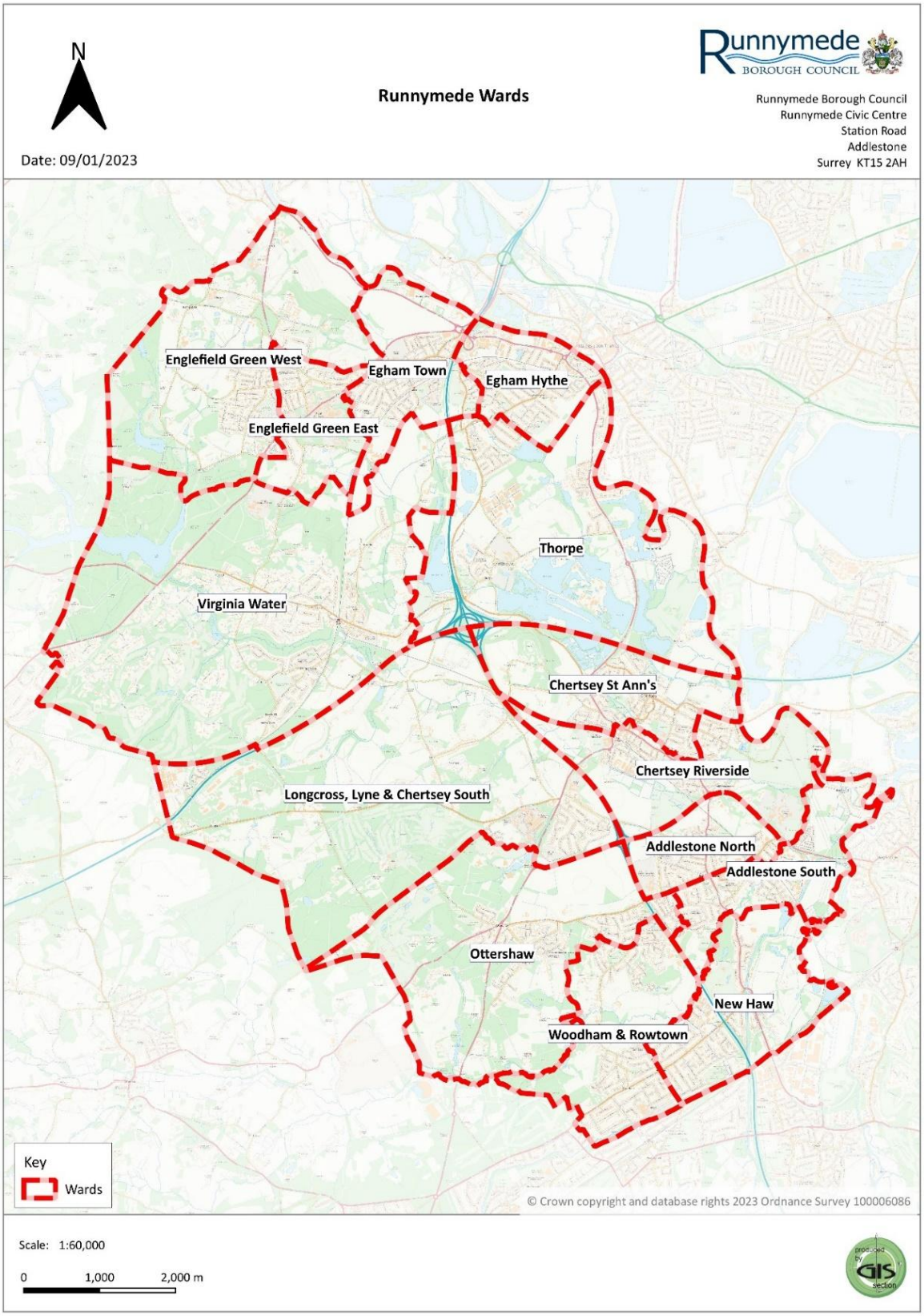
1.4.4 To analyse the current provision and future requirements for open space across the study area, the Council has conducted a Borough-wide analysis as well as a Ward-by-Ward analysis. This approach has been taken as accurate population data is available at ward level and thus is the most appropriate way to assess open space provision accurately. The Wards are:

- Addlestone North
- Addlestone South
- Chertsey Riverside

- Chertsey St Anns
- Egham Hythe
- Egham Town
- Englefield Green East
- Englefield Green West
- Longcross, Lyne and Chertsey South
- New Haw
- Ottershaw
- Thorpe
- Virginia Water
- Woodham and Rowtown

1.4.5 Ward boundaries are shown in Figure 1.1 below.

Figure 1.1: The study area, showing each Ward within Runnymede Borough.



Population Statistics

1.4.6 Ward level population data has been taken from the 2021 Census[8] (published in February 2023). The population of the Borough in 2021 was 88,079. The breakdown by Ward is shown in the table below.

Table 1.1 Ward population statistics (2021 Census data)

Ward	**Population (2021)**
Addlestone North	6,678
Addlestone South	6,440
Chertsey Riverside	6,086
Chertsey St Ann's	6,825
Egham Hythe	7,203
Egham Town	7,312
Englefield Green East	5,502
Englefield Green West	6,324
Longcross, Lyne & Chertsey South	4,014
New Haw	7,285
Ottershaw	6,590
Thorpe	5,806
Virginia Water	5,970
Woodham and Rowtown	6,044
Total	**88,079**

[8] https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/TS001/editions/2021/versions/3/filter-outputs/c433e86c-bb55-4b15-99df-5797ec6d978f#get-data

2.0 CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 This section sets out a brief review of the most relevant national and local policies related to the study which have been considered in developing its methodology and findings. Policies and strategies are subject to regular change; therefore the summary provided in this section is correct at the time of writing. The Council reserves the right to change and update this section as policies and guidance change. A number of other important 'scene setting' studies, datasets etc. are summarised in Appendix 5.

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

2.2 Strategic context

National strategic context

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024)

2.2.1 The NPPF[9] sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how they should be applied. The NPPF must be adhered to in the preparation of local and neighbourhood plans and is a material consideration in planning decisions.

2.2.2 In the Glossary of the NPPF[10], open space is defined as 'All open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity'.

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

- Paragraph 103 - Access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities and can deliver wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change. Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate.
- Paragraph 104 - Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:
    a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or

[9] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2
[10] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/annex-2-glossary

b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.

- Paragraph 105 - Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, forexample by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails.
- Paragraph 162 - Plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes, and the risk of overheating from rising temperatures. Policies should support appropriate measures to ensure the future resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change impacts, such as providing space for physical protection measures, or making provision for the possible future relocation of vulnerable development and infrastructure.
- Paragraph 187 - Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment.

National Design Guide (January 2021)[11]

2.2.4 The National Design Guide provides a structure that can be used for the content of local design policies, guides and codes, and addresses issues that are important for design codes (see below) where these are applied to large scale development on single or multiple sites. The ten characteristics of good design (set out in the same document) reflect the Government's priorities and provide a common overarching framework.

2.2.5 The National Design Guide also illustrates how well-designed places that are beautiful, healthy, greener, enduring and successful can be achieved in practice. It forms part of the Government's collection of planning practice guidance and should be read alongside the separate planning practice guidance on design process and tools.

2.2.6 This document makes reference to open space in more general terms and how it relates to built development, but how they can also host / enable a variety of social uses / interactions such as play, food production, recreation and sport, so as to encourage physical activity and promote health, well-being and social inclusion. This is highlighted by principle N1, which posits that places should provide a network of high quality, green open spaces with a variety of landscapes and activities, including play. Whilst it does not set any definitive guidelines or standards, it does provide good examples of how open spaces are incorporated into the built environment.

National Model Design Code (July 2021)[12]

2.2.7 This document has been developed to provide detailed guidance on the production of design codes, guides and policies to promote successful design. It expands on the ten characteristics of good design set out in the National Design Guide (see above), which reflects the government's priorities and provides a common overarching framework for design.

[11] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/602cef1d8fa8f5038595091b/National_design_guide.pdf
[12] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-model-design-code

2.2.8 This document states that the analysis that forms part of the baseline for the document could include a section on open space which covers a variety of topics such as open space provision, ecology, green and blue environments and their resilience. It goes on to advise that there may be value in having an authority-wide plan showing each type of open space and natural designations and their relevant proximity zones.

2.2.9 From this initial baseline, the NMDC advises that open space should be considered in various parts of the design coding process, including defining and guiding development in specific area types within a Borough / District, as part of the development of site masterplans as well as being considered as part of the wider 'nature' topic to ensure that open space and nature are not considered separately as part of the design process.

Guidance from statutory / significant bodies

Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework (October 2024)[13]

2.2.10 This document sets out a series of qualitative and quantitative requirements, including 15 Green Infrastructure Principles and Green Infrastructure Standards. Some of these standards are taken into consideration as part of the development of the Open Space Study, including:

- Accessible Greenspace Standards – Capacity criteria: Local authorities have at least 3 hectares of publicly accessible greenspace per 1,000 population and there is no net loss or reduction in capacity of accessible greenspace per 1,000 population at an area-wide scale.

2.2.11 Whilst the document sets out quantitative standards such as those above, it also emphasises that there should be an element of local assessment and discretion e.g. all major residential development should be designed to meet capacity targets (hectares of accessible greenspace per 1,000 population), specified by the local planning authority. The Framework presents recommended standards, which may be a useful starting point for Councils to develop their own standards, reflecting local circumstances. This is the approach that will be taken by Runnymede Borough Council relation to the need for new open space.

Fields in Trust Standards 'Creating great spaces for all' (2024)[14]

2.2.12 This document sets out a series of standards for open space not only in relation to size but also distances people should need to travel to access them. This is for a variety of space types including playing pitches, outdoor sports, equipped / designated play areas and other outdoor provision (Multi Use Games Areas and skateboard parks). One example of this is provided at p.18 of the document where it summarises how much space (in hectares) should be provided per 1,000 people for parks and gardens, amenity green space etc, and the walking guidelines e.g. how far in meters the open spaces should be from dwellings.

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13 https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/downloads/Green%20Infrastructure%20Standards%20for%20England%20Summary%20v1.1.pdf

14 https://fieldsintrust.org/content/images/FIT-Standards-2024-Accessible-version.pdf

Local context

Statutory development plan

2.2.13 Runnymede Borough Council adopted the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan[15] in July 2020, which represents a key document in the Development Plan for the area. In October 2024, the Council reviewed the Local Plan and concluded that its policies required updating. Concurrently, the Council approved an up-to-date Local Development Scheme[16] setting out how the update would formally commence in September 2025, with the new Local Plan likely to cover the period 2028-2043. However, prior to this, large parts of the evidence base will be updated, including this OSS. As this OSS has been prepared at an early stage in the plan-making process, the required need / projected populations will be based on that set out in the 2025 Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA). This sets out that the population of the Borough is expected to be 108,084 people in 2043. This is an increase of 20,005 people from the 2021 Census of 88,079 people.

2.2.14 Although the Government has provided indicative local housing need figures, the Council is yet to determine its Local Plan housing requirement (the minimum number of homes that a Local Plan seeks to provide during the Plan period). This will be determined as the Local Plan develops, and will be justified by evidence on land availability, constraints on development and other relevant matters. The agreed housing requirement target will be a key factor influencing future demand for open space and thus the figures calculated in this document may change as this new Local Plan evidence emerges.

2.2.15 In addition to including policies to support growth, the Local Plan has specific policies that relate to open spaces: SL25: Existing Open Space, SL26: New Open Space, SL27: Local Green Space and SL28: Playing Pitches. A summary of these policies is set out below, with the full versions available to view in the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan[17].

2.2.16 Policy SL25: Existing Open Space sets out that the Council will seek to protect, maintain, and where possible, enhance existing open spaces to encourage quality and accessibility improvements to ensure a continued contribution to the health and well-being of local communities. The Council will not permit the loss or displacement of existing open space to other uses unless it can be demonstrated that certain specific criteria can be met.

2.2.17 SL26: New Open Space requires residential developments of 20 dwellings (net) or more to provide new or enhanced provision of open space in accordance with the below standards:

- 1.6 hectares per 1,000 population for outdoor sports facilities
- 0.8 hectares per 1,000 population for provision for children and teenagers
- At least 20 standard size allotment plots (250sqm per plot in size) per 1,000 households or where this is not possible, provision of an alternative such as community gardens or similar.

[15] https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/localplan
[16] https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/planning-policy/local-development-scheme-lds
[17] https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/downloads/file/781/adopted-2030-lp

2.2.18 SL27: Local Green Space states that the Council will give special protection to sites designated as Local Green Space. Within a designated Local Green Space development will not be permitted other than development which supports the use of the Local Green Space or where very special circumstances can be demonstrated and which outweigh the harm to the Local Green Space.

2.2.19 SL28: Playing Pitches will not permit the loss or displacement of existing playing pitches and / or playing fields to other uses unless it can be demonstrated, through up-to-date and robust evidence, that one or more of a number of listed circumstances apply.

2.2.20 In addition to the above, it should also be noted that the Local Plan has a specific policy that relates to Green Infrastructure: EE11: Green Infrastructure. This focuses on avoiding further habitat fragmentation and supports proposals that restore, maintain and enhance habitat connectivity. Additionally, proposals are required to provide and make enhancements to on-site Green Infrastructure assets.

2.2.21 Policy EE11 (and policy EE12: Blue Infrastructure) is supported by the Council's Green and Blue Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Document which sets out guidance for developers on how they can ensure Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI) is considered, designed and delivered through their developments including maintaining and enhancing existing GBI features on site. The SPD includes a separate section for householders with advice and signposts to good practice on how small-scale developments can make a difference as well as a number of design principles for larger schemes to follow.

2.2.22 Alongside the Local Plan itself, there are also a number of Neighbourhood Plans which form part of the development Plan for the Borough. These have been adopted for Thorpe and Englefield Green with emerging plans in Virginia Water and Ottershaw. These plans frequently have open space policies and can identify particularly special areas with the Local Green Space designation, or highly open spaces where improvements are required. Sites identified in these plans will be considered for inclusion (if they are not already) in the Open Space Study.

Other local policy / evidence

2.2.23 Several existing and proposed council plans and strategies have relevance to the scope of this report, and they include the following:

Runnymede Open Space Study (February 2017)

2.2.24 The 2017 study[18] analysed the supply and demand of the various types of open spaces, playing pitches and outdoor built facilities across the Borough. The quantity and access standards were as follows (as set out in section 1.4 of the report):

Table 3.1: Open space typologies and standard from the 2017 OSS

[18] https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/downloads/file/999/oss-final

Open Space Typology	Quantity Standard / facility size	Access Standard / distance to the facility (km)
Accessible Natural Greenspace	2ha 20ha 100ha 500ha	0.3 2 5 10
Outdoor Sport	1.6 per 1,000 population	1.2
Designated equipped playing space	0.25 per 1,000 population	0.4
Informal playing space	0.55 per 1,000 population	0.4
Allotments	0.25 per 1,000 population	0.8

2.2.25 These 2017 standards have been considered in Section 6 in the development of new standards.

2.2.26 In addition to the above policies, strategies, evidence etc., further relevant documents, have been referred to and summarised in Appendix 5.

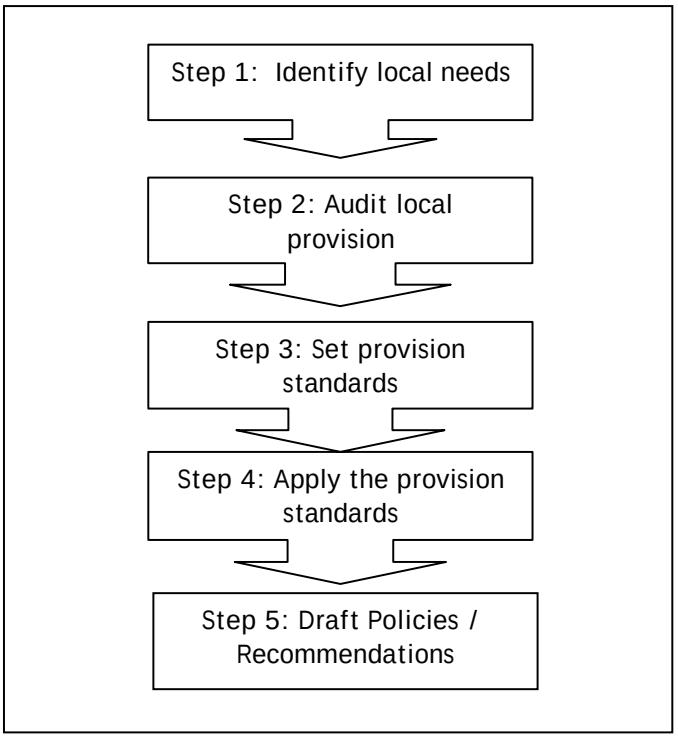
3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 General

3.1.1 The starting point for this study has been to review the guidance in Section 8 of the NPPF, which adheres to, but has superseded the guidance contained in PPG17. The policy gives clear recommendations for the protection of, and appropriate provision of open space but does not provide any detailed guidance via the Planning Practice Guidance on how to conduct an open space assessment. It is therefore both logical and acceptable, in the opinion of the Council, to reference the guidance for assessment provided in the former PPG17 and its Companion Guide.

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

Figure 2.1 Summary of methodology



3.1.3 Within this overall approach, the Companion Guide suggests a range of methods and techniques that might be adopted in helping the assessment process. Where appropriate, these methods and techniques have been employed within this study and are explained at the relevant points in the report. In addition, they are summarised in the paragraphs below.

3.2 Identify Local Needs (Step 1)

3.2.1 The initial analysis of likely population increase was undertaken in the HEDNA to determine the potential scale of population change to 2043 would result in a theoretical increase in the population of the Borough from the current estimated total of 88,079 in the 2021 census, to 108,084 people in 2043 - a 20,005 (22.7%) increase. This is being used so that the Council can plan for the potential additional open space needs arising

from new development in the Borough as opposed to just more general population change.

3.2.2 However, it should be noted that in relation to potential future needs in the Borough, the local housing need figure of 640dpa (as of May 2025) is based on the Standard Methodology set by Government[19]. This is a target set centrally but is not the agreed housing requirement figure for Runnymede which will be adopted in a future iteration of the Local Plan. The final adopted Local Plan annual housing requirement figure is likely to be different. This figure will be justified by evidence on land availability, constraints on development (such as the extent of Metropolitan Green Belt and land at risk of flooding) and any other relevant matters. This final figure will influence the potential quantum of additional open space required, if any.

3.2.3 In addition, through this study, the needs of the existing population will also be considered. This will be assessed in a variety of ways, including but not limited to, consideration of the sufficiency of the existing quantity of space through the setting of quantitative standards, consideration of the sufficiency of the quality and accessibility of the Borough's existing open spaces considering the findings of the site assessment work, discussions with other Council departments, and the responses received through the public consultation undertaken.

3.3 Audit of Existing Open Space Assets (Step 2)

Defining the scope of the audit

3.3.1 To build up an accurate picture of the current publicly accessible open space provision in the Borough, an initial desktop audit was carried out, which included:

- analysis of the Council's existing GIS data;
- desktop mapping of open space using aerial photography;
- liaison with Council officers in other relevant departments.

3.3.2 Following this exercise, site visits were undertaken (initially) in 2022 by officers of the Planning Policy Team and following on from public consultation in early 2023 where a further 18 potential sites were suggested, with ten being included in the study. In early 2025 informal consultation was undertaken with Councillors and the Borough's Neighbourhood Fora, where two further suggestions were put forward and included in the study. Therefore, a total of 333 sites were examined, with quality audits undertaken for 210[20] sites. The quality audit drew on criteria based on (but adjusted to fit the Runnymede context) the 'Green Flag Award'[21]. The site visits were undertaken using a standardised methodology and consistent approach (explained in more detail in section 7.3). However, audits of this nature can only ever be a snapshot in time and their main purpose is to provide a consistent and objective assessment of a site's existing quality rather than a full asset audit.

3.3.3 It is recognised that local communities and Council departments may have aspirations for enhancements that they would like made to the Borough's open spaces and which

[19] Calculated as of December 2024
[20] Not all sites were quality audited, as the site visits might have revealed that a site was not accessible / entirely private and therefore should not be included.
[21] https://www.greenflagaward.org/how-it-works/judging-criteria/

may have the effect of improving their overall quality. Possible improvements to the Borough's open spaces can be explored further outside of this study through discussions with Neighbourhood Fora, residents and community groups and other Council departments (such as the open spaces team). Projects may be identified by such groups during periodic updates to the Borough Infrastructure Delivery Plan and through the production of site management plans.

Approach to mapping

3.3.4 As part of the audit process, sites were mapped into their different functions using a multi-functional approach to mapping, as demonstrated in Figure 2.2 below.

3.3.5 Where open spaces cross Ward boundaries, to calculate the quantity of open space by Ward, these have been split using the Ward boundaries.

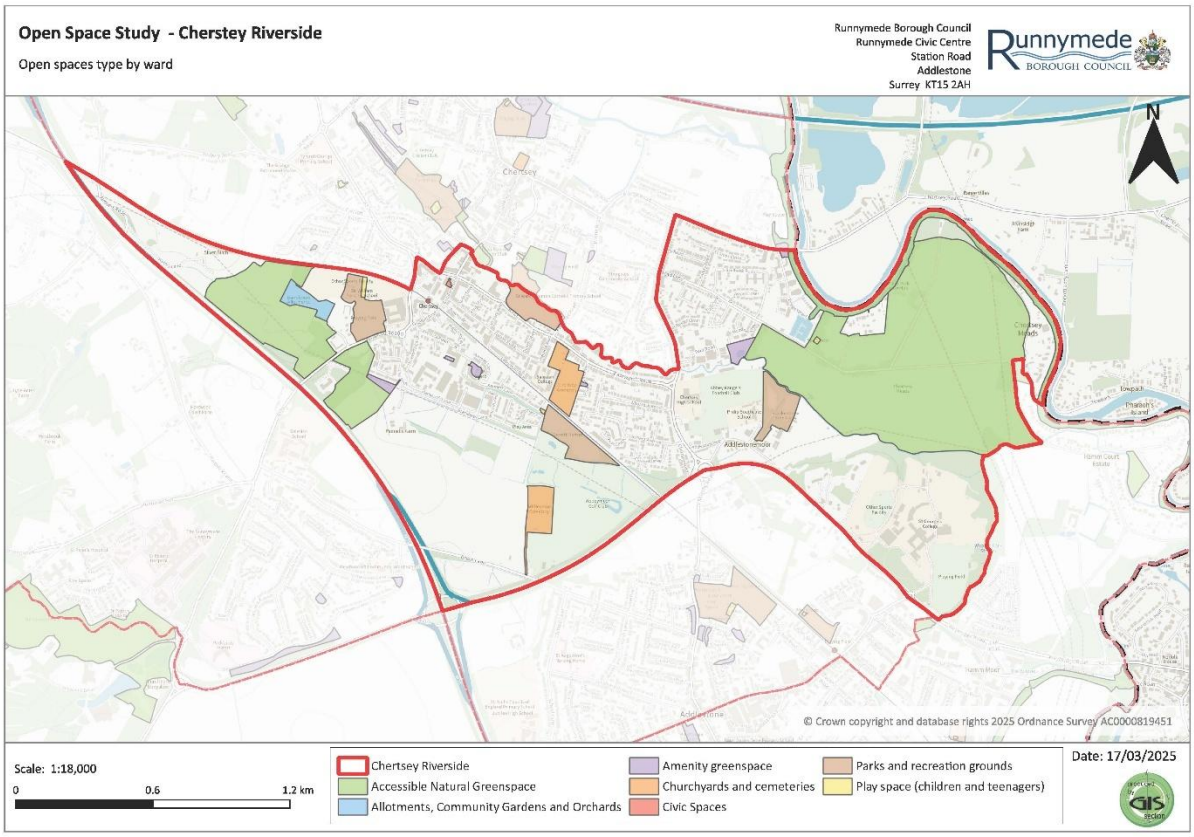
3.3.6 Only open spaces within the Borough have been mapped. Although cross-border use of open space has been noted and considered, open spaces falling outside of the Borough boundary have not been mapped.

3.3.7 Although this study deals with certain typologies of open space, with a focus on publicly accessible open space, it is recognised that there is also a range of inaccessible and privately owned and managed open spaces in the Borough which also make an important contribution to the Borough's wider green space network e.g., in terms of green infrastructure, historic environment, biodiversity, visual amenity and health and wellbeing. However, these spaces are not recorded or analysed in this particular study.

3.3.8 It should be noted that the typology mapping is as accurate as possible (as of March 2025) following cross checking with the Councils' GIS layers, desktop mapping and site visits.

3.3.9 The open space provision tables (in Section 5) and resulting supply and access maps (Section 7) are based on the mapping of open space which was based on information held by the Council in May 2025.

Figure 2.2 The variety of open spaces can be significant, even within a single Ward, in this case, Chertsey Riverside.



3.4 Set and Apply Provision Standards (Steps 2 and 3)

3.4.1 Local open space provision standards have been set for the Borough, with three components, embracing:

- quantity;
- accessibility; and
- quality.

Quantity standards

3.4.2 GIS information, data from the previous Open Space Study and discussions with other Council departments have been used to assess the existing provision of publicly accessible open space across the Borough.

3.4.3 The key to developing robust local quantity standards is that they are locally derived, based on evidence and are achievable. Typically, standards are expressed as hectares per 1,000 people.

3.4.4 To determine suitable standards for Runnymede, the Council reviewed national guidance, the previous OSS, and caried out a literature review of other recently produced open space studies covering other Local Authorities. The recommended standards for Runnymede can be viewed at section 6.7.

3.4.5 The recommended standards are then used to assess the supply of each type of open space across the Borough to determine if there is a sufficient existing quantity or shortfall for each type of open space. This will then inform the development of policy approaches to open space in the next iteration of the Runnymede Local Plan, formally scheduled to begin in September 2025.

Access standards

3.4.6 Evidence from the previous OSS and consideration of national benchmarks are used to develop access standards for open space. A series of maps assessing access for different typologies are presented in this report at Appendix 6. They show the buffers for straight-line distances (as the crow flies) so that the key gaps in access can be identified.

3.4.7 Conversely, walking distances are different and do not account for potential 'barriers', such as busy roads, railway lines, cul-de-sacs etc. So, the actual route walked is generally further i.e., straight-line distances are around 60% of actual distances. The standard walking distance and straight-line distances are shown in the table below:

Table 3.1 Standard walk-times and distances

Walk-time (minutes)	Straight-line (as the crow flies) (metres)	Walking distance (metres)
1	60	100
2	96	160
3	144	240
4	192	320
5	240	400
6	288	480
7	336	560
8	384	640
9	432	720
10	480	800
11	528	880
12	576	960
13	624	1,040
14	672	1,120
15	720	1,200
16	768	1,280
17	816	1,360
18	864	1,440
19	912	1,520
20	960	1,600

Quality standards

3.4.8 Quality standards have been developed drawing on the previous OSS, national benchmarks and good practice and the findings of the quality audits,which were based on Green Flag Award criteria, but adjusted to meet the Runnymede context.

3.4.9 The methodology and an overview of the findings for the quality standards are included

in Section 7.3 of this report. The detailed audits are set out in Appendices 7-20.

3.5 Drafting Policy Recommendations (Step 4)

3.5.1 This step involves outlining higher level strategic recommendations and policy options which may be applicable at Ward and Borough level, including to support the predicted growth in population generated by new development.

4.0 CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

4.1 Public consultation – observations and key issues raised

4.1.1 This document will be available to comment upon during the first (and any subsequent) rounds of public consultation associated with the update of the Runnymede Local Plan. Any cross-boundary issues and other comments raised during this period will be recorded in this section as part of subsequent updated version(s).

4.1.2 Whilst consultees are free to comment on any aspect of the study, the key questions asked about this document include:

- Has the Council developed a suitable and appropriate methodology?
- Are there any amendments to the methodology that you think should be made, and if so to which part(s)?
- A number of sites that were in the previous 2017 version of the OSS (as well as other sites suggested for inclusion in this 2025 version) have been removed from / not included in this 2025 version (these sites have been listed in Appendix 3). Do you agree with these sites being removed / not included and the reasons given as to why this has been done? If not, why not, and why should a removed / not included site be included?
- Are there any new sites that should be included in the 2025 version of the OSS? Are there any that the Council has missed? If so, please could you provide the following information about the site, so that the Council can undertake a site assessment of it (should the site be considered to meet the criteria):
    - Name
    - Address
    - Open space type (please see the open space typologies section in the following section to select which one you think applies).
    - A map showing the area that this open space covers, preferably with the boundaries of the area you think it should cover (this will enable the Council to accurately map and measure it).

4.1.3 Once any given consultation has finished, the Council will collate all the sites submitted for potential inclusion in an updated version of the OSS and undertake a quality assessment for each new site (should it meet the required criteria), as it has done for all the sites set out in Appendices 7-20. If a new site is included, it will then form part of the revised calculation of the existing open space provision in the Borough.

4.2 Health and Wellbeing Survey - March 2023

4.2.1 From 20 February until 7 March 2023 the Planning Policy and Leisure Teams at Runnymede Borough Council issued a 16-question survey focusing on a variety of elements relating to open space. A version of this survey is included within this document as Appendix 22.

4.2.2 The survey offered a number of insights into the interactions residents have with the Borough's open spaces by asking them to identify spaces they use, how frequently they use them, the average duration of use for a single period of time, how the open

spaces could be improved and what deters them from using certain spaces, amongst other questions.

4.2.3 At the close of the survey, 1,287 individuals responded answering a total of 9,348 questions (as not all questions were mandatory, the total number of questions is not 16 times the number of respondents). Respondents were from a range of local areas both within and outside of Runnymede and consequently provide knowledge and experience of different open spaces around the Borough, thus providing an overview of the open spaces within Runnymede. It should be noted that in terms of areas, the study was focused on 'settlement areas', which focus on the settlements as a whole (e.g. Chertsey, Addlestone, Englefield Green) not Wards (e.g. Englefield Green East, Englefield Green West) which are political divisions which attempt to balance population numbers to ensure equalised representation on the Council. This was done as this survey wanted to be relatable to people (to drive a higher response rate by making it understandable) and the areas they live in, as opposed to political divisions which many people may not be aware of relate to on a day-to-day basis. The largest concentration of responses was generated by respondents in Egham and Addlestone & Rowtown with each accounting for 22%. The settlement of Longcross & Lyne was the least represented with 1%, whilst 5% of respondents came from outside the Borough.

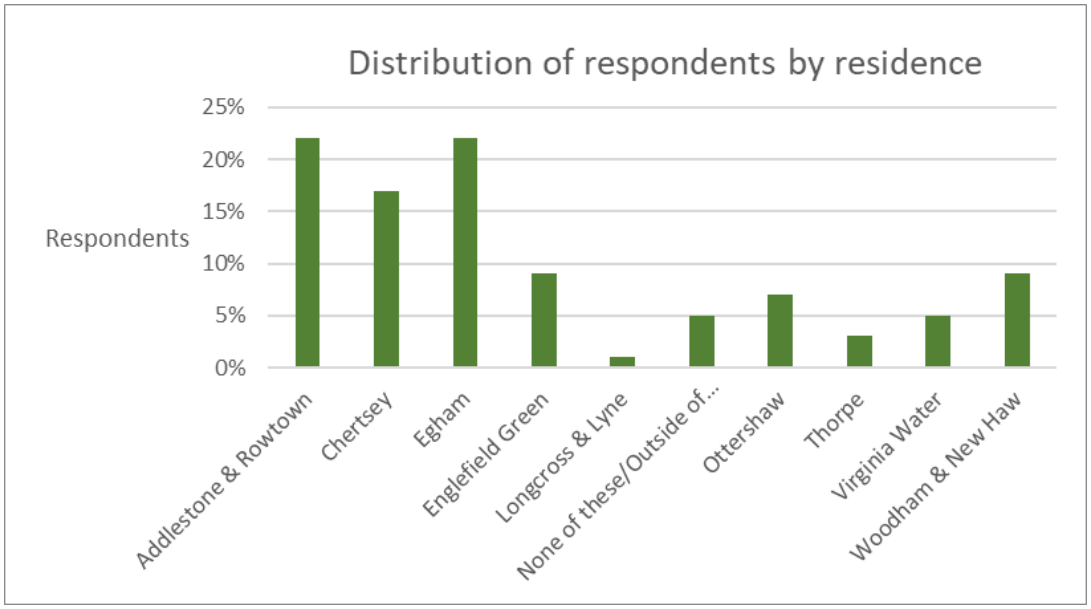


Figure 4.1 The distribution of survey respondents by the Settlement Area in which they live.

4.2.4 The frequency with which respondents use the open spaces provided was generally good, with 40% stating that they use an open space most days and a further 17% answering that they use an open space at least twice a week. This means that 57% use an open space at least twice a week. In contrast, a combined 18% of respondents answered that they use open spaces either twice a month or less. This provides a high-level indication that the open spaces are generally accessible and are popular based on the level of usage.

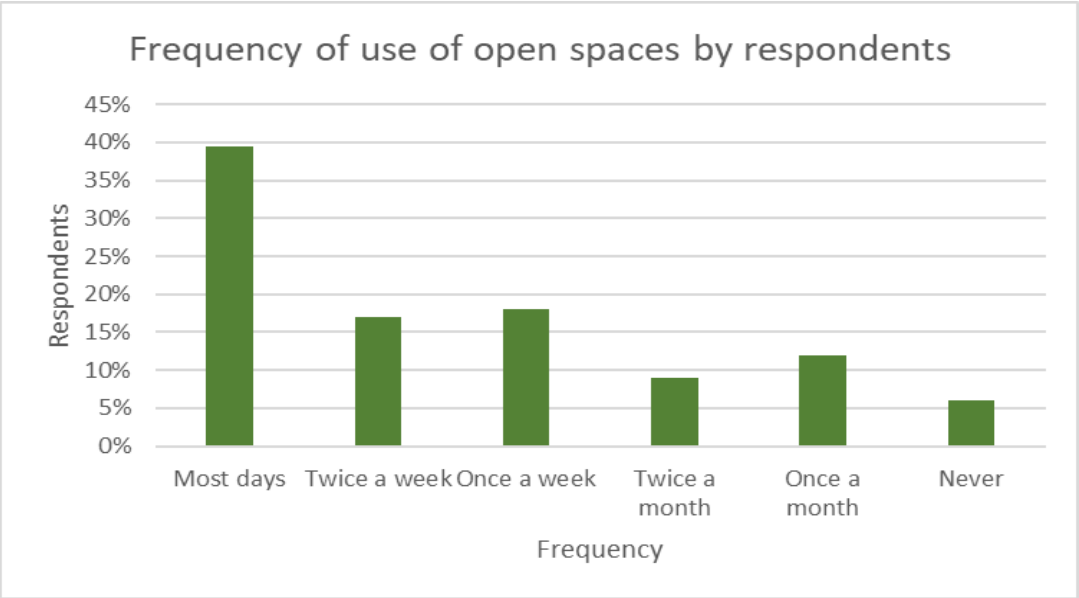


Figure 4.2 The frequency that residents used their local open spaces.

4.2.5 The survey also revealed that the available Open Spaces are used for a range of activities. The most frequently cited was 'enjoying wildlife' with 484 responses. This was closely followed by 'independent sport / exercise' and 'relaxing', which had 440 and 434 responses respectively.

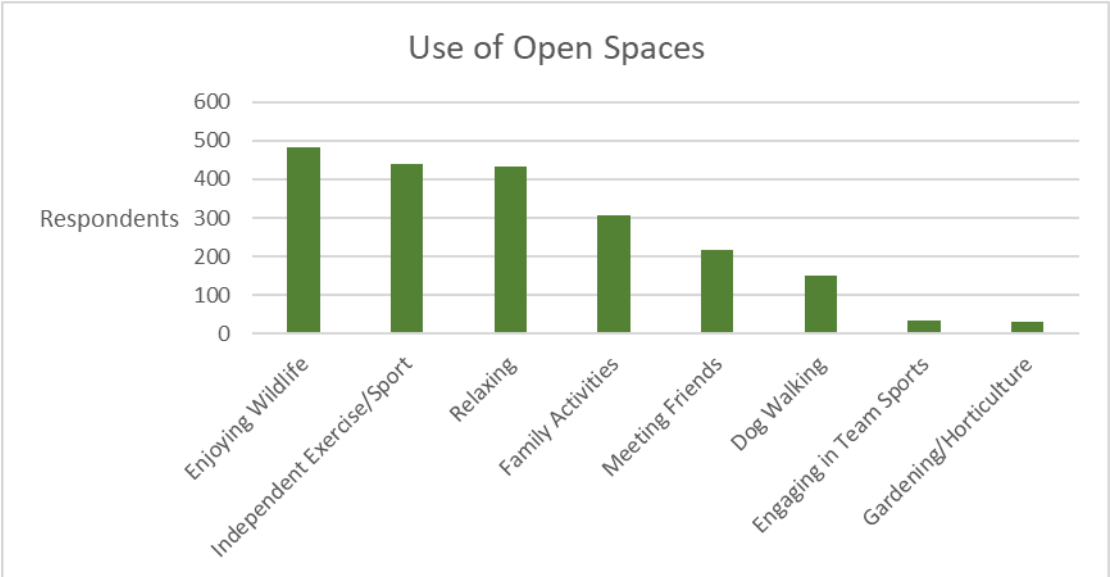


Figure 4.3 The reason(s) why residents used their local open spaces.

4.2.6 There were three further activities which received at least 100 responses: family activities (307), meeting friends / socialising (217) and dog walking (151). There were a large range of additional activities cited although none of which numbered more than 33 responses (team sports). A graph showing the most frequently cited responses is shown below.

4.2.7 Respondents were also asked to rank four environmental elements of open spaces from most to least important. This would help identify the areas and aspects of open spaces which the residents feel should be prioritised going forward. To analyse this, each answer was given a score with the highest priority scoring one point and the

lowest priority scoring four points. The answers were then averaged to give a hierarchy based on the 752 responses received. The results of this exercise are shown below:

(Highest priority)

1. Habitat creation - 321
2. More planting & biodiversity - 224
3. Climate change mitigation - 150
4. Areas for food production - 57

4.2.8 These responses show that there is a desire amongst residents to focus on rewilding through actions such as new planting to create areas of suitable habitats.

4.2.9 When asked about potential improvements to existing open spaces within the Borough, 586 respondents stated that a reduction in litter and / or vandalism would improve the quality and usability of the available green spaces. This was the most cited response with 75% of all respondents identifying this as an issue (respondents could select up to four options). The next most frequently cited response was a reduction in anti-social behaviour (cited 389 times by approximately 50% of respondents).

4.2.10 There was a deficit of seating and picnic spaces reported by 351 individuals - 45% of the total respondents. The next most frequently cited response was a lack of maintenance, cited by 36% of the total respondents. Additional play equipment, CCTV coverage and lighting each received between 195 and 136 votes - 25-17% of respondents. There was also the option for respondents to add suggestions of their own with free / increased parking provision, investment in cycle / footpaths and additional refuse facilities were all frequently cited as proposed improvements.

4.2.11 The survey also gave the respondents the opportunity to make the Council aware of any sites which may be suitable for inclusion in the OSS which may not have been previously assessed. Upon receipt of this information an assessment was undertaken to identify if the site was suitable for inclusion in the OSS. Many these were not taken forward as the sites identified were already included in this study and had already been assessed, whilst others were not considered to be publicly accessible. From the survey, 18 sites were identified as having the potential to be included in the OSS, and following on from a site visit, ten were added to the assessment, bringing the number of assessed sites included in the OSS to 218.

4.3 Informal consultation 2025

4.3.1 Informal consultation with Councillors and the Council's Open Spaces and Community Development Team and ran from 21 January until 21 February 2025. There were a small number of comments received from Councillors as well as a series of qualitative assessments re-assessments provided by the Open Spaces and Community Development Team which led to the scores for a significant number of sites being adjusted, primarily in relation to the state of play equipment and facilities as well as the biodiversity value of various sites across the Borough.

4.3.2 There was also informal public consultation held with the Council's Community Planning Panel which include the resident's Associations and Neighbourhood Fora.

This took place between 20 March and 20 April 2025 and resulted in detailed feedback being received from one Forum. This incorporated a series of site score adjustments as well as the recommendation for two new additional sites which were added into the study. Additionally, the qualitative score thresholds were aligned with those from the 2017 study for consistency, and the proposed policy requirement for allotments was increased on 0.21ha/1,000 people to 0.25ha/1,000 people.

5.0 AUDIT OF EXISTING OPEN SPACE ASSETS

5.1 General approach

5.1.1 This section sets out the open space typologies which have had new standards developed as part of this Study, and those which have been mapped, but do not have standards associated with them. The typologies of open space considered in this assessment have been developed following consideration of guidance provided within PPG17, a review of recently produced Open Space Studies for a variety of other LPAs, and a review of the latest best practice guidance produced nationally (e.g. the Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework guidance). The agreed list of typologies is considered to be locally derived and appropriate for the type and range of open spaces that exist within the Borough.

5.1.2 Although sites have been categorised into different typologies, the multi-functionality of different types of open space is important to recognise e.g., amenity green space, accessible natural green space, parks and recreation grounds and allotments may all provide multiple functions such as providing space for recreation, habitat for wildlife conservation, flood alleviation, improving air quality, and providing food growing opportunities. Linked to this are the intrinsic benefits of open space, such as providing an attractive landscape for improving health and wellbeing.

5.1.3 It should also be noted that there have been significant changes compared to the 2017 study, including removing some categories of open spaces entirely (e.g., school playing fields, land / areas owned by Royal Holloway University of London and private sports facilities). This is to reflect the fact that this study focuses on publicly accessible open spaces, as opposed to simply looking at all open space in the Borough. The focus of the study has shifted to publicly accessible open space because not all types of open space can be used by the public / community at large. For example, while a large number of local children will be able to use a school playing field for significant parts of the year, this access is limited only to those children who attend that school, and only during term times. This study focuses on spaces which do not have access limitations. Appendix 3 lists the other types of open spaces that were deleted from previous study, contribute to the Borough's wider Green Infrastructure network and open space / recreation / sport offer but do not meet the requirements of this study, often because they are not freely publicly accessible due to access restrictions (whether financial or physical). In addition, some of the open space typologies that were present in the previous study (such as outdoor sports facilities and green corridors) have been removed. As such, the sites that were in these categories have either been removed from the study or merged into one of the typologies outlined below.

5.1.4 The following typologies have been used in this assessment:

Table 5.1 Runnymede Borough Council's open space typologies

Typologies mapped with standards	**Typologies mapped without standards[22]**
• Accessible Natural Greenspace (ANG)	• Churchyards and cemeteries • Civic space

[22] An explanation for not developing standards for these typologies is outlined in the following sections.

Typologies mapped with standards	Typologies mapped without standards[22]
• Allotments • Amenity Green Space • Parks and Recreation Grounds • Play Space (Children and teenagers)	

5.2 Typologies with standards

Introduction to the standards used in the OSS

5.2.1 The standards that are recommended by this OSS can be viewed later in this document at section 6.7. This section sets out not only quantitative standards in terms of the amount of open space it is suggested (to be taken forward and adopted as part of updated Local Plan policy) to be provided per 1,000 additional residents, but also how far (as a maximum) these should be located from the community each type of space serves.

Accessible Natural Greenspace (ANG)

5.2.2 Accessible Natural Greenspace (ANG) covers a variety of spaces including meadows, woodland, copses, river valleys and lakes, all of which share a trait of having natural characteristics and biodiversity value and are also partly or wholly accessible for informal recreation. This can include formally designated areas such as Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG)[23], as well as other areas which have not been given a formal designation.

5.2.3 Some sites may provide access in different ways, for example, rivers or lakes are often used for water recreation (e.g., canoeing, fishing, sailing). Whilst access may not be available fully across all areas of these sites (e.g., the middle of a lake or dense scrub in a woodland), the whole site has been included within the assessment.

5.2.4 Some natural spaces have no access at all, and whilst they cannot be formally used by the general community, they can be appreciated from a distance, and contribute to visual amenity, green infrastructure, and biodiversity. Whilst every effort was made to exclude these spaces from the open space assessment, as already identified, in certain sites access to all parts of a site may not always be clear.

5.2.5 Research elsewhere (Natural England[24]) has identified the value attached to natural spaces for recreation and emotional well-being. A sense of 'closeness to nature' with its attendant benefits for people is something that is all too easily lost in urban areas. ANG can also make important contributions towards biodiversity aims, such as those set out by the Surrey Nature Partnership[25] in Biodiversity & Planning in Surrey (2019)[26] and can also raise awareness of biodiversity values and issues.

[23] https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/explore-borough/suitable-alternative-natural-greenspaces-sangs
[24] Natural England have published a variety of health and the natural environment publications at http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/127020
[25] https://surreynaturepartnership.org.uk
[26] https://surreynaturepartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/biodiversity-planning-in-surrey-revised_post-revision-nppf_mar-2019.pdf

Allotments

5.2.6 Allotments provide areas for people to grow their own produce and plants. It is important to be clear about what is meant by the term 'allotment'. The Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908[27] obliged local authorities to provide sufficient allotments and to let them to persons living in their areas where they considered there was a demand. The Allotment Act of 1922[28] defines the term 'allotment garden' as:

> *'an allotment not exceeding 40 poles[29] in extent which is wholly or mainly cultivated by the occupier for the production of vegetable or fruit crops for consumption by himself or his family'*

5.2.7 The Allotments Act of 1925[30] gives protection to land acquired specifically for use as allotments, so called 'Statutory Allotment Sites', by the requirement for the need for the approval of Secretary of State in event of sale or disposal. Some allotment sites may not specifically have been acquired for this purpose. Such allotment sites are known as 'temporary' (even if they have been in use for decades) and are not protected by the 1925 legislation.

5.2.8 A statutory allotment is defined as having an area not exceeding 1,000sqm. Allotments are generally for the growing of food crops, as are orchards, which whilst different to allotments, they are also used for food production and thus are considered as part of this category.

Amenity green space

5.2.9 This category is considered to include those spaces open to free and spontaneous use by the public, but neither laid out nor managed for a specific function such as a park, public playing field or recreation ground; nor managed as an accessible natural or semi-natural habitat. These areas of open space will be of varied size, but are likely to share the following characteristics:

- Unlikely to be physically demarcated by walls or fences.
- Predominantly lain down to (mown) grass.
- Unlikely to have specific / identifiable entrance points (unlike parks).
- They may have shrub and tree planting, and occasionally formal planted flower beds.
- They may occasionally have other recreational facilities and fixtures (such as, informal football or ball courts).
- Examples might include both small and larger informal grassed areas in housing estates and general recreation spaces.

5.2.10 They can serve a variety of functions dependent on their size, shape, location, and topography. Some may be used for informal recreation activities, whilst others by themselves, or else collectively, contribute to the overall visual amenity of an area.

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[27] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Edw7/8/36
[28] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo5/12-13/51/contents
[29] 40 Poles equals 1,210 square yards or 1,012sqm. A Pole can also be known as a Rod or Perch.
[30] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo5/15-16/61#:~:text=An%20Act%20to%20facilitate%20the,tenure%20of%20tenants%20of%20allotments

Parks and recreation grounds

5.2.11 This typology brings together the function of 'Parks and Recreation Grounds' and 'Outdoor Sports Space' as identified in the former PPG17 typology and previous 2017 study. The distinction between the two typologies in the study area is blurred, with very few formal gardens and many of the parks and / or outdoor sports spaces identified having multiple functions used for both informal and formal recreation, and not always just sport.

5.2.12 Communities do not generally make a distinction between outdoor sports space and parks and recreation grounds as often these are both found on the same site, particularly if the sport is of a more informal nature, e.g. a football pitch marked out in a park, in contrast to a formal tennis club / golf course. Therefore, for this study, an overarching typology for parks and recreation grounds has been used. This has incorporated the previous separate typology (from the 2017 OSS) of 'outdoor sport'. It should be noted that the vast majority of these outdoor sports facilities have been removed as they were private spaces, such as the aforementioned golf courses and private tennis clubs which are not accessible to the public and require payment for entry. As such, very few sports facilities fall under this category.

5.2.13 When it comes to the provision and future need for sports pitches in the Borough, the Council's most up to date Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) should be consulted as this is a sports-specific assessment of what is needed for various sports across the Borough. The OSS focuses on other and/or multi-functional types of open spaces, rather than single-use sports pitches, so the PPS should be consulted when considering the need for future sports provision in the Borough.

5.2.14 For this study, a 'Park and recreation ground' is defined as 'an open space that is a publicly accessible and is used for a multitude of spontaneous and free informal recreational activities'. They will often be of varied size, but are likely to share some of the following characteristics:

- Predominantly lain down to (mown) grass.
- They may have shrub and tree planting, and occasionally formal planted flower beds.
- Provision for a range of formal pitch and fixed sports;
- Informal recreation and sport;
- Providing attractive walks and cycle routes to work;
- Offering landscape and amenity features;
- Areas of formal planting;
- Providing areas for events;
- Providing habitats for wildlife;
- Dog walking.

5.2.15 This category may include private sports grounds where there is free and open public access i.e., although it is private (e.g., managed by a football club), access is de facto allowed to a field / football pitch for informal recreation as its access points are not locked and informal use is permitted / tolerated.

5.2.16 The Parks and recreation grounds typology comprises the general open space surrounding play areas, sports facilities etc. used for general recreation and includes

those areas laid out as pitches or fixed facilities such as tennis and bowls (although the pitches and fixed facilities themselves have not been separately mapped) which are accessible i.e., they can be walked over / used informally. Pitches or facilities which have no access e.g., they are fenced off and / or only open to members or clubs have not been mapped and are not included within the quantity analysis for Parks and recreation grounds.

5.2.17 The quantity figure for Parks and recreation grounds excludes the provision of children and teenagers play spaces which have been mapped separately and have a separate typology (see below).

5.2.18 The recommended standards for this typology (summarised in section 6.5) are intended to provide sufficient space for sports facilities, pitches and ancillary space e.g., footpaths, landscaping etc. The quantity standard is designed to be flexible so the Council can make the case for what type of open space / facilities are required where there are multiple use opportunities for example, or where one use is needed more than another – this would be justified based on the analysis of particular local circumstances and on a case-by-case basis.

Play space (children and teenagers)

5.2.19 Children and teenagers will play / 'hang out' in almost all publicly accessible 'space' ranging from streets, town centres and squares, parks, playing fields, amenity grassed areas etc. as well as the more recognisable play and youth facility areas such as equipped playgrounds, youth shelters, BMX and skateboard parks and Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs) etc. Clearly many of the other types of open space covered by this Study will therefore provide informal play opportunities.

5.2.20 The study has recorded play spaces for children and teenagers as one category. Within this typology, there are a number of recognised types of play area including Local Areas for Play (LAPs), Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs), Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs)informal ball courts, and 'hang out' areas.

5.2.21 Play spaces for children tend to comprise equipped areas of play that cater for the needs of children up to and around 12 years of age. Play spaces for teenagers tend to comprise informal recreation opportunities for, broadly, the 13 to 16/17 age group, and which might include facilities like skateboard parks, basketballcourts, BMX ramps and 'free access' Multi-use Games Areas (MUGAs). In practice, there will always be some crossover in terms of younger children using equipment aimed for teenagers and vice versa.

5.3 Typologies without standards

5.3.1 It should be noted that for both of the following types of open space, those assessed as part of the OSS can be found in the broader list of sites included in the OSS in Appendix 2.

Churchyards and cemeteries

5.3.2 The Borough has numerous churchyards and cemeteries, and these provide significant aesthetic value and space for quiet contemplation and burial of the dead,

often linked to the promotion of wildlife conservation and biodiversity. They can take the form of formal cemeteries or graveyards around churches. Their importance for informal use, aesthetic value, heritage and contribution towards biodiversity must be acknowledged, and as such, investment in their upkeep, maintenance and quality is an important factor. Churchyards and cemeteries have been identified and mapped where known, however, no quantity or access standard for provision will be set, as it is outside the scope of this study to make recommendations related to requirements for new provision.

Civic space

5.3.3 Civic spaces have been identified and mapped, as it is recognised that these provide important spaces designed for pedestrians, providing seating and a setting for civic artwork. No standards for provision, access or quality have been set as part of this study as no national access standard has been set for civic squares or spaces. This is in line with the archived PPG17 guidance which suggested that it was not realistic for councils to set a quantity standard for hard surface civic spaces and the Council continues to agree with this. Furthermore, it is considered that within Runnymede Borough there are too few civic squares or spaces for it to be worthwhile to create a bespoke access standard. This may be something officers will consider in the future if more civic squares or spaces are created.

5.4 Existing provision of open space

Open space provision across the Borough

5.4.1 The existing provision of open space is based on the desktop mapping and site surveysundertaken by the Council which included:

- analysis of existing GIS data held by the Council from the 2017 study;
- desktop mapping of open space using aerial photography;
- liaison with council officers; and
- Site visits to check accessibility, boundaries, typologies and complete quality audits.

5.4.2 It is understood that new sites will come forward as new developments are constructed in the Borough. Furthermore, there may be sites that are used by the local community that the Council is unaware of, and which have not been recorded. Local communities are encouraged to share this information with the Council for future updates of this assessment.

5.4.3 The following table shows the existing provision of open space in hectares, ha/1,000 population, and numbers of sites across the Borough (as of November 2025). Tables 5.2 and 5.3 show the breakdown (in ha and ha/1,000) by Ward.

Table 5.2 Summary of existing provision of open space across the Borough as recorded in the 2025 OSS.

Typology	Ha	Ha/1,000 people	No. of sites
Accessible Natural Greenspace	829.94	9.42	41

Typology	Ha	Ha/1,000 people	No. of sites
Allotments	11.18	0.13	13
Amenity Green Space	19.60	0.22	59
Parks and recreation grounds	103.20	1.17	35
Play (children and teenagers)	3.82	0.04	44
Churchyards and cemeteries	18.32	0.21	16
Civic space	0.08	N/A (too small)	2
TOTAL	**986.14**	**N/A**	**210**

Open space provision by Ward

Table 5.3 Existing provision of open space (hectares) by Ward

Ward	Accessible Natural Green Space	Allotments	Amenity Green Space	Parks and recreation grounds	Play (children and teenagers)	Churchyards and cemeteries	Civic space
Addlestone North	0.00	0.00	0.89	5.80	0.25	0.67	0.00
Addlestone South	17.02	1.90	0.99	0.60	0.51	0.00	0.00
Chertsey Riverside	97.06	1.63	1.59	11.46	0.25	5.18	0.05
Chertsey St Ann's	29.51	0.51	5.31	7.51	0.34	0.33	0.00
Egham Hythe	11.95	0.18	0.51	5.46	0.52	0.36	0.00
Egham Town	63.61	2.62	2.24	12.31	0.51	0.82	0.03
Englefield Green East	11.46	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Englefield Green West	208.53	0.54	1.26	15.47	0.36	7.84	0.00
Longcross, Lyne and Chertsey South	34.09	0.00	1.56	3.23	0.30	0.78	0.00
New Haw	16.47	1.08	0.03	6.19	0.18	0.00	0.00
Ottershaw	68.20	0.00	0.83	6.48	0.18	0.49	0.00
Thorpe	45.93	0.79	0.22	17.76	0.14	0.67	0.00
Virginia Water	208.64	1.93	0.30	7.74	0.18	1.18	0.00
Woodham and Rowtown	17.47	0.00	3.87	3.19	0.10	0.00	0.00
Total	**829.94**	**11.18**	**19.60**	**103.20**	**3.82**	**18.32**	**0.08**

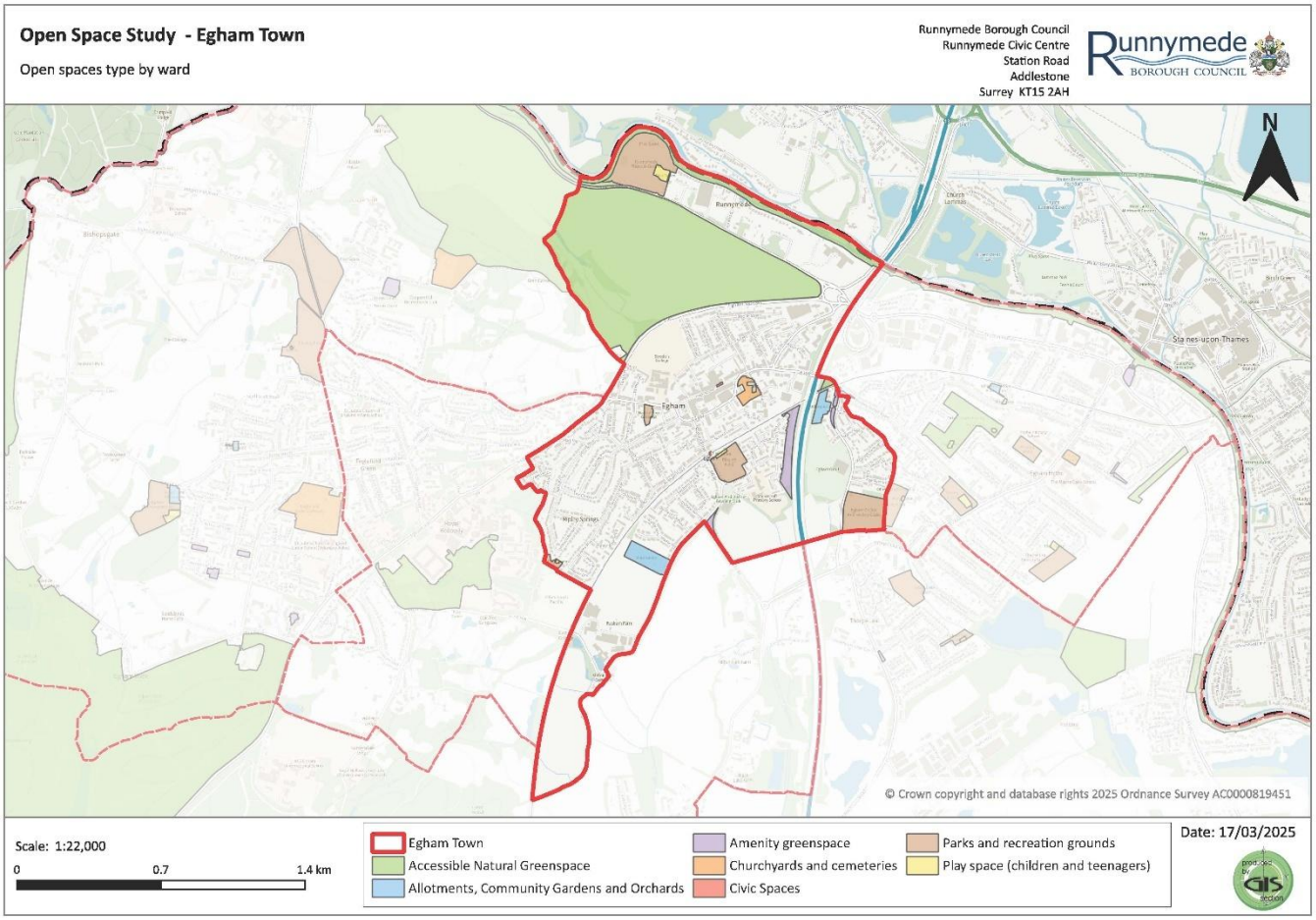
Table 5.4 Existing provision of open space (hectares per 1,000 population) by Ward

Ward (population 2021 Census)	Accessible Natural Green Space	Allotments	Amenity Green Space	Parks and recreation grounds	Play (children and teenagers)	Cemeteries and churchyards	Civic space
Addlestone North (6,678)	0.00	0.00	0.13	0.87	0.04	0.10	0.00
Addlestone South (6,640)	2.64	0.30	0.15	0.09	0.08	0.00	0.00
Chertsey Riverside (6,086)	15.95	0.27	0.26	1.88	0.04	0.85	0.01
Chertsey St Anns (6,825)	4.32	0.07	0.78	1.10	0.05	0.05	0.00
Egham Hythe (7,203)	1.66	0.02	0.07	0.76	0.07	0.04	0.00
Egham Town (7,312)	8.70	0.36	0.31	1.68	0.07	0.11	0.00
Englefield Green East (5,502)	2.08	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Englefield Green West (6,324)	32.97	0.10	0.20	2.45	0.06	1.24	0.00
Longcross, Lyne and Chertsey South (4,014)	8.49	0.00	0.39	0.80	0.07	0.19	0.00
New Haw (7,285)	2.26	0.15	0.00	0.85	0.02	0.00	0.00
Ottershaw (6,590)	10.35	0.00	0.13	0.98	0.03	0.07	0.00
Thorpe (5,806)	7.91	0.14	0.04	3.06	0.02	0.12	0.00
Virginia Water (5,970)	34.95	0.32	0.05	1.30	0.03	0.20	0.00
Woodham and Rowtown (6,044)	2.89	0.00	0.64	0.53	0.02	0.00	0.00
Population total (88,079) ↑ Average provision per ward →	**9.42**	**0.13**	**0.22**	**1.17**	**0.04**	**0.21**	**0.00**

Maps showing provision by Ward

5.4.4 Appendix 23 provides a map for each of the Wards within the study area showing the provision of open space. An example map is shown in Figure 5.1 below.

Figure 5.1 Example map showing existing provision of open space by Ward (see Appendix 23 for a full suite of maps for each Ward), in this case, Egham Town.



6.0 THE DEVELOPMENT OF STANDARDS

6.1 General

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

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

- Quantity standards: These are determined by the analysis of existing quantity, consideration of existing local and national standards and benchmarks and evidence gathered from the local needs assessment. It is important that quantity standards are locally derived and are realistic and achievable. The recommended standards need to be robust, evidence based and deliverable through new development through on-site or off-site provision.
- Accessibility standards: These reflect the needs of all potential users including those with physical or sensory disabilities, young and older people alike. Spaces likely to be used on a frequent and regular basis need to be within easy walking distance of the communities they serve and to have safe access. Other facilities where visits are longer but perhaps less frequent, for example country parks, can be further away. Consideration is also given to existing local or national standards and benchmarks.
- Quality standards: The standards for each form of provision are derived from the quality audit, existing good practice and from the views of the community and those that use the spaces (in this regard, this report will be updated following the Issues and Options Local Plan consultation to summarise local feedback). Again, quality standards should be achievable and reflect the priorities that emerge through consultation.

6.1.3 The standards that have been set are for minimum guidance levels of provision. So, just because a ward may have levels of open space provision exceeding the minimum standards in quantitative terms, this does not always mean that there is a surplus, as other factors need to be taken into consideration, such as the quality of provision and access to open space i.e., the quantity, accessibility and quality standards need to be considered together – they should not be considered in isolation. Furthermore, overprovision in one area may make up for under provision in nearby / adjacent areas, particularly where Ward boundary lines would result in one having a large surplus amount of space, with the neighbouring area having a deficit on its own, but 'on the ground' local residents would use the space in the neighbouring Ward with no consideration of which it falls into.

6.1.4 Quality has been assessed and scored but no standards have been proposed across the board. Instead, a series of recommendations to aid flexibility have been made, given that no two sites are the same. The potential for improvements will vary on a site-by-site basis depending on the size, and characteristics of each site.

6.2 Accessible Natural Greenspace

Table 6.1 Proposed quantity and access standard for Accessible Natural Greenspace

Quantity standard	Access standard[31]
N/A	1km

Existing national and local standards

6.2.1 Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework[32] sets quantity and accessibility standards for greenspace. The framework uses a quantity standard and accessibility standard for natural / semi-natural space which also includes blue space such as rivers / canals / lakes etc. The standards are:

- Quantity – At an area (Borough) wide scale, 3ha of green / blue space per 1,000 population; and a minimum of 1ha of statutory Local Nature Reserves (LNR) / 1,000 population.

- Accessibility – The accessibility standards cover access to the largest natural green / blue spaces of 500ha+ (sub-regional standard) to the smallest 0.5ha spaces (doorstep standard). The complete range of standards are that everyone should live within:
    - 200m of a green / blue space at least 0.5ha in area (Doorstep Standard);
    - 300m of a green / blue space at least 2ha in area (Local Standard);
    - 1km of a green / blue space at least 10ha in area (Neighbourhood Standard);
    - 2km of a green / blue space at least 20ha in area (Wider Neighbourhood Standard);
    - 5km of a green / blue space at least 100ha in area (District Standard); and,
    - 10km of a green / blue space at least 500ha in area (Sub-regional Standard).

6.2.2 However, the Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework also sets out the ambition that 'Everyone has access to a variety of good quality green and blue spaces within fifteen minutes' (1km) walk of their home'. This can be defined as within 200m of a doorstep (0.5ha) or 300m local (2ha) space and 1km of a neighbourhood (10ha) space.

6.2.3 It should be noted that the 'doorstep standard' (200m) is applicable to all accessible greenspace including natural greenspace. For this reason, an accessibility standard for ANG of 200m or the 'doorstep' standard is not recommended as it relates to greenspace in general not just ANG. Accessibility standards are discussed in more detail below.

Quantity Standard

6.2.4 Natural England's 3ha quantity standard is designed for use at a borough / district scale. The audit of existing open space in the Borough has shown that the existing level of provision is 10.34ha / 1,000 population. This significantly exceeds Natural England's 3ha per 1,000 population standard.

6.2.5 Further, with the expected population increase to 108,084, even if no additional ANG were brought forward to account for this population growth this would still give a ratio of 7.68ha per 1,000 population for ANG - still significantly above a standard of 3ha per 1,000 population.

[31] Please note that for the access standards in this and the following sections, this refers to straight line distances.
[32] Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework. Available at: https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/Home.aspx

6.2.6 This indicates that a quantity standard for natural / semi-natural greenspace is not required, even in future growth scenarios (assuming housing delivery does not significantly exceed the Government's minimum housing need figure).

6.2.7 The Council has also looked at provision of ANG against the 3ha standard by ward. However, this should not be used as an indicator of deficit / surplus of ANG as the Natural England quantity standard is appropriate at a borough / district, not at ward scale. Generally, when it comes to open spaces, local people will not 'adhere' to Ward boundaries when choosing which open space to visit and are more likely to simply visit the nearest / the most convenient / appealing to them. Therefore, ward data for ANG is for information only to help identify distribution of ANG across the Borough. The performance of each ward against the 3ha standard is shown in Table 5.4.

6.2.8 The second Natural England quantity standard is for 1ha of Local Nature Reserve (LNR) per 1,000 population. Runnymede has two LNRs, Riverside Walk at Virginia Water (21ha) and part of Chertsey Meads (41ha). These two LNRs do not provide sufficient LNR space to meet Natural England Standards as the Runnymede population exists now or in the future as the current level of provision would only be sufficient for a population of 62,000 people, when was already 88,079 according to the 2021 Census data. However, it is not considered for the Local Plan to determine where or what constitutes candidates for a LNR, rather this would be the role of the GBI Strategy or Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). As such, this standard is not considered further as part of this OSS exercise.

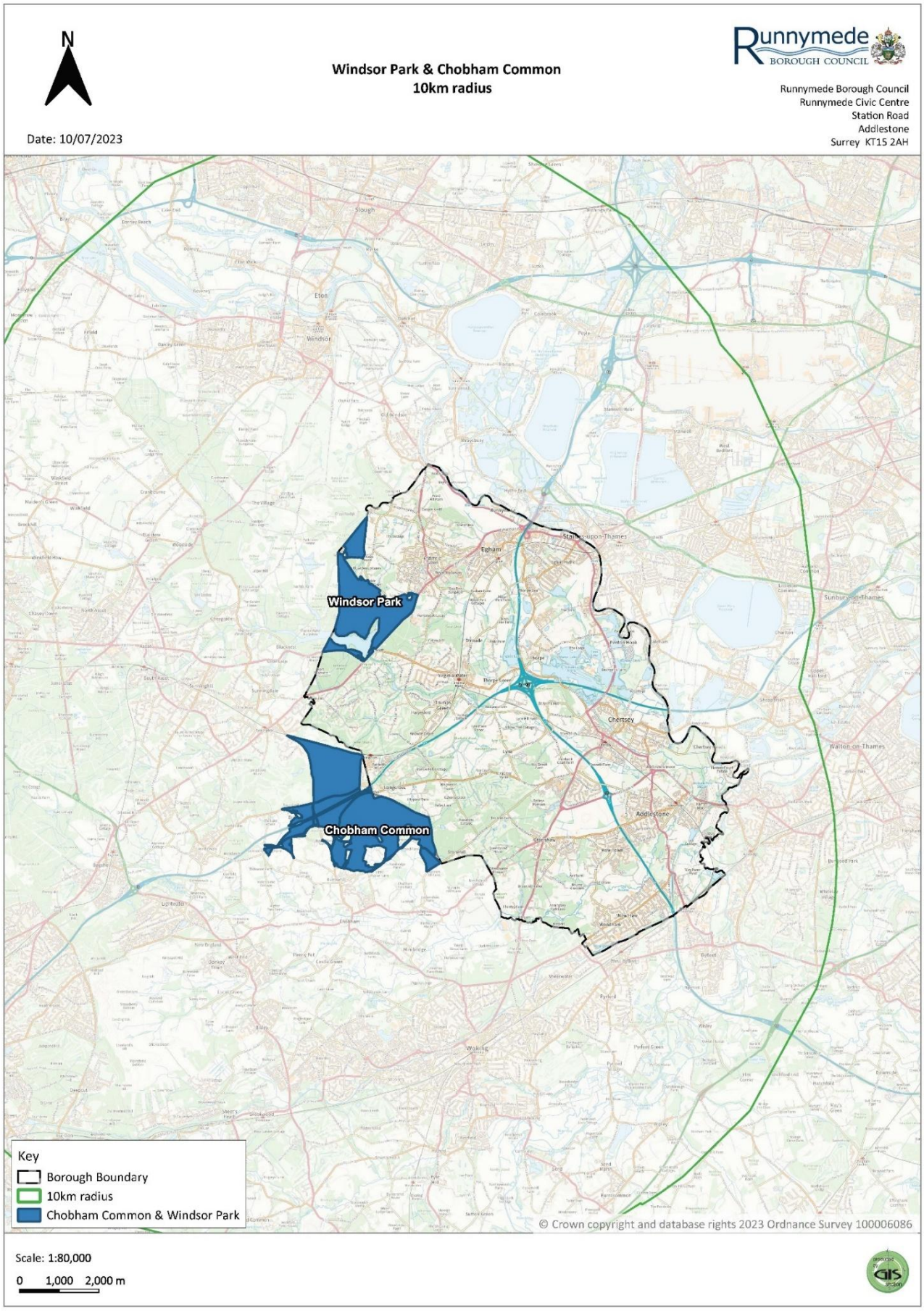
Accessibility

6.2.9 The previous Open Space Study (2017) recommended using all parts of the Natural England accessibility standards, however, it has been found that in terms of larger green / blue space areas:

- The whole of the Borough is within 10km of sites 500ha+ (Windsor Great Park & Chobham Common) and the sub-regional standard is therefore met (see the map below): and
- The District and Wider Neighbourhood accessibility standards for green / blue spaces (20ha-100ha) are relatively well provided for in the southern parts of the Borough, with few gaps between sites. However, this provision becomes more sparce the further north you go in the Borough (see the second map below).

6.2.10 As such, the Sub Regional accessibility standards are not considered relevant for Local Plan policy making. In terms of accessibility to smaller-scale ANG, see the justification section below.

Figure 6.1 A map showing the catchment of the Windsor Great Park & Chobham Common sites in relation to Runnymede Borough. Note that the area of Windsor Great Park shown below only reflects those areas of the Park within Runnymede.



Justification for not having a quantity standard for Accessible Natural Green Space

- The large quantity of existing ANG significantly exceeds the required standards set by Natural England across the Borough;
- Sufficient 'spare' ANG capacity exists to meet potential future growth levels;
- Flexibility in policy is possible - where there are local identified gaps / deficiencies in the provision / access to ANG, this will be considered a suitable form of open space to be delivered as part of new developments on a case-by-case basis;
- Consideration can be given to combining ANG with other green space typologies to provide bigger, more biodiverse spaces, in accordance with the NPPF. This may only be appropriate for sites over a certain size / capacity threshold; and

Justification for a new access standard for Accessible Natural Greenspace

6.2.11 Accessibility standards for larger ANG are largely met and as such no standards are recommended at these scales (Sub-Regional). Neither is the smallest (200m) doorstep standard considered relevant for ANG.

6.2.12 However, at relevant smaller scales of ANG, whilst the Wider Neighbourhood 10ha+ / 1km standard (Neighbourhood) is largely met in the south of the Borough, there are major gaps in the north of the Borough, particularly for Egham and large parts of Englefield Green, as shown in the map below. There are wider gaps across the Borough at the 2ha minimum / 300m distance (Local) standard, but it is unlikely to be possible or realistic to close all the gaps, simply because opportunities for new development at a scale which can provide 2ha of green / blue space on-site will be limited. This is shown in the second map below.

Figure 6.2 A map showing the catchment of sites of 10-20ha ANG sites in relation to Runnymede Borough, which highlights the areas of deficit within the Borough for this type and size of open space.

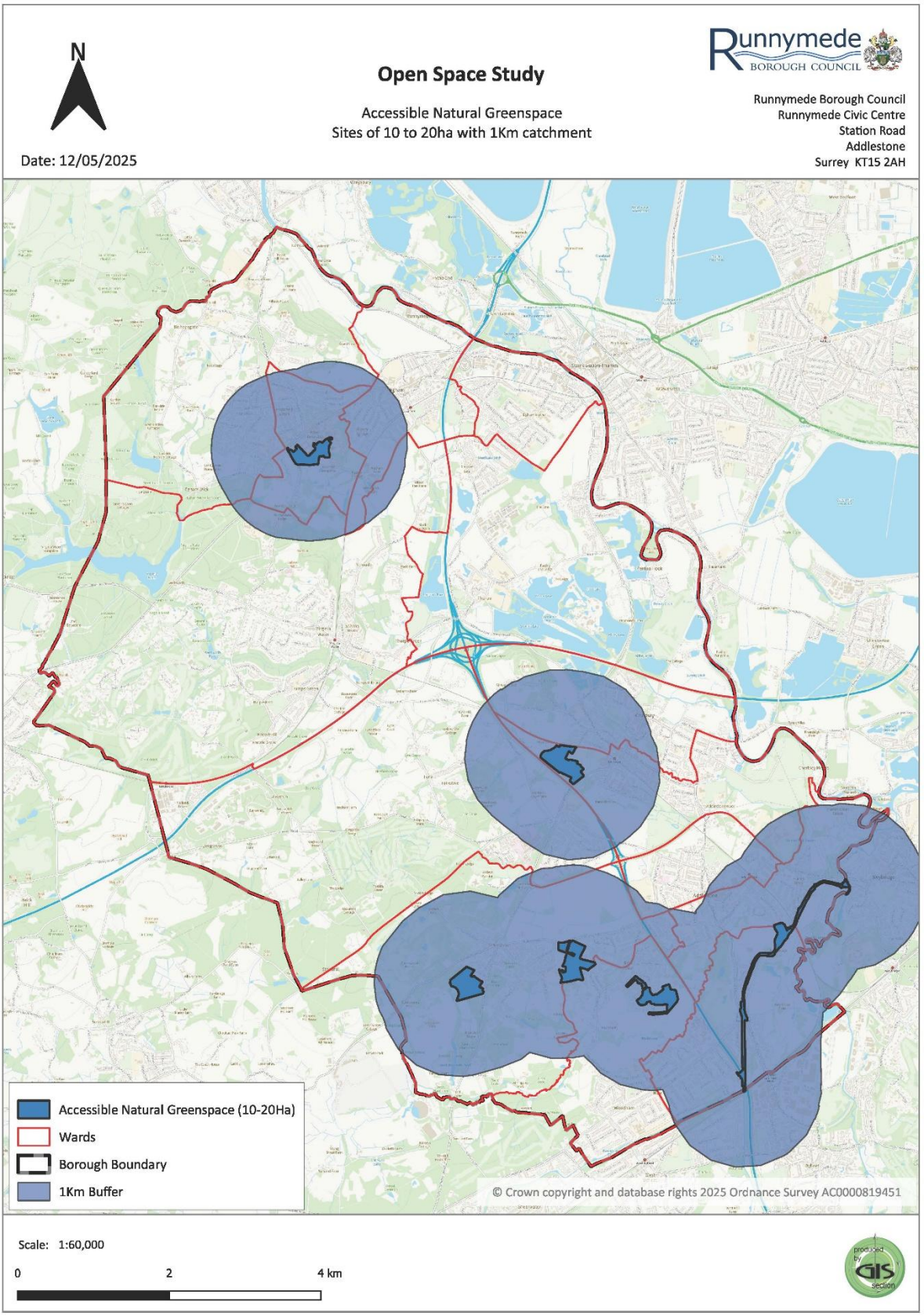
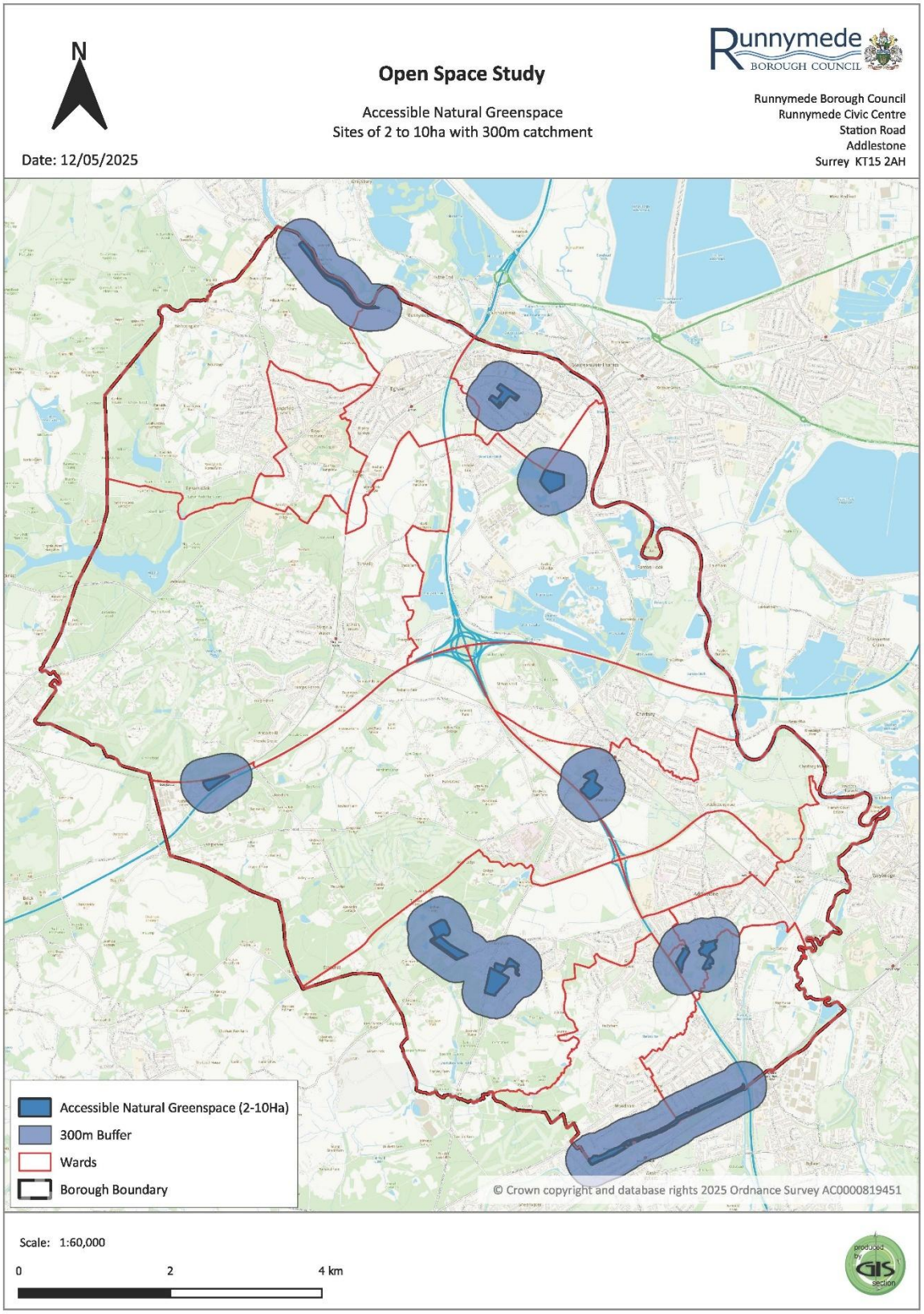


Figure 6.3 A map showing the catchment of sites of 2-10ha ANG sites in relation to Runnymede Borough, which highlights the areas of deficit within the Borough for this type and size of open space.



6.2.13 Further, the Natural England target that everyone lives within a 200m / 300m walk of 0.5ha or 2ha green / blue space AND 1km of 10ha green / blue space is an ambition rather than a necessity. Given this, it is considered that a sequential approach be taken i.e. to focus on those areas which do not meet the Neighbourhood standard first, followed by those areas which do not meet the Local standard. As such, for the purposes of this

OSS, the accessibility standard starting point is a maximum of 1km.

6.2.14 Given the general overprovision of ANG (in overall quantitative terms) in the Borough, it maybe justifiable, where accessibility gaps to the Local standard occur, to negotiate on a site-by-site basis, the type of Open Space provision where other typologies may be more appropriate or desirable to ANG. This is especially the case where it will not be possible to deliver a new or extended space of at least 2ha, but it is possible to provide something smaller, which helps to meet doorstep standards to accessible greenspace rather than natural greenspace. This would be in line with Policy SL26 of the adopted Runnymede 2030 Local Plan.

6.2.15 Chapter 9 of this document considers the robustness of the existing policies and sets out whether any amendments are likely to be required including whether additional flexibility is required between different greenspace typologies.

Justification of a new quality standards for Accessible Natural Greenspace

6.2.16 Whilst it might be difficult to create ANG 'from new' in urban areas, there is scope to alter the way in which many existing spaces are managed to offer a more natural ambience and encourage ecological and habitat diversity. This suggests that the provision of new or improved open space cannot be considered in isolation from other factors including the means of maintaining such space; perceptions of anti-social behaviour; and ease of access from within the surrounding area.

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

6.2.18 Although a new quantity standard is not recommended for this type of open space, the following measures offer ways in which the wildlife value and the Green Infrastructure network in Runnymede could be improved:

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

6.2.19 Protecting, creating, enhancing and retrofitting accessible natural and semi-natural features is a cost-effective and win-win approach to delivering positive outcomes for people and wildlife.

6.3 Allotments, community gardens and orchards

Table 6.2 Summary of quantity and access standard for allotments

Quantity standard	Access standard
0.25 ha/1,000 population	800m

Existing national or local standards

6.3.1 The standards set out by the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG) are generally considered to a reliable source in the absence of any set standards cited by national planning policy or guidance. These are as follows:

- Standard Plot Size = 300 square yards (250sqm)[33]
- Paths = 1.4m wide for disabled access
- Haulage ways = 3m wide
- Plotholders shed = 12sqm
- Greenhouse = 15sqm
- Polytunnel = 30sqm
- Overall, the standards supported by NSALG recommend that there should be 0.25ha/1,000 people

6.3.2 The previous Open Space Study (2017) suggested the standard for this typology should be 0.25 hectares/1,000 people, however Policy SL26 of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan has a bespoke requirement of 0.5ha/1,000 households, which is equivalent to 0.20ha/1,000 people. This is because there is an average of 2.53 people per household in the Borough[34], when which is calculated as follows:

1,000 households / 2.53 people per household = 395.25 households per 1,000 people.
As 1,000 people is equivalent to 395.25 households, and it is 0.5ha per 1,000 households, 395.25 households is the equivalent to 39.525% of the 0.5ha per 1,000 households rate.
Therefore: 39.525% of 0.5ha = 0.197625ha (rounded up to 0.2ha/1,000 people).

Justification of a new quantity standard for allotments

- The existing average level of provision across the study area is 0.13ha/1,000 population. Furthermore 10 of the 14 wards have provision below (and in most cases significantly below) both the suggested standard in the previous OSS and the standard contained in the adopted Local Plan. When considered together, this is considered to be indicative of insufficient provision in the Borough.
- Those responsible for managing local authority allotments highlight that provision is not evenly spread across the Borough.
- The value of allotments (and other open spaces) in providing access to outdoor physical activity and associated benefits for health and wellbeing, both physical and mental is recognised by various agencies and organisations.
- The propensity for higher density new housing with smaller gardens is likely to increase demand for allotments.
- Therefore, a standard of 0.25 ha/1,000 people is proposed for analysing the level of

33 https://thenas.org.uk/uploads/Members%20Area%20Leaflets/Creating%20a%20new%20allotment%20site%20A5.pdf

34 The median household size (2.53 people) is based on the 2021 Census data for Runnymede available here: https://www.surreyi.gov.uk/census-2021/census-2021-household-characteristics/#householdsize.

existing provision and for new provision, above the current standard in the adopted Runnymede 2030 Local Plan.

Justification of a new access standard for allotments

6.3.3 Although the previous OSS did not set an access standard for allotments, having undertaken a literature review as part of the review of the preparation of this study, it became apparent that a number of other LPAs who have allotments as an open space typology require a walking distance of 400-720m as an access standard. The Fields in Trust guidance[35] considered allotments to fall within the 'amenity green space' category, with all homes being within a recommended 200-300m walking distance to this type of space, and everyone having access to the full range of open space types within 1,000m.

6.3.4 Due to the limited number of allotments available in the Borough, and the limited amount of spare land, it is considered that a slightly longer distance to access them would be acceptable, and a walking distance of 800m is therefore recommended. This is also in line with what is considered to be a readily achievable walking distance in the Council's Sustainable Places Paper part 2, which will underpin the next iteration of the Local Plan. It represents an approximately 16–17-minute walk in line with Table 3.1 of this document.

Justification of a new quality standards for allotments

6.3.5 A number of general recommendations are made in relation to quality, which should include the following where the landscape allows this:

- Well-drained soil which is capable of cultivation to a reasonable standard.
- A sunny, open aspect preferably on a southern facing slope.
- Limited overhang from trees and buildings either bounding or within the site.
- Adequate lockable storage facilities, and a good water supply within easy walking distance of individual plots where possible.
- Provision for composting facilities or ability to compost on the allotment.
- Secure boundary fencing.
- Good access within the site both for pedestrians and vehicles where possible.
- Good vehicular access into the site and adequate parking and manoeuvring space where possible.
- Disabled access.
- Notice boards.

6.4 Amenity greenspace

Table 6.3 Summary of quantity and access standard for amenity greenspace

Quantity standard	Access standard
0.60 ha/1,000 population (minimum size 0.15 ha)	480m

Existing national or local standards

6.4.1 The Fields in Trust (previously known as the National Playing Fields Association) Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play report 'Beyond the Six Acre Standard' (2020)[36] proposes a benchmark guideline of 0.6ha/1,000 population of amenity greenspace within a walking distance of 480m. However, this has been superseded by their more recent

[35] https://fieldsintrust.org/content/images/FIT-Standards-2024-Accessible-version.pdf
[36] https://fit.viewcreative.agency/content/files/Guidance-for-Outdoor-Sport-and-Play-England.pdf

'Creating great spaces for all' guidance which suggests that 'All homes should be within 200m-300m walking distance of open space with everyone having access to the full range of open space types with 1,000m'.

6.4.2 The Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework sets out an accessibility target of 200m to accessible greenspace areas of at least 0.5ha in area or 300m to accessible natural greenspace at least 2ha in area. However, amenity greenspace areas in Runnymede are varied in size with some falling below 0.5ha in area and are not therefore suited to the Natural England targets.

Justification of a quantity standard for amenity greenspace

- The existing average level of provision in the Borough is 0.24ha/1,000 population.
- Provision varies by Ward with 12 wards falling well below the average, and the remaining two exceeding it. Overall, the average across all wards is well below the recommended standard.
- Considering the above factors, a minimum standard of 0.60 ha/1,000 people is recommended for analysing existing provision and for new provision of amenity green space, which is slightly above the average existing provision level within the study area and is consistent with the FIT guidance and is used by other comparator LPAs.

6.4.3 Where a development would result in less than 0.15ha of new amenity green space, it will be provided as a single space. For developments that result in more than 0.15ha of new amenity green space, the minimum size considered acceptable is 0.15ha for each individual amenity green space provided. This will avoid a proliferation of small amenity spaces which have no real recreation function.

Justification of an access standard for amenity green space

6.4.4 The access standard for amenity greenspace has been determined by reviewing national guidance and a number of other LPAs OSS methodologies, with the distances ranging between 400-600m, with a number of them using a mid-range figure of 480m, which matches the previous Fields in Trust Guidance and comes within the range of the current Fields in Trust guidance. Therefore, this figure of 480m is deemed appropriate for the Runnymede context.

Justification of a new quality standard for amenity green space

6.4.5 The value of 'amenity green space' must be recognised especially within housing areas where it can provide important local opportunities for play, exercise and visual amenity that are almost immediately accessible. On the other hand, open space can be expensive to maintain, and it is very important to strike the correct balance between having sufficient space to meet the needs of the community for accessible and attractive space and having too much which would be impossible to manage properly and therefore a potential liability and source of nuisance. It is important that amenity green space should be capable of use for at least some forms of public recreational activity.

6.4.6 It is therefore recommended that in addition to the minimum size threshold identified above (0.15ha), that all amenity green space should be subject to landscape design, ensuring the following quality principles:

- Capable of supporting informal recreation such as a kickabout, space for dog walking or space to sit and relax;
- Include high quality planting of native trees and / or shrubs to create landscape

structure and biodiversity value, to maximise natural capital and ecosystem services[37];
- Include paths along main desire lines (lit where appropriate); and,
- Be designed to ensure easy maintenance.

6.5 Parks and recreation grounds

Table 6.4 Summary of quantity and access standard for parks and recreation grounds

Quantity standard	Access standard
N/A	710m

Existing national or local standards

6.5.1 The Fields in Trust (FIT) Standards 'Creating great space for all' (2024), which replaces the Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play report 'Beyond the Six Acre Standard', proposes a benchmark guideline of 0.8ha/1,000 population for parks and gardens, with a walking distance guideline of 200-1,000m depending on the type of open space. The FiT standard was 710m before its latest guidance was published.

6.5.2 The Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework does not consider parks and recreation areas to form accessible natural greenspace (ANG) but does treat them as accessible greenspace with a 200m accessibility standard, the same as small greenspace sites less than 2ha in area. However, given the function of parks and recreation areas and that the majority of these in Runnymede exceed 2ha, the Natural England accessibility standard of 200m is not considered reasonable or realistic.

Justification of a new quantity standard for parks and recreation grounds

- Existing average level of provision of parks and recreation grounds in the Borough is 1.22ha/1,000 population. Three wards in Runnymede have below the recommended level of provision with the remaining 11 wards being over (some quite significantly) the recommended level of provision.
- Although there are some areas that do not meet the standard required, it is determined that it is not justifiable to have a set standard as the current level of provision per 1,000 people is notably above the standard set out the by the FIT guidance. This also enables there to be flexibility to seek additional space as and when it may be required, as opposed to having a blanket requirement.

Justification of a new access standard for parks and recreation grounds

6.5.3 A standard of no more than 710m has been set, in line with the previous Fields in Trust Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play report 'Beyond the Six Acre Standard' (2020), as it is considered that this figure remains fit for purpose.

Justification of a new quality standard for park and recreation grounds

6.5.4 National guidance relevant to this typology is provided in the 'Green Flag' quality standard for parks which sets out benchmark criteria for quality open spaces. For outdoor sports space, Sport England has produced a wealth of useful documents[38] outlining the quality standards for facilities such as playing pitches, changing rooms, MUGAs and tennis

[37] Natural Capital is the world's stocks of natural assets which include geology, soil, air, water and all living things. We derive from natural capital a wide range of services, often called ecosystem services, which make human life possible and include production of food and water, regulation of floods, and non-material benefitssuch as recreational and spiritual benefits.

[38] https://www.sportengland.org/guidance-and-support/facilities-and-planning

courts plus associated ancillary facilities. The Rugby Football Union has provided guidance[39] on the quality and standard of provision of facilities for rugby, and the England and Wales Cricket Board has provided guidance[40] for cricket facilities. It is recommended that applicants utilise this guidance when preparing a planning application for this type of open space provision.

6.5.5 The Council's Playing Pitch Strategy[41] also contains clear sport, area and site-specific recommendations for the Borough's playing pitches (various sports) and a prioritised action plan.

6.6 Play space (children and teenagers)

Table 6.5 Summary of quantity and access standards for play space

Typology	Quantity standard	Access standard
Children and teenagers play space	0.25ha/1,000 population	480m children / 720m teenagers

Existing national and local policies

6.6.1 Current FIT guidance 'Creating great spaces for all' (2024) recommends provision of 0.25ha/1,000 population of equipped / designated play areas, with a walking distance of 100m for Local Areas for Play (LAPs), 400m for Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs) and 1,000m for Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs). The guidance does not specifically cover the needs of most teenagers, although larger facilities such as Multi Use Games Areas (MUGA) or pump tracks should be within 700m walking distance from homes. Their latest guidance suggests that in total, including informal play provision, a minimum of 0.55ha/1,000 people of play space be provided.

6.6.2 Previous FIT guidance (The Six Acre Standard) recommended provision of 0.8ha/1,000 people for children's play of which around 0.3ha should be equipped provision. These standards have been criticised because they are often seen as undeliverable and can result in a proliferation of play areas that can be difficult to maintain, as well as setting unrealistic aspirations in urban areas where insufficient land is available to provide facilities, especially higher density development on brownfield sites. The following minimum size guidelines and buffers are recommended by FIT:

Playable space (LAP type - need not be equipped)

1. Minimum active playable space of 100sqm (need not be equipped and can be distributed within a development as part of playable routes).
2. Buffer zone of 5m minimum depth between the active playable space and the nearest dwelling.

Equipped play area (LEAP type)

1. Minimum activity zone area of 400sqm.
2. Buffer zone of not less than 10m in depth between the edge of the equipped activity zone and the boundary of the nearest dwelling and a minimum of 20m between the equipped activity zone and the habitable room facade of the dwelling.

[39] https://www.englandrugby.com/run/club-management/facilities
[40] https://www.ecb.co.uk/play/club-support/facility-management
[41] https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/planning-policy/planning-policy-evidence-based-documents/8

Teen play including a MUGA (NEAP type)

1. Minimum activity zone area of 1,000sqm divided into two parts; one part containing a range of playground equipment; and the other a hard surface MUGA of at least 465sqm.
2. Buffer zone of not less than 30m in depth between the activity zone and the boundary of the nearest dwelling. A greater distance may be needed where purpose built skateboarding facilities are provided.

6.6.3 The previous OSS (2017) recommended 0.8ha/1,000 people for provision for children and young people within a 15-minute walk. This was split into 0.25ha of designated equipped play space and 0.55ha of informal playing space, though it should be noted that the adopted relevant policy in the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan (SL26) does not make this differentiation.

Justification of a quantity standard for play spaces

- Current average levels of provision of play space for children and teenagers is 0.04ha/1,000 population. This is well below the recommended FIT standard of 0.25ha/1,000 population of equipped / designated play areas, and every ward in the Borough having a level of provision which is well below this (range is between 0 and 0.08ha per 1,000 population).
- It is therefore recommended that existing levels of equipped play facilities (whether this is for younger children or teenagers) are retained with a standard of 0.25ha/1,000 population for analysing existing and required provision. This is in line with current FIT guidance for equipped designated play areas.
- It should be reiterated that these are minimum standards for equipped provision and do not include the need for surrounding playable space as recommended by FIT[42] and Play England[43] i.e., this surrounding playable space will need to be provided in addition to the quantity standard.
- The FIT hierarchy approach (LAPs, LEAPs, NEAPs etc.) directs developers towards providing standardised play rather than thinking about what is needed locally, and opportunities for more creative play design e.g., natural play. As such, a single standard of 0.25ha per 1,000 population is recommended for equipped children's play with the objective of moving away from lots of little play areas with low play value which are not sustainable and providing better designed play areas with high play value.
- To achieve this, it is considered that the minimum size of equipped play provision would be 100sqm. In addition to this, buffer zones (which will take a landscape design approach) will be provided between 5m and 30m, depending on the size of the play area. Proximity to housing requires careful consideration to avoid conflict.

Justification of an access standard for play spaces

- Previously there was no set access standard for children or teenagers play equipment. Having reviewed more recent OSS from other LPAs, it is considered that there would be a benefit to having standards set.
- Children's provision – recommended that this should be set at 480m. Whilst this is not completely in line with current FIT guidance, this standard is considered to acknowledge that younger children need facilities close to home. It also aligns with

[42] Fields in Trust Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play, Beyond the Six Acre Standard – sets out guidance on buffer zones, which should be well designed to enhance play value and landscape setting.
[43] Design for Play: A guide to creating successful play spaces (https://www.playengland.org.uk/designforplay).

some of the standards used by other LPAs for their children's play provision in their OSS.

- Teenager Provision – recommended that this should be 720m. Whilst this is not completely in line with current FIT guidance, this standard is considered appropriate given that teenagers are older and more able to access facilities further from home. It also aligns with some of the standards used by other LPAs for their children's play provision in their OSS.

Justification of a new quality standard for play spaces

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

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

6.6.6 Play England are keen to see a range of play spaces in all urban environments:

A: Door-step spaces close to home
B: Local play spaces – larger areas within easy walking distance
C: Neighbourhood spaces for play – larger spaces within walking distance
D: Destination/family sites – accessible by bicycle, public transport and with car parking.

6.6.7 Moving forward, Play England would like their new Design Guide; '*Design for Play'*[44] to be referenced and added as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in standard configuration. Play England have also developed a '*Quality Assessment Tool'*[45] which can be used to judge the quality of individual play spaces. The Council could consider adopting this as a means of assessing the quality of play spaces in Runnymede. Play England also highlight a potential need for standards for smaller settlements and rural areas where the doorstep, local, neighbourhood, and destination hierarchy is unlikely to be appropriate.

6.6.8 Disabled access is also an important issue highlighted by Play England, and they would like local authorities to adopt the KIDS[46] publication; '*Inclusion by Design'* as an SPD. Their most recent guidance document, '*Better Places to Play through Planning'* gives detailed guidance on setting local standards for access, quantity and quality of playable space and is considered as a background context for the standards suggested in this study.

[44] https://www.playengland.org.uk/designforplay
[45] https://www.playengland.org.uk/qualityinplay
[46] KIDS, is a charity which in its 40 years, has pioneered a number of approaches and programmes for disabled children and young people. KIDS was established in 1970 and in 2003, KIDS merged with KIDSACTIVE, previously known as the Handicapped Adventure Play Association.

6.7 Summary of open space quantity and access standards

Table 6.6 Summary of open space quantity and access standards[47]

Typology	**Quantity standards for existing provision and new provision (ha/1,000 population)**	**Access standard**
Accessible Natural Greenspace	N/A	800m
Allotments	0.25	800m
Amenity Green Space(sites >0.15 ha)	0.6	480m
Parks and recreation grounds	N/A	710m
Play space (children and teenagers)	0.25	480m / 720m
Total for new provision	**1.10ha/1000 population**	

6.7.1 It should be noted that a key issue for Runnymede is limited land availability for new development, given the small size of the Borough. Therefore, it will be a challenge to achieve these standards everywhere, and the enhancement of existing facilities (including improving access to facilities) will be key to meeting unmet demand.

[47] In addition to these open space standards, the PPS sets out the requirements for playing pitches.

7.0 APPLYING LOCAL STANDARDS

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 This part of the report uses the standards recommended in chapter 6 to analyse open space provision across the Borough. This section provides an overview of current provision across the individual Wards, with more detailed maps provided in Appendix 23.

7.1.2 This section also discusses the application of the proposed new standards and their components in respect of 'quantity', 'quality', and 'access'.

Quantity analysis

7.1.3 The quantity of provision is assessed using the recommended quantity standards for each of the typologies where such a standard has been developed. As set out in chapter 6, recommended standards are expressed as hectares of open space per 1,000 population.

7.1.4 The quantity assessment looks at the existing levels of provision, then uses the recommended standard to assess the required level of future provision. From this, a calculation is made of the total supply required, which will either be sufficient or insufficient. Within this section, levels of provision are provided at the Borough and Ward level.

Access analysis

7.1.5 This section of the report provides analysis of the recommended access standards for each typology across the Borough. The maps and analysis in this section are intended to be indicative, providing an overall picture of current provision and highlighting any key issues across the Borough which could be the focus of future enhancements.

Quality analysis

7.1.6 Section 8 of the report makes analysis of each typology across each of the wards in the Borough – it highlights any common themes or issues that have been highlighted through the production of this study; during the site visits carried out by officers, through discussions with the relevant Council departments (including the Open Spaces, Assets and Housing teams), and through responses given through the public consultation. A summary of the quality audit results is provided at the Borough level. The quality audits have been provided in Appendices 7-20, and maps by ward are provided at Appendix 24 which show the ranking of each open space audited (good, average or poor).

7.2 Application of quantity standards

Current supply against the standards

7.2.1 The tables below show the existing supply of open space for each typology at the Borough and ward levels. The supply is calculated using the population figures (Census 2021 data, published in February 2023) for each of the wards and the quantity of open space compared to the open space requirements against the recommended standards.

7.2.2 Positive figures show where the Borough / wards meet or exceed the quantity standard for the open space typology (and how much in excess of the standard they are), and negative figures show where there is a shortfall in supply against the quantity standard, and what

the shortfall is.

7.2.3 Although these figures highlight where there are shortfalls in supply against the quantity standards and therefore where new provision should be sought, new provision may not be achievable (unless, for example, it is delivered through new development). These figures can help inform decisions about the form of new open spaces and improvements to existing open spaces, rather than it being imperative that every ward must achieve a '+' number. This is particularly true given that in reality, people do not choose to visit open spaces only within their ward boundaries. Often where provision of a particular open space typology is low in one ward, this may be partly compensated for by higher provision in surrounding wards which may be easily accessible by residents who live nearby.

Table 7.1 Open space supply at the Borough level in 2025 against the quantity standards.

Typology	Existing (ha)	Existing (ha/1,000 people)	Standard/ Required Provision (ha/1,000 people)	Required Provision (ha) (pop. 88,079)	Existing Supply (ha) against standard	supply (ha/1,000 people) against standard
Accessible Natural Greenspace	829.94	9.42	N/A	176.15	+653.79	N/A
Allotments	11.18	0.13	0.25	22.02	-10.84	-0.12
Amenity greenspace	19.60	0.22	0.60	52.85	-33.25	-0.38
Parks and recreation grounds	103.20	1.17	N/A	70.46	+32.74	N/A
Play (children and teenagers)	3.82	0.04	0.25	22.02	-18.40	-0.21

Table 7.2 Open space requirement (ha) at Ward level based on the quantity standards[48] (there may be some slight difference with the figures in Table 7.1 due to rounding) against the current population according to the 2021 Census data.

Ward (Census 2021 population)	Accessible Natural Greenspace	Allotments	Amenity Greenspace	Parks and Recreation Grounds	Play (children and teenagers)
Addlestone North (6,678)	N/A	1.40	4.01	5.34	1.67
Addlestone South (6,440)	N/A	1.35	3.86	5.15	1.61
Chertsey Riverside (6,086)	N/A	1.28	3.65	4.87	1.52
Chertsey St Anns (6,825)	N/A	1.43	4.10	5.46	1.71
Egham Hythe (7,203)	N/A	1.51	4.32	5.76	1.80
Egham Town (7,312)	N/A	1.54	4.39	5.85	1.83
Englefield Green East (5,502)	N/A	1.16	3.30	4.40	1.38
Englefield Green West (6,324)	N/A	1.33	3.79	5.06	1.58
Longcross, Lyne and	N/A	0.84	2.41	3.21	1.00

[48] Please note that table 7.2 refers to the theoretical level of need there 'should' be in each ward if they were to have the 'correct' level of open space in line with the 2021 population figures. It does not refer to the actual amount of space that may be present. For example, there are currently no allotments in the Longcross, Lyne and Chertsey South ward, however, there 'should' be at least 0.84ha based on the quantity standards and the current population level, to meet the quantity standards.

Ward (Census 2021 population)	Accessible Natural Greenspace	Allotments	Amenity Greenspace	Parks and Recreation Grounds	Play (children and teenagers)
Chertsey South (4,014)					
New Haw (7,285)	N/A	1.53	4.37	5.83	1.82
Ottershaw (6,590)	N/A	1.38	3.95	5.27	1.65
Thorpe (5,806)	N/A	1.22	3.48	4.64	1.45
Virginia Water (5,970)	N/A	1.25	3.58	4.78	1.49
Woodham and Rowtown (6,044)	N/A	1.27	3.63	4.84	1.51
Population total (80,079) Total requirement	**N/A**	**18.50**	**52.85**	**70.46**	**22.02**

Table 7.3 Open space supply (extant ha) at Ward level as set out in Table 7.1 above against the requirements to meet the need of the 2021 population (by Ward) set by the quantity standards, with the level of need shown in Table 7.2 above.

Ward	Accessible Natural Greenspace	Allotments	Amenity Greenspace	Parks and Recreation Grounds	Play (children and teenagers)
Addlestone North	N/A	-1.40	-3.12	+0.46	-1.42
Addlestone South	N/A	+0.55	-2.87	-4.55	-1.10
Chertsey Riverside	N/A	+0.35	-2.06	+6.59	-1.27
Chertsey St Anns	N/A	-0.92	+1.22	+2.05	-1.37
Egham Hythe	N/A	-1.33	-3.81	-0.30	-1.28
Egham Town	N/A	+1.08	-2.15	+6.46	-1.32
Englefield Green East	N/A	-1.16	-3.30	-4.40	-1.38
Englefield Green West	N/A	-0.79	-2.53	+10.41	-1.22
Longcross, Lyne and Chertsey South	N/A	-0.84	-0.85	+0.02	-0.70
New Haw	N/A	-0.45	-4.34	+0.36	-1.64
Ottershaw	N/A	-1.38	-3.12	+1.21	-1.47
Thorpe	N/A	-0.43	-3.26	+13.12	-1.31
Virginia Water	N/A	+0.68	-3.28	+2.96	-1.31
Woodham and Rowtown	N/A	-1.27	+0.24	-1.65	-1.41
Total	**N/A**	-7.32	-33.46	+32.74	-18.20

7.2.4 Table 7.3 shows that open space provision varies across Wards and typologies, with some meeting the standards and some falling below e.g., for allotments and child and teenager play space there are shortfalls in provision in every Ward. This will be an important consideration when determining the need for on-site open space as part of new developments coming forward.

7.2.5 It is important that the supply figures are not considered in isolation, as the access and quality results are equally important. Just because a typology is in sufficient or excess supply, this does not mean that some of the open space is 'surplus' to requirements, as the access and quantity standards also need to be considered alongside the quantity requirements. There may also be other factors such as a site's nature conservation, historic or cultural value, or its contribution to the Green Infrastructure network which mean it should be protected (see Section 8.2 of this report).

Future need for open space

7.2.6 This section of the report considers the potential implications for open space provision from the predicted population growth as set out at section 2.2.4 above, which expects a total population of the Borough that is projected to be 108,084 people, up from 88,079 in the 2021 Census. It should be noted that at the time of publishing this document, the Council has not set out a preferred housing strategy for its next Local Plan or determined a housing requirement for the next 15-year Local Plan period (which is likely to be from 2028 to 2043). This is due to be set out in the Council's 'Preferred Options' document, which will be consulted on midway through Plan preparation. The Standard Method (as set out in Government guidance) does not set a housing requirement but is an indicator of housing need that Councils utilise as a starting point for determining targets in their Local Plans.

7.2.7 The figures for open space requirements are for indicative purposes - the calculations assume that all new open spaces will be provided on site (which will not be the reality in some cases, as consideration of the individual development size and proximity to existing open spaces needs to be taken into account (see Section 8)). It only considers the needs of future population growth generated by new development and does not seek to meet existing deficits / surpluses.

Table 7.4 Open space requirements resulting from potential housing growth (this does not take account of any shortfalls / surpluses in existing provision)

	HEDNA predicted population increase (to 2043)	**Open space requirements against quantity standards (see Table 6.6)**
Runnymede Borough	20,005	Accessible Natural Greenspace: N/A Allotments (0.25ha/1,000 people): 5.00ha Amenity Greenspace (0.6ha/1,000 people): 12ha Parks and recreation grounds: N/A Play (children and teenagers) (0.25ha/1,000 people): 5ha

7.2.8 More detail around the application of the open space standards on individual development sites is provided in Section 8.5 of this report. The efficacy of standards will depend heavily on the way that they are applied. Here are some important and interrelated principles:

- An inability to provide sufficient quantity might be at least partly compensated for through better quality and access. Investment in the quality and robustness of open space can also often improve the 'carrying capacity'[49] of open spaces and therefore offset some shortcomings in quantitative provision.
- New and improved open space should be designed and provided to benefit both people and the local / wider environment. Wherever possible, it should heighten residents' overall appreciation, understanding of, and respect for that environment.
- Standards will need to be applied to a variety of circumstances, and flexibility of interpretation is the key to success. A pragmatic approach will be essential given the range of circumstances in which they will be used.
- The standards that have been set are for minimum guidance levels of provision. So, just because some wards may enjoy levels of provision exceeding minimum standards does not mean these areas are necessarily surplus to requirement, as such provision may be well used, and it may also be used by those from surrounding areas outside

[49] Improvements in the quality of open spaces can improve the capacity of that open space to accommodate more people.

the Borough where provision may not be as high, or this may also apply in certain localised parts of the Borough. It is also important to note that the quantity, accessibility and quality standards need to be considered together – they should not be considered in isolation. For example, even if there may be sufficient supply of a particular open space typology against the quantity standard, there may still be gaps in access, or the existing provision may be poor quality / not fit for purpose – and therefore there would still be shortfalls against the standards.

7.3 Application of quality standards

Quality of open space – audit methodology

7.3.1 The quality audits were undertaken using a standardised methodology and consistent approach. However, audits of this nature can only ever be a snapshot in time and their main purpose is to provide a consistent and objective assessment of a site's existing quality rather than a full asset audit. Site visits were undertaken in August-October 2024, with additional feedback provided by the Council's Open Spaces Team and Biodiversity Officer in February 2025.

7.3.2 The quality audits were designed to focus on the key, publicly accessible open spaces. It was not possible to survey all sites due to access restrictions, e.g., private sports grounds. Other sites were also excluded due to restrictions on access, and time available. This has meant that the quality audits have focused on the key open spaces within the resources available i.e., parks and recreation grounds, large amenity greenspaces, children's and teenagers play spaces and accessible natural greenspaces.

7.3.3 Sites were visited and an assessment of the quality of the open space was undertaken using the following criteria, which are based on the Green Flag Award criteria, but adjusted for the Runnymede context:

1. Accessibility
2. Cleanliness
3. Facilities available
4. Safety
5. Overall quality

7.3.4 For each of the criteria a score of between 1 -5 is given, where 1 is the worst and 5 is the best. Sub criteria helped determine which score was appropriate for each site based on certain observed factors. The criteria and sub criteria can be viewed at Appendix 4. The site was then given an overall score out of 25, from which sites are grouped into three categories (in line with the categories in the 2017 study for consistency):

- 'Good' (those sites with a score of between 20 and 25);
- 'Average' (those sites with a score of between 15 and 19) or;
- 'Poor' (those sites with a score of between 0 and 14).

Quality of open space – audit findings

7.3.5 The quality audit was undertaken at 210 open spaces across the Borough, with the details of the quality audits contained in Appendices 7-21. For each of the Wards within the Borough, a map showing the results of the quality audit has been produced, showing the sites which scored good, average or poor quality (see Appendix 24).

7.3.6 Figure 7.13 and Table 7.5 below provides an overview of the quality audit results across

the Borough. Findings show that most open spaces were assessed as being of 'Good' (39 spaces – 18.57%) or 'Average' (121 spaces – 57.62%) quality.

Table 7.5 Overview of quality audit scores across the Borough.

Typology	Quality audit grade			
	A (Good) (20-25)	B (Average) (15-19)	C (Poor) (0-14)	Total
Accessible Natural Greenspace	5	19	17	41
Allotments	5	5	3	13
Amenity greenspace	8	34	17	59
Parks and recreation grounds	5	25	5	35
Play space (children and teenagers)	5	31	8	44
Churchyards and cemeteries	10	6	0	16
Civic spaces	1	1	0	2
Total	**39**	**121**	**50**	**210**

7.3.7 In the previous (2017) OSS the breakdown of quality was as follows:

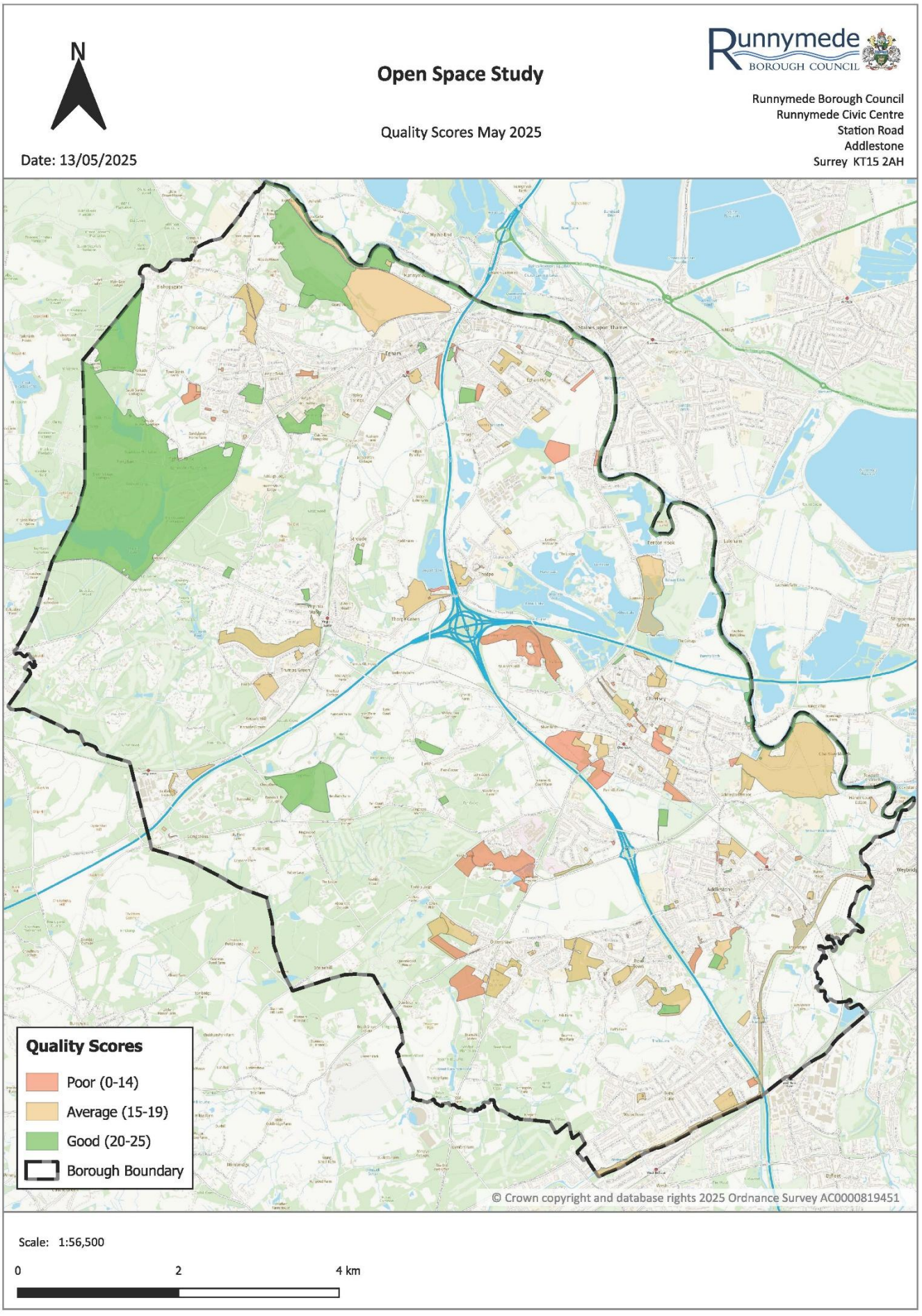
- 'Poor': 43 (21.28%)
- 'Average': 75 (37.12%)
- 'Good': 84 (41.58%)

7.3.8 In the 2025 OSS, the breakdown is as follows:

- 'Poor': 50 (23.81%)
- 'Average': 121 (57.62%)
- 'Good': 39 (18.57%)

7.3.9 This would initially suggest that quality has improved over time. However, it is not possible to draw a direct comparison between these findings due to the different scoring methodology adopted as well as a wholly different selection of sites being assess between the two studies.

Figure 7.1 Overview of existing open space quality scores.



8.0 Analysis and Findings

8.0.1 This section is dedicated to a more detailed analysis of the site audits which have been presented at ward level. Through this approach the following will be able to be identified:

- The number of Open Space sites within each ward
- The types of sites in each ward
- The quality of sites in each ward.

8.0.2 Alongside the above, an assessment has been made about the dispersal of the sites across the Borough, and this has helped identify geographical areas which may need improvement or be areas where additional site types may be required, in terms of either or both quantum and quality.

8.1 Addlestone North

8.1.1 In Addlestone North there were 12 sites identified, spanning four of the classifications (Table 1) with no Accessible Natural Greenspaces, civic spaces or allotments within the ward. The general quality is average, with three sites (25%) falling in the good category, four (33%) within the average score range and five (42%) being poor. This suggests that the residents of Addlestone North have access to some reasonably good quality spaces, but there are a notable number with room for improvement.

8.1.2 However, there were five spaces which could benefit from improvement as they scored relatively low (8, 10, 13 and two at 14). These sites all scored relatively low marks for cleanliness and the facilities present, so maintenance / facility provision and cleaning appear to be a priority for these sites. This particularly applied to Aviator Park Recreation Ground play area (site number 195) which only scored a one for cleanliness.

Table 8.1 - Addlestone North Open Space typologies

Typology	**Quality audit grade**			
	A (Good)	**B (Average)**	**C (Poor)**	**Total**
Accessible Natural Greenspace	0	0	0	0
Allotments	0	0	0	0
Amenity greenspace	1	1	3	5
Parks and recreation grounds	1	0	1	2
Play space (children and teenagers)	0	2	1	3
Churchyards and cemeteries	1	1	0	2
Civic spaces	0	0	0	0
Total	**3**	**4**	**5**	**12**

8.2 Addlestone South

8.2.1 There were 18 sites assessed within Addlestone South. Six (33%) of these sites were of a poor standard, with 11 (61%) being average and the remaining one (6%) being good.

8.2.2 There are five Accessible Natural Greenspaces in the Ward, scoring between nine and 17. The lowest scores of nine were for sites 71 (St. Augustine's Green Open Space) and 77 (Sayes Wood) with the best score of 17 going to 107 Hamm Court. The other two sites scored 11 and 15, so on balance the natural greenspaces in Addlestone South are of a lower standard. They could generally benefit from improvements to cleanliness and safety as these were the areas where they (overall) scored the lowest.

8.2.3 The ward contains two allotments. One (site 253, Sayes Court Allotments) scored highly, achieving a total of 23/25, with only some minor issues in relation to facilities and safety identified. The other (site 291, Wren Crescent Allotments) scored 15, getting average scores across all categories. This latter site could therefore possibly do with a number of improvements but is not currently considered to be in a bad state.

8.2.4 Of the four amenity greenspaces in Addlestone South one was poor (site 315 Surrey Towers Open Space), two were average (scoring 15 and 16) with the other three being average with the highest (getting 19/25) being site 108 Kingthorpe Gardens. These sites all scored reasonably well on accessibility as they were considered easy to find and navigate by residents. The two areas where the sites scored lower were safety and facilities. Additional planting, seating and refuse facilities would help to enhance these sites.

8.2.5 The only Park and Recreation Ground within Addlestone South is Hamm Moor Playing Field (site number 75) which was assessed as ‘Average’ having scored 15 out of a possible 25. Alongside this one park there are six play areas of children and teenagers, two of which were ‘poor’ scoring 11 and 12. The remaining four scored 16-18 points showing that the play spaces in Addlestone South are generally of an poor to average quality, with cleanliness and facilities being the main areas for improvement.

Table 8.2 - Addlestone South Open Spaces

Typology	Quality audit grade			
	A (Good)	B (Average)	C (Poor)	Total
Accessible Natural Greenspace	0	2	3	5
Allotments	1	1	0	2
Amenity greenspace	0	3	1	4
Parks and recreation grounds	0	1	0	1
Play space (children and teenagers)	0	4	2	6
Churchyards and cemeteries	0	0	0	0
Civic spaces	0	0	0	0

Typology	Quality audit grade			
	A (Good)	B (Average)	C (Poor)	Total
Total	**1**	**11**	**6**	**18**

8.3 Chertsey Riverside

8.3.1 There were 18 sites assessed within the Chertsey Riverside ward with five being assessed as 'Poor' across three different categories of site. Four of these did not score above two against of the five criteria with the last one achieving a relatively highs core of 14/25. The site assessments found that the sites lacked maintenance, facilities, lighting and easy access with the overgrowth of plants and lack of lighting.

8.3.2 The only allotment in Chertsey Riverside (site number 101 - Barrsbrook Farm Allotments) scored as 'average' (18/25) as it did well against the cleanliness and facilities criteria due to the evident care and maintenance. It also had a range of facilities including some that were communal which were not evident in some other allotments assessed across the Borough. The lowest scores came in the accessibility and safety criteria (three for both) which was largely due to its secluded single access point.

8.3.3 There were two Churchyards and cemeteries assessed - Chertsey Cemetery (site number 83) and Addlestone Cemetery (site number 67). Chertsey Cemetery was overall considered to be an average site scoring 18/25, due to a lower than anticipated number of facilities such as bins, benches, seating and standpipes (to enable flowers etc. to be watered). There were also issues over safety with neither site having obvious CCTV or natural surveillance. Addlestone Cemetery was deemed to generally be a good site scoring 21/25.

8.3.4 There was one Civic Space, Phoenix Plaza (site number 143), that was assessed as 'average' (scoring 15/25). This was largely due to its high accessibility score as it can be accessed by walking, cycling and public transport this is partly due to its proximity to the town centre. The remaining criteria scored lower as there were perceived safety issues, a lack of facilities and significant amounts of litter, compounded by a lack of maintenance.

Table 8.3 - Chertsey Riverside Open Spaces

Typology	Quality audit grade			
	A (Good)	B (Average)	C (Poor)	Total
Accessible Natural Greenspace	0	1	2	3
Allotments	0	1	0	1
Amenity greenspace	0	3	2	5
Parks and recreation grounds	0	2	1	3
Play space (children and teenagers)	1	2	0	3
Churchyards and cemeteries	1	1	0	2
Civic spaces	0	1	0	1
Total	**2**	**11**	**5**	**18**

8.4 Chertsey St Ann's

8.4.1 The sites assessed within the Chertsey St Ann's ward were generally of a decent standard with only seven of the 27 sites assessed falling within the 'Poor' category. It is notable that a large number of amenity greenspaces are located within Chertsey St Ann's, accounting for 13 of the 27 sites.

8.4.2 There was one allotment in the ward, St Ann's Allotment (site number 49), which scored very highly with 24 points out of 25. The only criteria that did not achieve maximum points was accessibility, which was due to the single access point and proximity to a busy road.

8.4.3 The five play spaces were a mix of poor (one site) average (three sites) and good (one site). This shows that there is a variety in terms of the quality of children's play spaces across this ward, with some of them in need of improving.

8.4.4 There was only one churchyard in the ward, St Peter's Church (site number 275) which was assessed as being 'average' with a score of 18 out of 25. The assessment found that the site was reasonably well maintained with adequate facilities provided both on-site and within the church itself. It was also found to be a largely safe site due in part to its location having plentiful natural surveillance.

Table 8.4 - Chertsey St Anns' Open Spaces

Typology	Quality audit grade			
	A (Good)	B (Average)	C (Poor)	Total
Accessible Natural Greenspace	0	1	3	4
Allotments	1	0	0	1
Amenity greenspace	1	9	3	13
Parks and recreation grounds	0	3	0	3
Play space (children and teenagers)	1	3	1	5
Churchyards and cemeteries	0	1	0	1
Civic spaces	0	0	0	0
Total	**3**	**17**	**7**	**27**

8.5 Egham Hythe

8.5.1 There were 16 sites assessed within Egham Hythe with only one (6.25%) being assessed as being of a good standard with 11 (68.75%) being average and four (25%) as poor. There is a relatively even spread of scores and overall sites in this ward can be considered to be of an average quality.

8.5.2 There are only two amenity greenspaces within Egham Hythe, both being assessed as 'average'. The Hythe open space (site 131), which scored reasonably well for accessibility and safety, although there were some issues

with facility provision. The other is Wapshott Road which scored 18/25, with the main issue for both of these sites being a lack of facilities available. The fact that there are only two sites within this classification is unusual though, as amenity greenspaces is the largest single classification in terms of the number of sites assessed in many wards.

8.5.3 The six play spaces were average except for one which was poor, which scored 11 (site 262 Charta Road Recreation Ground Play Area). The other five scored 15 to 17 (the latter being site 206 Pooley Green Recreation Ground Play Area). As five of the six scored 15 to 17, Charta Road Recreation Ground Play Area is the outlier due to it needing to be improved across a number of criteria including accessibility, cleanliness and facilities.

Table 8.5 - Egham Hythe Open Spaces

Typology	Quality audit grade			
	A (Good)	B (Average)	C (Poor)	Total
Accessible Natural Greenspace	0	1	1	2
Allotments	0	0	1	1
Amenity greenspace	0	2	0	2
Parks and recreation grounds	0	3	1	4
Play space (children and teenagers)	0	5	1	6
Churchyards and cemeteries	1	0	0	1
Civic spaces	0	0	0	0
Total	**1**	**11**	**4**	**16**

8.6 Egham Town

8.6.1 There were 17 sites assessed within the Egham Town ward. There were four (23.5%) sites which fell within the poor classification, seven (41%) were scored as average and six (35.5%) scored as good. This means that a reasonably high proportion of the sites were of a high standard.

8.6.2 There were two areas of Accessible Natural Greenspace; Runnymede & Coopers Hill East (site number 33). This scored 17 out of 25 with all criteria scoring well with the exception of facilities which could be improved. The other was the worst performing space in the ward, being rated poor and only achieving a score of 8/25. This was the Land opposite Vicarage Crescent (site 332), and it scored no more than two against any of the criteria.

8.6.3 There were two allotments assessed: Boshers Allotments (site number 47) and Vicarage Road Allotments (site number 226). These sites scored 23 and 20 points respectively with both sites scoring high marks for cleanliness with there being clear evidence of care and ongoing maintenance, however, there was a lack of communal facilities observed at Vicarage Road Allotments. This, together with a lack of natural surveillance, reduced the score for these two criteria, each scoring three out of a possible five. There were fewer issues observed at Boshers Allotments although there were some concerns about

the level of communal facilities and access in the form of disabled parking and pedestrian access.

8.6.4 There were three amenity greenspaces within the ward Manorcrofts Open Space (site 15), Manorcrofts Road Open Space (site 326) and Land at Vicarage Road (site 331). There were all classed as 'poor', however the latter two scored higher at 14/25. The main issues were identified were overgrowth, littering and accessibility. Manorcrofts Open Space scored poorly primarily due to cleanliness and safety issues.

8.6.5 The five parks and play spaces are of an average to good standard scoring 15-23 points with good levels of maintenance, cleanliness and modern equipment. The one site with a key area for improvement was site 85 Spring Rise recreation ground which need improvements in terms of its facilities.

8.6.6 The second of the Borough's two civic spaces (at site 133 Fountain Outside Egham Tesco) is in this ward. It was given good scores across the board but particularly for its safety and accessibility, getting a total of 22/25.

Table 8.6 - Egham Town Open Spaces

Typology	Quality audit grade			
	A (Good)	B (Average)	C (Poor)	Total
Accessible Natural Greenspace	0	1	1	2
Allotments	2	0	0	2
Amenity greenspace	0	0	3	3
Parks and recreation grounds	2	3	0	5
Play space (children and teenagers)	0	3	0	3
Churchyards and cemeteries	1	0	0	1
Civic spaces	1	0	0	1
Total	**6**	**7**	**4**	**17**

8.7 Englefield Green East

8.7.1 Two sites were assessed within the Englefield Green East ward, both of which are Accessible Natural Greenspaces. The first one (site 56 Royal Holloway University Fields) scored as 'good' (22/25), with its only real area of weakness being accessibility due to a lack of car parking near the site. The other was site 310 Arboretum at Royal Holloway University of London. This scored 10 (poor), largely due to it being hard to find and thus access, as well as safety concerns due to its highly enclosed nature and lack of sight lines within it.

Table 8.7 - Englefield Green East Open Spaces

Typology	Quality audit grade			
	A (Good)	B (Average)	C (Poor)	Total
Accessible Natural Greenspace	1	0	1	2
Allotments	0	0	0	0

Typology	Quality audit grade			
	A (Good)	B (Average)	C (Poor)	Total
Amenity greenspace	0	0	0	0
Parks and recreation grounds	0	0	0	0
Play space (children and teenagers)	0	0	0	0
Churchyards and cemeteries	0	0	0	0
Civic spaces	0	0	0	0
Total	**1**	**0**	**1**	**2**

8.8 Englefield Green West

8.8.1 There were 16 sites assessed within the Englefield Green West ward, and of these five (31.25%) were assessed as being good, six (37.5%) were assessed as being average and five (31.25%) were poor. Overall the quality spread in the ward is relatively even, and therefore overall the sites in the ward can be seen as being 'average' across all of them.

8.8.2 There were two accessible natural greenspaces one (site 34, Runnymede & Coopers Hill West) considered to be good quality, scoring 20/25 with the other (42 - Riverbank at Runnymede) being average, scoring 19/25. There were two allotments assessed: Kings Lane Allotments (site 249 (12/25) which was poor) and Bond Street Allotments (site 65 (16/25) which was average). Kings Lane Allotments scored more highly although there were some concerns about the provision of communal facilities. Bond Street Allotments had significant concerns over accessibility and the provision of facilities.

8.8.3 The Parks and recreation grounds and play spaces were a mix of standards. In total there were five of these sites assessed, with two being good, one average (site 84, Englefield Green) and two being poor. These latter sites require improvements in a number of categories across the criteria.

Table 8.8 - Englefield Green West Open Spaces

Typology	Quality audit grade			
	A (Good)	B (Average)	C (Poor)	Total
Accessible Natural Greenspace	1	1	0	2
Allotments	0	1	1	2
Amenity greenspace	0	3	2	5
Parks and recreation grounds	0	1	1	2
Play space (children and teenagers)	2	0	1	3
Churchyards and cemeteries	2	0	0	2
Civic spaces	0	0	0	0
Total	**5**	**6**	**5**	**16**

8.9 Longcross, Lyne and Chertsey South

8.9.1 There were 12 sites assessed within the Longcross, Lyne and Chertsey South ward, four (33%) of which were assessed as 'Good', seven (58%) scored as 'Average' and one (site 292 - Little Green Lane open space (9%)) classified as 'Poor'.

8.9.2 The three Accessible Natural Greenspace sites all scored well for accessibility, cleanliness and facilities. There were observed safety concerns at Firefly Road woodland (site 305) due to issues associated with visibility and lighting levels. Overall, two of them were average and one was good.

8.9.3 The four parks and play spaces within Longcross, Lyne and Chertsey South were all higher quality sites (three out of the four were classed as good) with the lowest score being 16 and the highest 23. Both Lyne Recreation Ground (site number 62) and Lyne recreation Ground Play Area (site number 209) awarded 22 and 23 out of 25 respectively, making them amongst some of the best sites in Runnymede.

8.9.4 The amenity greenspaces in this ward could benefit from investment or improvements three of the four were average quality with the aforementioned Little Green Lane open space being poor scoring just 14/25. The provision of facilities at these sites were of particular concern with issues due to a lack of benches and bins being identified in some of the assessments.

Table 8.9 - Longcross, Lyne and Chertsey South Open Spaces

Typology	Quality audit grade			
	A (Good)	B (Average)	C (Poor)	Total
Accessible Natural Greenspace	1	2	0	3
Allotments	0	0	0	0
Amenity greenspace	0	3	1	4
Parks and recreation grounds	1	0	0	1
Play space (children and teenagers)	1	2	0	3
Churchyards and cemeteries	1	0	0	1
Civic spaces	0	0	0	0
Total	**4**	**7**	**1**	**12**

8.10 New Haw

8.10.1 There were six sites assessed within the New Haw ward, with half being good and half being average.

8.10.2 The two allotments assessed were Pinewood Avenue Allotments (site 63, scoring 11/25) and Woodham Lane Allotments (site 227, scoring 16/25). Both were reasonably clean and well organised at the time of inspection, but potential issues were identified associated with the provision of lighting, natural surveillance and vehicular access. If actions were taken to rectify

these, it would lead to a significant improvement for both sites which are currently poor and average respectively.

8.10.3 Three of the remaining four sites were within the 'average' classification, were parks and recreation grounds and (for one of them) its associated play space, namely (Heathervale Recreation Ground (site 176) and Heathervale Recreation ground Play Area (site 203)) and Marshall Place Open Space (site 148), another park and recreation ground. These sites were largely safe, accessible with good facilities. The last site (301 Hawthorn Way, an amenity greenspace) scored highly at 21/25 and thus fell into the good classification.

Table 8.10 - New Haw Open Spaces

Typology	Quality audit grade			
	A (Good)	B (Average)	C (Poor)	Total
Accessible Natural Greenspace	0	0	0	0
Allotments	0	1	1	2
Amenity greenspace	1	0	0	1
Parks and recreation grounds	0	2	0	2
Play space (children and teenagers)	0	1	0	1
Churchyards and cemeteries	0	0	0	0
Civic spaces	0	0	0	0
Total	**1**	**4**	**1**	**6**

8.11 Ottershaw

8.11.1 There were 18 sites assessed within the Ottershaw ward, one (5.5%) of which were of a good standard. A further 13 (72%) were of average quality, with the remaining four (22.5%) were classified as poor.

8.11.2 The largest category of sites assessed was Accessible Natural Greenspace, seven in total, representing 39% of all sites assessed within Ottershaw, four of which were of an average standard with the remaining three classed as poor. Most scored well for cleanliness and safety, showing that all the sites are well cared for and maintained. There were lower scores for accessibility and facilities which are the main areas in which these sites could be improved.

8.11.3 There were six amenity greenspaces within Ottershaw, with one (site 103, Clarendon Gate (21/25)) being assessed as 'good' quality with another (258, Sandy Road Open Space (14/25)) being poor, with the remaining being average. Road Open Space scored the lowest due to its hidden / tucked away location as well as a lack of natural light within the site because of the significant number of tall trees which heightens a sense that the site lacks safety.

Table 8.11 - Ottershaw Open Spaces

Typology	Quality audit grade			
	A (Good)	B (Average)	C (Poor)	Total
Accessible Natural Greenspace	0	4	3	7
Allotments	0	0	0	0
Amenity greenspace	1	4	1	6
Parks and recreation grounds	0	2	0	2
Play space (children and teenagers)	0	2	0	2
Churchyards and cemeteries	0	1	0	1
Civic spaces	0	0	0	0
Total	**1**	**13**	**4**	**18**

8.12 Thorpe

8.12.1 There were 18 sites assessed with the Thorpe ward with one (5.5%) of these were assessed as being of good quality, 12 (66%) being average and five (28.5%) being poor.

8.12.2 There was one allotment in Thorpe: Thorpe Allotments (site 46), which was scored as average (18/25) but there was a lack of communal facilities and natural surveillance identified at the time of its assessment.

8.12.3 There was a total of eight parks and play spaces, two of which were poor (site 205 Frank Muir Memorial Field Play Area and 208 Thorpe Green Play Area) which both scored 14/25, with the remaining six being ‘average’ quality, showing that these recreation sites are generally well cared for and maintained with good access, facilities and cleanliness, but there is definitely room for improvement as well.

Table 8.12 - Thorpe Open Spaces

Typology	Quality audit grade			
	A (Good)	B (Average)	C (Poor)	Total
Accessible Natural Greenspace	0	1	3	4
Allotments	0	1	0	1
Amenity greenspace	0	2	0	2
Parks and recreation grounds	0	4	0	4
Play space (children and teenagers)	0	2	2	4
Churchyards and cemeteries	1	2	0	3
Civic spaces	0	0	0	0
Total	**1**	**12**	**5**	**18**

8.13 Virginia Water

8.13.1 There were 12 sites assessed within the Virginia Water ward, and of these five (42%) were assessed as being good quality sites, with the seven (58%)

other sites being average.

8.13.2 There was one Accessible Natural Greenspace in the Virginia Water (site 257 Cabrera Trust Riverside Walk) and had an average score of 16/25. This was reduced down from a good score primarily due to accessibility issues.

8.13.3 There was one allotment assessed: Stroude Road Allotments (site 48). This was an excellent site (scoring 24/25) which is well signposted and easy to find, with good provision for vehicular access. It is well organised and cared for, including a well-maintained perimeter fence and associated boundaries. It is a site that provides a range of facilities including storage facilities for each plot and communal facilities including seating and a toilet block.

8.13.4 All of the three play spaces in Virginia Water were average and in general they all scored reasonably well for most criteria. There were some issues with cleanliness observed at Cabrera Avenue Playing Field Play Area (site 187) as at the time of assessment there was some notable litter, but otherwise it was a well-maintained site.

Table 8.13 - Virginia Water Open Spaces

Typology	**Quality audit grade**			
	A (Good)	**B (Average)**	**C (Poor)**	**Total**
Accessible Natural Greenspace	0	1	0	1
Allotments	1	0	0	1
Amenity greenspace	1	1	0	2
Parks and recreation grounds	1	2	0	3
Play space (children and teenagers)	0	3	0	3
Churchyards and cemeteries	2	0	0	2
Civic spaces	0	0	0	0
Total	**5**	**7**	**0**	**12**

8.14 Woodham and Rowtown

8.14.1 There were 12 sites assessed in the Woodham and Rowtown ward, four (33%) of which were good, seven were average (58%) and one (9%) was poor. This poor site was site 126 Malus Drive Open Space which scored just 10/25.

8.14.2 Half of the sites assessed were amenity greenspaces representing the largest concentration of sites of any single classification within any of the wards assessed. In a similar pattern, half of these sites were assessed as good with the remaining being average (two of them) and just one (the aforementioned Malus Drive) being poor.

8.14.3 There were four combined parks and play spaces within the ward with three being average and one (site 228 Franklands Park) being good, scoring 21/25. This was partially due to a number of these sites are relatively new.

8.14.4 There were no Allotments, Churchyards, Cemeteries and Civic Spaces assessed within the Woodham and Rowtown ward.

Table 8.14 - Woodham and Rowtown Open Spaces

Typology	Quality audit grade			
	A (Good)	B (Average)	C (Poor)	Total
Accessible Natural Greenspace	0	2	0	2
Allotments	0	0	0	0
Amenity greenspace	3	2	1	6
Parks and recreation grounds	1	1	0	2
Play space (children and teenagers)	1	1	0	2
Churchyards and cemeteries	0	0	0	0
Civic spaces	0	0	0	0
Total	**5**	**6**	**1**	**12**

9 STRATEGIC OPTIONS, POLICY & MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

9.0.1 This section sets out options and recommendations for open space within the Borough, which may result in changes to Policies SL25 and SL26 of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan through the current review and update process. This could cover a number of areas including provision of new and enhancements to existing open spaces, as well as the potential for the possible relocation of existing spaces, alongside the approach to spaces that may be surplus to requirements.

9.1 Strategic options

Introduction

9.1.1 The strategic options address six key areas:

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

Delivering strategic options

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

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

9.1.4 Although it is up to local communities to define their own priorities (such as through Neighbourhood Plans), the information provided within this study will form a good basis to inform any decisions related to the provision of open space.

9.1.5 The following sections consider the key issues for open space in the Borough, and the recommendations that emerge need to be taken in context with legislation (including the 2011 Localism Act[50]) and national policy and consider how they can fit into local decision making. The following sections serve to highlight issues and inform policy decisions, but do not necessarily resolve how they may be addressed.

9.1.6 The information provided within this study can also form the basis for potential future strategies. The suggested changes to the relevant policies in the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan (policies SL25 and SL26) arising from this study will feed into the revision of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan.

9.2 Existing provision to be protected

9.2.1 The policy in the current Runnymede 2030 Local Plan that protects existing open space is Policy SL25: Existing Open Space. This states:

> *'The Council will seek to protect, maintain, and where possible, enhance existing open spaces to encourage quality and accessibility improvements to ensure a continued contribution to the health and well-being of local communities.*
>
> *The Council will not permit the loss or displacement of existing open space to other uses unless it can be demonstrated, through up-to-date and robust evidence, that:*
>
> *a. There is a proven surplus of provision and the site is no longer needed, or is unlikely to be required in the future; or*
> *b. The benefit of the development to the community outweighs the harm caused by the loss of the facility; or*
> *c. An alternative facility of an equal quantity and quality or higher standard will be provided in at least an equally convenient and accessible location to serve the same local community. The local accessibility standards highlighted within the most up-to-date Open Space Study at the time of any planning application should be relied upon to support any arguments advanced.*
>
> *Developments which look to maintain or increase the quality of open spaces, in particular natural and semi natural spaces, to provide an improved environment for wildlife and to achieve recreation enhancements for the community, will be welcomed.'*

9.2.2 This policy has been reviewed as part of the review of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan, and subsequently as part of this 2025 OSS. From this exercise, a minor modification to this policy is recommended to make reference to amenity greenspace, which the outcomes in sections above identify as requiring improvement. It is recommended that the final paragraph of the policy is revised as follows: "Developments which look to maintain or increase

[50] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/contents/enacted

the quality of open spaces, in particular natural and semi natural spaces **and amenity greenspaces**, to provide an improved environment for wildlife and to achieve recreation enhancements for the community, will be welcomed".

9.2.3 There is also scope to use the findings in the OSS to inform the development of future design codes which seek to protect, maintain and where possible enhance existing open spaces; and to be used as evidence for applicants to demonstrate that they have met the design code requirements. Certain elements of Policy SL25 may be captured more effectively as part of the Runnymede Design Code, and design code requirements can be tailored to areas of the Borough where the OSS indicates that protection of existing provision is particularly important (e.g. in wards where there is already a significant deficit of existing open space).

9.3 Existing provision to be enhanced

9.3.1 In areas where there is a quantitative deficiency of provision, then increasing the quality of existing provision may be considered to improve their 'carrying capacity'. Qualitative improvements would also enhance facilities or spaces which do not currently meet the relevant quality standards, even where there is no deficiency of provision. This includes those spaces or facilities which are critically important in avoiding deficiencies in diversity, accessibility or quantity, but scored poorly in the quality assessment.

9.3.2 Those sites which require enhancement are identified within the quality audit that was undertaken. Some of the key observations relating to site quality, functionality and enhancement include:

- The importance of providing high quality provision and maintenance of formal facilities such as parks and recreation grounds and play spaces for children and teenagers (and particularly the need for additional facilities for the latter category of open space).
- The need to ensure high quality open spaces are designed and provided through new development where feasible.
- The importance of rights of way and accessible natural greenspace within the Borough, and the need to maintain and enhance provision for biodiversity.
- The role of open space in contributing to wider initiatives and strategies.
- Extending and enhancing the network of green infrastructure including the connectivity between sites and improved accessibility to existing sites.

9.3.3 Appendix 24 provides maps by Ward showing the sites that were quality audited and their overall score (good, average, poor), as identified within the quality audit database. An overview of the open space quality audit rank scores is provided in Section 8.

9.3.4 Policy SL25 of the 2030 Local Plan set out above also seeks to enhance existing open space to improve quality and accessibility. Minor modifications to this policy and/or design code implications are described in paragraphs 9.2.2-9.2.3 above – these are also relevant in bringing about enhancement to

existing provision.

9.4 Opportunities for relocation / re-designation of open space

9.4.1 In some areas it may be possible to make better use of land by relocating an open space or sport and recreation facility, especially if this will enhance its quality or accessibility for existing users or use land which is not suitable for another purpose. This needs to be determined at a local level, considering the quality, quantity and access to facilities at neighbourhood level and in some cases across the Borough.

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

9.4.3 When considering possible relocation/redesignation, careful consideration should be given to where different types of facilities and space - such as children's playgrounds, sports pitches, young people's facilities etc. are to be located. Where it is identified that an open space is no longer needed, consideration should be given to how its disposal or re-use can be used to fund improvements to other spaces.

9.4.4 Spatial and investment plans should apply the standards recommended in this study and be in accordance with the strategic policies set out in the existing and future iteration of the adopted Local Plan (as informed by this study). Such plans should also seek to ensure that where significant investment is anticipated for green spaces, that this is prioritised and realised with the help of key stakeholders and communities. In this regard, the Council will engage with its local communities and other key stakeholders as part of its CIL Governance Arrangements when identifying potential green space projects for the allocation of CIL funding. This will help prioritise projects for funding in the Borough (both through the spending of neighbourhood and strategic portions of CIL monies).

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

9.4.6 This study provides information on the existing supply of different types of open space in the Borough, an analysis of access, and identifies local issues related to quality. It will act as a good starting point for feeding into strategies for future decision-making but will require further detailed investigation and community consultation before any decisions can be made. For example, just because an open space may be in sufficient supply with overlaps in access, and it may be of average or poor quality, local knowledge (or other considerations such as green infrastructure or historic value) may show that it

is a highly valued and / or an important facility, and therefore it should not be considered for alternative use / as being surplus to requirement.

9.5 Identification of areas for new provision

9.5.1 New provision will be required where there is a new development proposed above a certain size (currently determined through Policy SL26 of the adopted Local Plan on 'New Open Space'). Section 7 outlines the existing situation with regards to supply, quality and access to open space. This study can be used as the basis for decision-making, as follows:

Quantity

9.5.2 Within the study report, for each typology, there is an identified 'sufficient supply' or 'undersupply' for each of the Wards and the Borough overall. If a given area has an existing under supply of any typology, there may be need for additional provision. Policy SL26 of the adopted Runnymede 2030 Local Plan confirms the types of new open space that are required to be provided over the current Plan period and the relevant standards. This study will underpin the next iteration of the Local Plan and inform the content of associated design codes and will help determine whether existing open space requirements and standards need amending.

9.5.3 New provision could be delivered through developing a new open space (for example as part of a housing development), acquiring land to extend an existing open space, or changing the typology of an existing space (which may be in over supply). In addition to 'New Open Space' policy, the next iteration of the Local Plan will include site allocation policies – these policies allocate land for certain development uses, and the findings of this study will provide evidence to inform any site-specific key requirements concerning the provision of open space included in relevant site allocation policies.

9.5.4 The supply statistics should also be used as part of the decision-making process in Development Management to determine if a new development should provide facilities on-site or enhance existing provision through developer contributions. However, the use of the quantity statistics should not be in isolation and should be considered alongside the access standards.

Access

9.5.5 This study considers how access to different types of open space varies across the various geographies against the proposed standards, focused on the current urban areas of the Borough. Access maps for each open space typology can be found at Appendix 6. The Council and neighbourhood fora can use this information to help determine where projects to improve access would be most beneficial. This may correspond with areas earmarked for future housing development.

9.5.6 In relation to accessibility the focus for this relates to Accessible Natural Greenspace which shows there are a number of areas throughout the

borough that lack access to. This is not the case for the larger sites (e.g. 20ha+ sized sites), where the Borough has full 'coverage' (e.g. is within either 5 or 10km of the sites in these categories), so it is only the smaller areas where there are gaps. Broadly these are as follows (as shown on the second and third maps in Appendix 6):

- Sites of 2 to 10ha / 300m catchment (Neighbourhood standard): whilst the southern parts of the Borough have reasonable coverage, this gets sparser further north, with near complete absence of access to sites of this size in Egham and large parts of Englefield Green. These is also an absence of sites of this size in the Virginia Water and Longcross areas of the Borough, through this may be offset by presence of the (much larger) Windsor Park in the east of the Borough.
- Sites of 10 to 20ha / 1km catchment (Local Standard): whilst these sites are spread relatively evenly across the Borough, there are large gaps between them and thus large parts in every ward fall outside the recommended catchment of the existing areas of Accessible Natural Green Space.

9.5.7 For allotments, which have an accessibility buffer of 800m, there is a mixed picture across the Borough. Approximately half of the urban area has good access to existing allotments, however the following areas are currently outside the 800m radii as shown on the sixth map in Appendix 6:

- Woodham
- Ottershaw
- The Northern part of Addlestone
- Rowtown
- Chertsey South
- The south eastern part of Chertsey
- Longcross
- The majority of Virginia Water
- The eastern edge of Thorpe
- The southern edge of Egham
- A central strip through Englefield Green

9.5.8 When it comes to amenity greenspace (which has a buffer of 480m), there is a relatively even spread across the Borough, with the below areas lacking. These areas are shown on the seventh map in Appendix 6:

- Woodham and parts of New Haw
- The western edge of Ottershaw
- A small area in the north of Addlestone
- Parts of Longcross
- The fringes of Virginia Water
- A central strip of Egham
- A large, central east-west section of Egham / Englefield Green

9.5.9 For Parks and Recreation grounds, which have a buffer of 710m, most of the

Borough (to a greater extent than for other open space types) is well covered with a few exceptions. This is shown in more detail on the eighth map in Appendix 6:

- A central east-west strip of Addlestone
- Chertsey South
- The western edges of Virginia Water

9.5.10 For children and teenagers' spaces, these have two buffer sizes; 480m for children play space and 720m for teenagers. This study has not differentiated between the two for this type of open space as often they could be used by both, however, a comparison will be made for each buffer size. For the 480m distance radius, the gaps are as follows, as shown on the ninth map in Appendix 6:

- Parts of both Woodham and New Haw
- Small areas of Row Town
- A narrow central strip in Ottershaw
- Chertsey South
- A north-south strip in the east of Chertsey
- The eastern edge of Longcross
- Most of Virginia Water
- The northern edge of Egham
- A central southwestern to north eastern strip of Englefield Green

9.5.11 For the 720m buffer the gaps are as follows, shown on the tenth map in Appendix 6:

- The fringes of Woodham and New Haw
- Chertsey South
- The eastern edge of Longcross
- The northern parts of Virgina Water
- A relatively narrow central southwestern to north eastern strip of Englefield Green

9.5.12 Whist there are significant gaps between the above types of sites, it should be noted that overall, across the Borough there is a good spread of sites as shown in the Borough-wide map in Appendix 23, which shows all the publicly accessible open spaces in Runnymede.

9.5.13 A key consideration in policy terms is that the current Policy SL26 In (New Open Space) states that: *'As a minimum, development should not increase existing deficiencies of open space in the Borough as informed by the most up-to-date Open Space Study'* and thus new areas of development should be seeking to make on-site provision where it is currently lacking. Further to this, the Policy goes on to state that *'the Council will negotiate on a site-by-site basis the type of Open Space provision where other typologies may be more appropriate or desirable having regard to the most up to date Open Space Study'*. This may mean, that where there may be an overall quantitative

surplus / sufficiency in the Borough or a ward, if there is a localised deficiency, the Council may negotiate for additional located, on-site provision to make up for this shortfall.

Delivering new provision

9.5.14 There are various opportunities for delivering new facilities through new development – the various mechanisms are considered in turn below.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

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

9.5.16 Runnymede Borough Council adopted its charging schedule for CIL in March 2021. Therefore, CIL is already the dominant means for securing financial contributions from development in the Borough. To explain the role of CIL and its relationship with S106 agreements, the Council has published an Infrastructure Delivery & Prioritisation SPD[51]. CIL money can beused to support development by funding infrastructure to support 'growth', it does not need to be used for providing infrastructure on the site it is collected from. This is not the case for Section 106 agreements where money collected will be restricted to that infrastructure required to directly mitigate the impact of a proposal. Where a development is unable to provide sufficient on-site provision of open space to mitigate the impact of that development, the CIL monies collected through the planning application process could be put towards off-site provision / enhancement.

9.5.17 The most recent amendments to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations (2010) came into force on 1st September 2019. One of the key changes is the lifting of the 'pooling restriction', due to the deletion of Regulation 123. This allows CIL and planning obligations (S106) to fund the same piece of infrastructure and accordingly remove what can be a barrier to development. Infrastructure Funding Statements (which have replaced the regulation 123 lists) require annually (from 31st December 2020) an appropriate audit trail of all contributions to receiving authorities and how they are spent, whether S106 or CIL to be published.

9.5.18 It should be noted that there is a subset of the CIL that is collected which is apportioned to neighbourhood areas. This is 15% for those areas without an adopted Neighbourhood Plan, and 25% for those that do. These monies can be spent on local priorities in line with the CIL 123 list set out in a Neighbourhood Plan (if it has one), which can include open space provision / improvements.

[51] https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/downloads/file/840/adopted-infrastructure

Planning Obligations (S106)

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

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

9.5.20 New development will be required to provide on-site open space wherever possible in accordance with the Council's adopted policy requirements in Policy SL26. This policy recognises however that it may not always be possible to make on-site provision for open space. Where it has been demonstrated that it is not feasible or viable to provide on-site provision, the Policy states that off-site financial contributions (made via CIL payments) to improve the quality of existing Council owned open spaces within a reasonable proximity to the development site as highlighted by the most up to date local accessibility standards will be considered as mitigation. Policy SD5: Infrastructure Provision & Timing sets out how developer contributions for infrastructure – which could include open space – will be sought.

9.5.21 It is recommended that the approach in both Policy SL26 and SD5 is retained in the next iteration of the Local Plan.

External grant funding

9.5.22 Although the availability of external grant funding has diminished in recent years, funding may still periodically become available for providing facilities for open space. RBC's Bid Writer and Grants Officer will search proactively for applicable funds, as well as receive funding updates from all relevant providers. Their role is to project manage applications in full or give bidding advice to officers, as required by any given project.

9.5.23 National and governing bodies for individual sports should be consulted where new infrastructure is required, such as changing rooms and sports pitches and they may also have funding schemes for consideration. Environmental grants and stewardship schemes are available for managing accessible natural greenspace.

9.5.24 As neighbourhood plans are developed and open space priorities are established within these, funding requirements can be discussed with RBC's Bid Writer and Grants Officer and grant funding can be pursued where viable and feasible opportunities are identified.

9.5.25 Priorities for open space in Neighbourhood Plans can also be funded by the neighbourhood portion of Community Infrastructure Levy receipts which the

Council retains as charging authority, should these be supported by the wider community and are deliverable.

9.6 Facilities that are surplus to requirement

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

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

9.6.2 Policy SL25 of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan confirms the presumption against the loss or displacement of existing open space to other uses but lists the limited circumstances in which loss may be permitted. It is recommended that the contents of Policy SL25 are retained in the updated Local Plan.

9.7 Developer contributions

9.7.1 In the adopted Infrastructure Delivery & Prioritisation SPD[52], there is guidance on how the Council will prioritise infrastructure funding to support the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan and how it will operate Section 106 planning agreements and undertakings now that CIL[53] has been implemented. The SPD supports the implementation of Policy SD5 of the Local Plan and is an important material consideration in planning decision taking, setting the framework for how the Council will prioritise and fund supporting infrastructure through developer contributions. This SPD also sets out the cost impact implications of development on various infrastructure types which will act as a starting point for the Council in negotiating financial contributions in lieu of physical infrastructure provision through Section 106 agreements / undertakings.

9.7.2 When it comes to open space, the SPD currently focuses on the provision of Children's play space, outdoor sports and allotments in line with Policy SD5 of

[52] https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/downloads/file/840/adopted-infrastructure
[53] https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/community-infrastructure-levy-cil

the Local Plan (with the supporting Infrastructure Delivery Plan identifying a need for these types of infrastructure to meet needs generated by new development); and Policy SL26 of the Local Plan which requires residential developments of 20 or more net dwellings to provide new or enhanced facilities. Policy SL26 sets out the space standards required for each type based on population as set out below:

- Children and teenager facilities – 0.8ha per 1,000 population; and
- Outdoor sports facilities – 1.6ha per 1,000 population; and
- At least 20 standard size allotment plots (250sqm per plot in size) per 1,000 households or where this is not possible, provision of an alternative such as community gardens or similar.

9.7.3 The Council will consider when it prepares a revised version of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan if these open space standards remain fit-for-purpose, whether the findings of a revised Infrastructure Delivery Plan identify different types of open spaces that are needed to support growth (drawing on the findings of this OSS), and thus whether the SPD needs to be amended to cover other types of open space. It is likely that the SPD will need to be revised to include updated information to reflect any changes to the relevant Local Plan policies that may relate to the provision of open spaces.

10 CONCLUSION

10.0.1 This study provides a robust analysis of the status of open space within Runnymede Borough as of 2024/25. It includes an audit of provision and a local needs assessment, with findings used to produce new recommended standards for quantity, accessibility and quality of publicly accessible open space. The study also includes a suite of policy recommendations for interpreting and informing the needs for the assessed open space typologies over a period of 2028-2043.

10.0.2 It should be noted that the OSS does not look in detail at the need for sports pitches / provision. For this, the Council's latest Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) should be consulted. This is because the Strategy specifically looks at the current levels of provision and potential future need for sports pitches in the Borough, whereas the OSS focuses on more general and multi-use areas of open space. The PPS will therefore be used to inform the review of the outdoor sports facilities standards in policy SL26, and to create any other relevant, updated outdoor sports policy requirements.

10.0.3 To summarise the finding of this study, the key points relate to quantity and accessibility standards, and from these recommendations for what an open-space focused policy in a future Local Plan and associated Design Code (or other design tools) may want to focus on.

10.0.4 In terms of the types of open space, the amount of each that should be required by new development, and the distance that no community should be further away from each type of open space are set out in the table below:

Table 10.1 Summary of open space quantity and access standards

Typology	**Quantity standards for existing provision and new provision (ha/1,000 population)**	**Access standard**
Accessible Natural Greenspace	N/A	800m
Allotments	0.25	800m
Amenity Green Space(sites >0.15 ha)	0.6	480m
Parks and recreation grounds	N/A	710m
Play space (children and teenagers)	0.25	480m / 720m
Total for new provision	**1.10ha/1000 population**	

10.0.5 Based on the above, a revised/additional policy that relates to the provision of new open space in the Borough should require 1.10ha/1,000 people generated by a development, and this should be provided on site wherever possible. Where on-site provision is not possible (e.g. where it has been demonstrated that it is not feasible or viable to provide on-site provision), then suitable off-site financial contributions should be made instead, so that existing facilities that serve the development (if the development is within the

distances set out in table 10.1 above) can be improved. Where there are no existing facilities within the above distances of the development, then the financial contributions made should be prioritised for the provision of new facilities that would be able to serve the development within the relevant distance radius.

10.0.6 Away from the quantitative elements of this study, following a review of the quality of the 210 existing open spaces in the Borough studied in this assessment, the overall picture in the Borough is that most of the Borough's open spaces are Good, with a minority being either average or poor. The percentage for each quality classification is set out below:

- 'Poor': 50 (23.81%)
- 'Average': 121 (57.62%)
- 'Good': 39 (18.57%)

10.0.7 As can be seen from these overall figures, the majority of the open spaces in the Borough are in an average or good condition, with a relatively lower number in need of significant improvement. Those that are however, in a poor state currently may be worth focusing on for future improvements where this is possible (e.g. in terms of improved facilities, accessibility etc). Some of these issues may be insurmountable, e.g. due to their location, size etc., however this does not mean that they should be neglected in favour of those that are already performing well. However, this does not mean that those that are classified as good currently can be expected to simply remain good and will need ongoing maintenance to ensure that they retain this good quality status and thus the high scored they were allocated.

10.0.8 Overall, the role and value of open space in contributing to the delivery of national and local priorities and targets is clear from this assessment. It is important that the policy options and recommendations included within this assessment are considered as part of the statutory Local Plan preparation process and inform associated guidance and other Council strategies and policy documents where relevant.

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