

Bristol City Council

Bristol Green Space Provision Standards Development Guide

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Bristol Parks and Green Space Strategy sets out new green space provision standards for Bristol. This paper explains how the standards were developed – the processes followed and the information and technical processes used to inform them.

The Bristol Green Space Standards are designed to ensure that all people in Bristol have access to a range of good quality spaces and associated facilities.

The standards will be used for planning and prioritising future work the Bristol City Council in meeting this aim. It is also intended that the standards are incorporated into the Bristol Development Framework and provide developers, other stakeholders and the City Council with clarity over the future provision of green space in planning decisions.

The standards identify minimum levels of provision, and their application will take into account future population trends and growth areas across the city - with an estimated population growth of over 39,000 by 2026.

In adopting green space standards the Bristol Parks and Green Space Strategy responds to Planning Policy Guidance 17 (PPG 17). In line with PPG 17 recommendations there are three specific standards which comprise the Bristol Green Space Standards:

- Quality standard – a level of quality which all spaces should attain.
- Distance standard - how far people should have to travel to reach a particular type of space.
- Quantity standard - how much green space of different types there should be.

The standards apply to all green spaces for which there is legitimate public access (this excludes, for example, school grounds and allotments). They will be applied through the proposed green space typology – formal green space, informal green space, children and young people's space, natural green space and active sports space.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Planning Policy Guidance 17

The Bristol Parks and Green Space Strategy responds to the guidelines given in PPG 17 in terms of its adoption of new, *local* provision standards, the scope of those standards, plus how they are derived and expressed.

PPG 17 sets out the policies to be taken into account by regional planning bodies in the preparation of Regional Planning Guidance and explains the need, development and use of local provision standards for green spaces.

The guidance advises local authorities to set local standards for open space provision that are informed by robust assessments of the existing and future needs of their communities for open space, sports and recreational facilities. Local authorities should undertake audits of existing space and facilities that consider both quantitative and qualitative elements. Assessments and audits will allow local authorities to identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of space and facilities in their areas.

The Government believes that open space standards are best set locally. Local authorities should use information gained from their assessments of needs and opportunities to set locally derived standards for the provision of open space, sports and recreational facilities. Local standards should include:

- quantitative elements (how much new provision may be needed);
- a qualitative component (against which to measure the need for enhancement of existing facilities); and
- accessibility (including distance thresholds and consideration of the cost of using a facility).

2.11 Multiple use of green space

The P&GSS conforms to PPG17 in analysing open space in types based on what uses they support – unlike the traditional hierarchy of local/district/city/sub-regional parks.

PPG 17 also recommends that analysis should allocate a *primary use or purpose* to any one park and that all decisions should follow from this. This has proved untenable, and the strategy does not follow the recommendation. This is because the PPG 17 approach does not correspond to the reality of the way people use open space or of their preferences. Some examples to illustrate this:-

- a) Arnos Vale cemetery is a historic graveyard, designed as an attractive landscape to attract custom, whose monuments add further to its landscape charm. It has developed significant wildlife value and is recognised as a Site of Nature Conservation interest. It is undeniably used by people interested in both aesthetic and wildlife experiences. Importantly, the presence of both interests adds value to each, and the co-existence of users with a variety of enthusiasms adds social value to the park.

- b) A large part of the Downs is used as football pitches in a competitive league structure once or twice a week. The rest of the time, it is used as informal green space.

Managing these sites for a primary use, without regard to other uses, would be not be good recreational management or land use practice. Moreover, these examples illustrate how difficult it would be to come up with a consistent and justified way of identifying “primary purpose”. Conversely, it is true that rejecting the recommendation of PPG 17 creates a number of risks.

- There can be conflicts of priority between uses, and the management of too many open spaces is weak because there is no clear policy to manage the land for any particular use at all.
- It is not always true that multiple use is desirable. In many cases a particular use should be given priority.
- There is a danger of authorities (in the planning process, or in parks management decisions) evading the need to provide adequately for particular uses by reference to a minor use of a local site, which does not provide enough capacity in reality.

However, these dangers can quite easily be guarded against in the way that planning policy is applied, strategic management decisions are taken, day-to-day management is conducted and green spaces are promoted. In contrast, the consequences of the “one use” approach implied by PPG17 would be unacceptable.

2.12 Assessing needs and opportunities: A companion guide to PPG17

The Companion Guide advises that provision standards should be based on objective assessment of needs, assessing current provision, benchmarking and establishing local community views. For development control purposes provision standards should also encompass:

- A minimum acceptable size
- A site area multiplier
- Normalised, capital, establishment and maintenance costs
- Design guidelines

QUALITY - Any assessment of the quality or nature of existing open spaces or sport and recreation facilities needs a clear set of benchmarks, related to stated standards and, ideally, some form of scoring system. It is an important opportunity for the ‘management system’ and the ‘planning system’ working together. The aim should be jointly to identify those open spaces or facilities which need enhancement, the form of this enhancement should take and relative priorities.

QUANTITY - The Guide prescribes that the easiest way to express a quantity standard is a combination of a unit of a 'useful area' of provision and a population, such as X sq m/person (mainly for indoor provision) or Y ha/1,000 people (mainly for open spaces and outdoor sports provision).

ACCESSIBILITY- Distance thresholds for accessibility standards are given as “*the maximum distance that typical users can reasonably be expected to travel to each type or provision using different modes of transport*” and the easiest recognised method of expressing this is as straight line catchment area radii which derive ‘as the crow flies’ distances.

2.2 Previous Planning Guidance

The Bristol Development Framework is due to be adopted by 2010 and will replace the Bristol Local Plan (1997) which provided some earlier planning guidance relating to green space provision. Updated green space standards incorporated into the BDF will offer much improved guidance for planners with a greater depth, scope and degree of clarity, accuracy and achievability.

2.21 Quality

Neither guidance nor policy commitments regarding the quality of green spaces are a strong feature of the current Local Plan. Greater detail is given to defining the quality of landscape. The proposed standards add detail to the meaning of the term ‘amenity’ in the Local Plan by being applied through the new green space typology – ie. formal space, informal space, children and young people’s space, natural green space and active sports space.

The Local Plan, somewhat simplistically, recognises that the quality of Bristol’s environment relies on the existence of green space that fulfils a variety of functions - and this is defended in policy NE1.

2.22 Quantity

The Local Plan recognises that the calculation of land requirements for open space is inherently complex and problematic. The Plan summarises the recommendations of the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) with regard to the provision of space for outdoor sport and playgrounds including casual/informal play space (2.4ha per 1000 population) but states that the current Bristol provision of 1.6ha of formal outdoor playing space per 1000 population is already well below this minimum recommendation.

2.23 Accessibility

The Local Plan respects current National Playing Fields Association guidance for children’s play areas but states that, measured against the standard, most of the city’s residential areas are deficient in play areas. The NPFA states that toddler’s play areas should be located within 150 metres of family dwellings and junior play areas within 400 metres of every household, ‘as the crow flies’. Both levels of provision should be accessible without having to cross a main road.

2.3 Value

PPG17 recommends that “value” is taken into account in planning and land management decisions.

Value is a difficult concept to define separately from quality, but is essentially a cultural expression of public esteem based on traditions of use and of attitude. It also includes non-use benefits of green space (or more precisely, non-visit benefits), such as the contribution to landscape, to carbon capture or to flood storage capacity.

Some attributes of value are more or less objective and are expressed directly or indirectly in various planning policies, but others are difficult to codify, remain hidden within communities and may well be entirely unknown to planners, council members and officers, developers and landowners – until proposals for change cause local reaction.

In preparing the Parks and Green Space Strategy, and the Green Space Standards, the view has been taken that any numerical scale or formula measuring “value” could not be devised in the way that made sense in determining minimum standards. However, it is intended that “value” will be considered at the point of planning and management decisions being made over individual green spaces, although the benefits of an arithmetic approach to assessing and mapping value remain to be debated.

3.0 THE BRISTOL GREEN SPACE STANDARDS

The Bristol Green Space Standards were developed with regard to the following:

- **The requirements of Planning Policy Guidance 17;**
- **A baseline assessment of current provision;**
- **A thorough assessment of the needs of Bristol residents for green space;**
- **Advice from advisors including CABE Space, internal (Council) partners and external partners (e.g. Core Cities);**
- **A review of existing national and local policy and guidance;**
- **Benchmarking with other authorities working to develop standards;**
- **A series of discrete area based feasibility studies and the testing of the potential application of the standards – assessing their achievability.**

3.01 General guidelines for applying the standards

- The standards should be applied as part of a holistic analysis of local green space resource in which quality, quantity and distance are considered together.
- The standards measure minimum requirements for recreational use. Planning and management decisions should take into account a wider framework of issues, including:
 - i) Other planning policies relating to the use, conservation and protection of green space.
 - ii) Local views, patterns of use, and other issues contributing to a wider assessment of “value”
 - iii) Local demographics and social needs; for example, a higher population of children in any one area may warrant more play provision.
 - iv) Local urban form.
 - v) Connectivity and linkages between green spaces

3.1 Standards Development - Quality

3.11 The proposed Bristol quality standard

Bristol has set a standard at a level that, in line with PPG 17, is deemed to be deliverable. It is based on a sound assessment of site quality, with a scoring system that informs prioritisation of facilities and areas for improvement. The approach creates a framework to raise green space quality and inform priorities for doing so.

The council proposes to bring all parks and green spaces up to a 'good' quality over the next twenty years.

While the standard aims to bring all the spaces up to 'good', this does not mean that the city should not aspire to have excellent facilities. Hence, it is also intended that the national benchmark of high quality – the Green Flag Award – will be applied to a number of Bristol's most important spaces. As an illustration, an initial target of at least 7 Green Flag Awards in the city by 2010 has already been set.

3.12 Assessment of provision

A thorough assessment of the quality of facilities and features has shown that the quality of Bristol's parks and green spaces varies considerably across the city. The quality standard will act to redress this imbalance and has been set at a level that will benefit all communities.

The methodology used to assess the quality of Bristol's green spaces was informed, in part, by the Green Flag Award scheme and also reflects the requirements of PPG 17. The methods and processes employed are comprehensively set out in another background document **Manual for Assessing Quality**, and therefore only briefly here.

The assessment process resulted in comprehensive, detailed and objective data on the quality of Bristol's green space. Reflecting PPG 17, the Bristol quality assessments:

- Provide an initial basis for assessing the quality of individual sites;
- Enable the quality of sites to be gauged in relation to one another;
- Enable an overview of all sites' quality to be collectively considered, across the city or within specified areas;
- In conjunction with other criteria, enable relative priorities for the attraction of investment and improvement through planning, design or management; and
- Provide a basis for performance management, ongoing monitoring and review.

The assessment process includes an assessment of facilities and park features for their *provision*, *condition* and *maintenance*. The scoring system allows for these three factors to be separately identified and considered. From the quality assessment it is the *provision* of facilities that more fundamentally informs green

space capital cost planning purposes in the strategy. *Condition* and *maintenance* assessment relate to more short-term or routine aspects of quality - more easy to be tackled and improved with a change in management regime, but of course still requiring additional resources.

Each assessment is a snapshot measurement of quality on the day of the site visit - and a measurement is made of both the existing and potential quality of a site. The latter would represent what could be achieved on a site were it to be the subject of full capital funding and optimum long-term management.

The generic criteria assessed for each site:	Supplementary criteria:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Setting and containment of site; ▪ Entrance; ▪ Boundaries, peripheral ▪ Boundaries, internal ▪ Access paths / hard paved surfaces ▪ Grass areas ▪ User experience ▪ User information ▪ Site furniture ▪ Overall impressions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Horticulture ▪ Nature conservation ▪ Trees ▪ Woodlands ▪ Water ▪ Children's play ▪ Buildings ▪ Toilets ▪ Sports pitches, seasonal ▪ Sports bowling greens and infrastructure ▪ Sports surfaces, all year (hard/artificial) ▪ Sports pavilions / changing rooms ▪ Permanent works of art

The assessment process made use of a simple scoring system where 1 = Poor, 2 = Fair, 3 = Good and 4 = Excellent.

Example interpretation of quality scores:

4 = Excellent:

User experience beyond expectation. This is the ideal world given unlimited funds.

Example – ‘*Access paths / Hard paved surfaces*’

- Paths in an extremely good state and contributing to park's infrastructure
- Surfaces smooth and consistent, no dips or cracks, no mossy patches or encroaching weed growth.
- Drains are clean and free of litter/debris
- No sign of dog fouling.

3 = Good:

Users should be more than satisfied with facilities and services. They should have a positive impression of Bristol's Parks and Green Spaces.

2 = Fair:

Minimum acceptable standard, “utility grade”.

1 = Poor:

This is an unacceptable standard and requires corrective action. The user is likely to wish to complain.

Example – ‘Access paths / Hard paved surfaces’

- Patching evident that contributes to overall feel of unarrested decline
- Paths have significant settlement dips and cracks apparent
- There are trip hazards
- Poorly drained areas, mossy patches evident and encroaching weed growth.
- Drains are blocked with litter/debris
- Signs of extensive dog fouling

The average quality level across all sites in Bristol was found to be 2.03 - fair. Within this were important variations. In broad terms, older (pre-1920) parks are higher quality though not necessarily in better condition, due mainly to higher design standards and density of features of interest. The historic estates have good design and condition (with significant investment in recent years). The worst quality is in the mid/late 20th century suburbs where extensive open spaces have low design quality and high levels of abuse, and in some inner city areas subjected to neglect and high levels of abuse (although the basic design quality can be good).

The quality (or quality score) data can be collated and expressed in any number of ways. Each site can be given an overall score, the individual scores for site features are known, scores for sites in an area can be amalgamated and scores for individual features can also be amalgamated e.g. footpaths. This allows a diverse or composite picture of quality to be expressed, providing a very powerful decision-making tool.

Data indicating the quality of parks and green spaces by area (NB: as assessed in 2005/6) can be found at www.bristol.city.gov.uk/parks

3.13 Assessment of need

PPG 17 states that the quality standard should be informed by community views. Public research has shown that improving the quality of parks and green spaces in a variety of ways should be the council’s priority for green space policy. Quality is expressed in a way that both a quality standard and service management policy can respond to. Research clearly shows that satisfaction with park quality varies considerably across the city and that raising quality will act to raise satisfaction with the amount of, and access to, green space and will increase frequency of use.

Bristol City Council has a bank of research data to direct the provision of better quality green spaces that goes back to 1999 – and the findings are closely

comparable to national research. The empirical research for the Strategy did not attempt to elicit a definition of a quality park or quality type of green space by direct questioning. However, together with past research, the breadth and depth of data received allows a very confident appraisal of quality relating to green spaces and what is required of the city's parks service. This appraisal is limited in its relevance to planning requirements but has greater relevance to service improvement and management policy by the parks service and other BCC departments.

For the production of the Strategy, three principal research methods were used to inform our assessment of quality:

- Quality of Life surveys - completed by nearly 4,000 Bristol residents in 2004;
- A separate commissioned public survey - completed by 800 people
- Focus groups - engaged a further 139 people.

A comprehensive review of past research carried out by Bristol Parks was also carried out.

The research demonstrates that indicators of quality are dependent on the following headline needs:

1. A high frequency and comprehensive maintenance regime;
2. A lack of run down, damaged and vandalised facilities/equipment;
3. The presence of a variety of facilities with a clear number of priorities within these;
4. Parks being and feeling safe to use – closely linked to tackling anti-social behaviour and the presence of a park keeper on-site;
5. The issue of dog mess and dogs off leads being addressed;
6. A provision of a variety of types of spaces that may be used in different ways;
7. The provision of multifunctional spaces that may provide a broad range of experiences;
8. The provision of accurate information in appropriate formats.

Delivery of higher quality in these terms is the concern of both wider Parks and Green Space Strategy policies as well as the policy covering the quality standard. The emphasis in the Strategy is on better design and investment in improved infrastructure - which are long term, capital funding issues. However the quality standard recognises that user experience is also very strongly affected by condition and day-to-day maintenance, which are primarily short and medium term revenue funding issues.

The objective quality assessment laid out in the **Manual for Assessing Quality** and enshrined in the standard will address findings 1, 2 and 3 above. The quantity standard will also support finding 6 and 7. Service management policy will address all findings.

The list above shows that quality means different things to different people, though, collectively, all the indicators have strong support from research. An *Equalities Impact Assessment* carried out as part of the strategy - assessing

impacts of parks services on groups of people identified by race, gender, disability and age - clearly identifies different priorities for these different groups of people.

The new empirical research also provides some measure of the type of improvements users suggest for each of the different component types of space (informal, formal, active sports, natural green and children and young people's) that affect quality.

Bristol Parks has for several years invested in the Council's annual Quality of Life surveys and presented questions to elicit satisfaction levels for quality for different types of green space and green space overall. The Quality of Life data allows a spatial comparison of user data and this data with other spatial data.

The Quality of Life data supports the need for a green space quality standard, clearly showing year on year that the public's satisfaction with quality is very different in different areas of the city. The veracity of this data is proven when compared with Bristol's objective quality assessment data. A substantial correlation exists between public satisfaction with quality and an objective assessment of site quality (see Appendix 1).

Quality of Life data also shows that the satisfaction with quality of parks and green space is closely connected to satisfaction with amount and accessibility and also both the level and frequency of use (see Appendix 2). This supports the principle of a raised quality standard for Bristol's green spaces and brings confidence that this will result in greater and more frequent use of them.

3.14 Review of national and local policy and guidance

Bristol's quality standard responds to both Planning Policy Guidance 17 and the Government's national standard for high quality green space administered by the Civic Society – the Green Flag Award.

The quality assessment methodology used for all Bristol's publicly accessible parks and green spaces has been informed by the Green Flag Award scheme but is bespoke to Bristol.

Green Flag includes assessment of community relations, environmental management and marketing which are omitted from Bristol's quality assessment methodology. The Bristol methodology gives more weight to design and infrastructure, and to routine and preventative maintenance. The Green Flag model was initially considered as the method to produce a local standard but did not fit Bristol's particular needs – in particular, as the methodology chosen was also needed to inform the essential financial investment modelling for the strategy.

The Bristol methodology adds detail to assessing the quality of facilities, features and site infrastructure with a consideration of these for their provision, condition and maintenance. The scope of Green Flag is broader with consideration of the adoption of relevant policies, environmentally sustainable management practices and commitments, the involvement of the community in management, good marketing and promotion and the existence of a management plan as central to

Green Flag status. The Bristol process is not distracted, for example, by the need for a site management plan or site risk assessments.

The Green Flag Award scheme recognises and rewards the highest quality standards, usually with the focus on sites of a certain status or size. As the Bristol quality standard can be applied to all publicly accessible green spaces in the city and, in accordance with PPG 17 should be set at an achievable level, the utility of Green Flag is again necessarily limited.

Both Green Flag and the Bristol processes are carried out from a user/visitor perspective.

3.15 Benchmarking

Bristol is a lead authority on the development of a bespoke method of assessing and expressing green space quality. The need through PPG 17 for a local standard means that other cities' standards are not directly comparable – and most authorities have adopted the Green Flag 'field assessment' as their model.

Of the Core Cities (Bristol, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Sheffield, Birmingham, Nottingham, Leeds) Leeds, for example, has established a local Performance Indicator based on the Green Flag Award scheme. Leeds' internal Green Flag assessors undertake field inspections of sample sites on a 3-year rolling programme. Sites that meet a minimum threshold are awarded a local distinction – a 'Leeds Quality Park' award.

Sheffield is using Green Flag as a benchmark for selected sites – reflecting a potential future application for Green Flag status.

No benchmarking work around quality has been carried out with other local authorities.

3.16 Advisors advice

Bristol's methodology in addressing the difficult task of pinning down and measuring quality, has enjoyed the particular support of *CABE Space*, which has indicated enthusiasm for promoting its use nationally.

3.17 Testing the standard

The quality standard has been carefully and comprehensively tested to ensure that it is both achievable and (potentially) affordable whilst at the same time meeting the public's desire of demonstrating that an improvement in quality can be achieved – albeit over almost a generation. Achieving the quality standard across the city's green space estate is a considerable task and will take a significant increase in capital and revenue expenditure.

PPG 17 makes it clear that local standards should be achievable and it is therefore important that the quality standard is set at a level that can be delivered financially. In order to be confident of this, the costs of delivering quality improvements have been comprehensively modelled. The Strategy Investment Model provides the potential delivery costs required to achieve and maintain the quality standard of 'good' whilst providing a confident prediction of the cost of delivering any level of improvement to quality – above or below the standard. The model has been used to ensure that the level of potential funding available for the strategy is sufficient to match service delivery.

The Strategy Investment Model provides a £/m² rate for each typology type (formal green space, informal green space, natural green space, children and young people's space, active sports space) to move the quality level from Fair to Good - and through to Excellent if required. The model also provides a £/m² rate for the three elements of quality in the standard - provision, condition and maintenance (refer to Appendix 2):

- Provision – This is the initial capital required to provide the feature. In the case of existing features this will include refurbishment costs, or this may necessitate in total replacement to achieve good or excellent standard.
- Condition - Based on fifteen year period, the cost of /major refurbishment/replacement must be equated to a £/m²/year basis.
- Maintenance - This is the annual planned (grounds) maintenance on a £/m²/year basis. Must include all staff costs.

The £/m² rates have been calculated using real contract costs associated with a sample 12 sites. Bristol Parks also undertook a rate comparison exercise with members of the Core Cities and other councils. When considering what to include for good and excellent quality design, it was considered what the general public would expect or appreciate - not what may be appreciated by a 'professional architectural critic'.

An initial assessment of the costs of reaching 'good' and 'excellent' indicated it to be unlikely that the council could afford a minimum standard of excellent. From this assessment a greater amount of detailed work then went into modelling the costs of reaching good - the predicted costs for reaching excellent are therefore less robust.

The rigour and effectiveness of the quality assessment process was tested early by engaging representatives of community park groups, Bristol Parks' staff and a CABA Space representative in an on-site trial. The result provided a high level of confidence that an inevitably complex series of criteria, could be applied to any site in the city, whilst taking differences in type and site context into account - and still conclude with a high level of consistency once independently scored assessments were compared. Participants in the testing process did not suggest adding any further to the assessment criteria but did recommend that one or two of the most 'subjective' criteria such as how 'safe' a site feels and how well it works with surrounding land uses are best answered by users rather than site managers.

The council is confident that meeting the standard will allow it to respond to public concern about raising quality - and that the public will benefit from a subsequent increase in the use and enjoyment of parks and green space.

3.18 Links to other documents

The standard is supported by the Manual for Assessing Quality and the Bristol Green Space Design Guide. The standard has methodology connections to Green Flag and conforms to Planning Policy Guidance 17.

The Green Space Quantity Standard of 'good' is defined by the objective quality assessment process and data discussed above. This is laid out in detail in the support document **Manual for Assessing Quality**.

In addition to the Manual which defines quality, the objective to deliver a 'good' standard is also supported the **Bristol Green Space Design Guide** which provides clear guidance of how quality standards are to be consistently achieved, both in respect of refurbishing existing green spaces, or when creating new ones.

The Design Guide is the document that:

- guides planning officers with regard to standards that are to be delivered through the planning process, including by way of **SPD 4 - Achieving Positive Planning through the use of Planning Obligations**.
- guides landscape architects engaged to design integrated schemes for the refurbishment of existing green spaces, or when designing new ones.
- informs officers who will act as clients, about design considerations to be incorporated in a brief.
- stimulates a shared awareness, of designer and landscape manager, of long-term design and management considerations - with a specific view to their sustainability.

3.2 Standards Development - Distance

3.21 The proposed Green Space Distance Standard

The aim of the distance standard is to protect and promote an accessible network of green space. The distance standards are based on research as to how far Bristol residents (both users and non users of green space) feel it is reasonable to travel to get to the different types of space - and an analysis of green space location in Bristol's layout to ensure the standards are credible. The analysis examined existing citywide distribution graphically, for each type of green space, showing the coverage currently achieved under various distance options; and also examined the deliverability of the draft standards in three Local Need Areas. The distances proposed are maximum recommended distances.

The distances proposed are in the table below:

Distance Standard		
	Walking Time (minutes)	Distance –'as the crow flies' (metres)
Distance to the nearest green space	9*	400*
Children's play space	10	450
Formal green Space	15	600
Informal green space	13	550
Natural green space	18	700
Active sports space	Determined by Playing Pitch Strategy	Determined by Playing Pitch Strategy

*The relationship between a unit distance and a walking time is calculated using a formula derived from the National Playing Fields Association's method of providing distances from walking times in the 'Six Acre Standard'. This is a well-known and nationally applied method.

Overall distance to the nearest green space

This standard was not part of the original public research, but was proposed to respond to the fact that many park visits (eg; for informal play or to exercise the dog) could use any type of open space, and also that many open spaces already support more than one type of use – or could be improved to do so.

It is likely to be the headline distance standard and the most important in planning policy: the fact that conversion between types is possible means that it should carry greater weight in planning (development control) decisions.

This distance is greater than many standards recommended nationally, particularly for play. However, a lower figure would leave significant gaps in parts of Bristol where there is no likelihood of open space being created; and the user

research suggests that play is the only type where this standard could not meet public need (see next paragraphs). Under the proposed 400 metre standard there would be some gaps in provision, but the key judgement is to set a standard which provides protection for existing open space at an appropriate level.

Children's play space

This was originally called "children's and young people's space". However the needs of these two groups (ie younger children and teenagers) are different and it is misleading to imply that provision for one would be satisfactory for the other, to be delivered by a single standard.

This standard is likely to be particularly sensitive because accessibility is a greater issue for children and their carers than for most adults. The distance proposed is also a large increase on most play distance standards – for example the current Local Plan sets a distance of 120 metres for play in new development. The comparison is not completely valid because the proposed standard is for dedicated, quality assured children's play space, while other types of green space are also available – but clearly there is a potential impact because even the "nearest green space" standard is a large increase on the Local Plan standard. User research suggests that distances beyond a 400 metre standard start to impact on some users of play space.

However, to meet a 400 metre standard would require a dramatic increase in the number of playgrounds and there is a strategic choice to be made over how to balance number/distance, and quality. Even the proposed 450 metre standard implies a significant increase in the number of playgrounds over the life of the strategy (from the current 101 to between 155 and 175). The general priority given to quality assurance in the draft Strategy led to an initial proposal of 500 metres; but for children's play, distance ranks alongside quality in importance - hence the proposed compromise.

In those areas where existing play provision is denser than the proposed standard, there is a good case for rationalisation to create an affordable and sustainable network of high quality play spaces (the current network is none of these). Consideration was given to having a subsidiary 400m standard to apply to higher density neighbourhoods. However, in these cases other relevant factors (particularly the guidelines potentially encouraging denser provision in areas of high child population and/or relative deprivation and social stress) will achieve the same purpose without the confusion that results from having two play standards.

The land requirements of playgrounds are comparatively low, so creation of playgrounds in existing green spaces to rectify deficits is generally quite feasible. The main issue is to avoid nuisance (if the playground is too close to houses) but at the same time to provide surveillance and a safe environment.

User research shows that young people are able and willing to travel significantly further for particular facilities such as wheels parks. All the same, there is widespread recognition that large parts of Bristol fail to provide sufficient opportunity for young people's recreation and that social conflict can result if that provision is not available closer to home. There is a traditional weakness in specific provision for young people in open spaces, and parks should be able to

contribute much more. The current proposal is to have a general enabling policy and programmes to fill this provision gap as an important strand of the P&GSS – and to set a service performance target of 1 km for Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs) and 2 km for wheels parks.

There has been much interest lately in teen shelters, but these have significant limitations if provided in isolation from active facilities like Wheels parks, MUGAs and the like - and getting the right facility in a location which minimises or avoids conflict with neighbours is more important than distance.

Finally, participation in location and design decisions is probably more important for this group than any other. For these reasons, and because the evidence base is weaker, the distance proposals for young people's facilities are not included in the formal list of distance standards.

Formal green space

“Formal green space” is where the aesthetic appeal of the landscape is a primary reason for visits. This can vary from a small formal garden to a large picturesque landscape.

No revision has been made to the initial research based distance standard of 600 metres. Distribution maps show substantial parts of Bristol as not meeting this standard currently. However

- A large part of the apparent gap is because the database allocates land to some other type which also functions as formal green space
- Gaps are comparatively easily rectified by creation of formal and more ornamental areas within other types - particularly true of informal space. This would apply particularly in parts of south Bristol which has large amounts of informal green space. Here the standard would operate not in a protective way but in a creative way – to remedy what is a real shortage of a particular user opportunity.

Informal green space

Almost all of Bristol already meets the proposed standard of 550 metres for informal space, which is the distance drafted from public research.

Natural green space

Almost all of Bristol already meets the proposed standard of 700 metres for natural green space, which is the distance drafted from public research.

Active sports space

Bristol has already adopted a Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS), which uses the nationally recommended Sport England methodology. This is robust and needs based, and therefore meets the requirements of PPG 17. Under this Sport England methodology and the associated PPS, the determination of whether there is adequate supply for outdoor sport in localities is not purely based on

distance and quantity standards as with the other types – mainly because team sports involve users being willing to travel longer distances; eg 20 minutes by car. The analysis of supply according to the PPS shows that Bristol has generally an adequate supply of pitches. A revision to the adopted (2005) PPS is now in draft form and can be made available on request.

The first draft standards for active sports in localities included a distance standard of 630 metres based on user consultation. Feasibility testing of this showed a large proportion of Bristol outside this standard. The absurd implication would be that many more pitches would need to be created even though there is no demand for additional pitches.

Indeed the drive of the Playing Pitch Strategy is towards consolidation into more viable and manageable clusters of pitches (often bringing secondary school pitches into community use). The contradiction is probably explained by the fact that a great deal of active sporting recreation takes place in informal green space – jogging, ball games, etc, whereas this type is defined around more formally identified sports space demanding specific facilities and/or management. This distinction did not emerge clearly in initial user consultation.

Therefore the current proposal is not to set a distance standard for active space in the P&GSS, but to refer playing pitch land use decisions (whether management decisions or development control) to the Playing Pitch Strategy. However other sports provision – particularly tennis, bowls, and all weather provision/MUGAs – are covered by both the Playing Pitch Strategy and the P&GSS; both documents will work together to determine decisions on these types of provision. Although the methodology is still in development, the intention is to prepare plans for each of these sports based on the following principles:

- *Bowls*: requirements can be measured by the level of use of existing facilities. It is believed that there is currently adequate supply (or possibly a small surplus). A recently introduced methodology to assess bowling demand is being modelled in the city.
- *Tennis*: appears to be a similar position to bowls, however the poor condition of many parks courts may artificially suppress demand. The higher priority is to establish hubs with sufficient scale to sustain proper management. A recently introduced methodology to assess tennis demand is being modelled in the city.
- *Multi-use games areas (MUGAs) and all weather provision*: there is inadequate hard evidence to support any particular standard but as noted above, there is a shortage of accessible opportunities (particularly for young people) to engage in active sports. There is a cross-over between play and sports provision, with a significant but rather technical distinction between the former, which is open access, and the latter, which is bookable and more controlled. Either way, the facility needs to be very robust and previous investment decisions in Bristol have tended to save short term cost at the expense of a facility which is frequently closed less than a decade later through vandalism. But MUGAs are very efficient users of land, and an increase in their number and accessibility is an important strategic principle.

Guidelines for applying the distance standards

When applying the distance standards,

- Physical barriers such as railways, main roads and steep slopes will be taken into account, but administrative boundaries (e.g. of wards, or Local Need Areas) will not (unless they coincide with physical barriers).
- In most cases local gaps in provision of one type of green space could be filled either by wholesale conversion of another site of another type, or by adapting it to be multifunctional. Where it is not possible to fill a gap from existing green space, it would usually be unrealistic to create new green space and the priority would be to increase the quality and visibility of the nearest existing spaces.
- Distance isn't the whole story when considering accessibility – when managing provision, other aspects such as disabled access, visibility, visitor welcome and navigability are also important.
- Local demographics such as a high number of children, access to transport facilities etc should influence the interpretation of the standards. A conclusion of the equalities impact assessment is that minority communities are more concerned about travel distance than most people, and this should be taken into account.
- Subject to all the above, the distance standards are intended to reflect the furthest a person would have to travel to get to a particular type of space – in most cases it is likely that spaces will be closer.
- No single distance is given for active sports because participants in competitive sport will travel significant distances for games and location can be dependant on fixtures with teams organising transport to get there. Nevertheless the Playing Pitch Strategy indicates the intention of having an accessible network of pitches and 'hub sites', and the management proposals in the Parks and Green Space Strategy include development of a network of multi-use games areas for informal and organised sport at about **1km intervals** as well as policies for the provision of tennis and bowls facilities.
- The play standard is for access to a dedicated quality assured play space: other types of green space, particularly informal, are also expected to contribute to the land available for children.

3.22 Assessment of provision

The current accessibility of different types of green space is heavily dependent on location. There is currently no distance threshold target for any type of green space other than that stated in the current Local Plan.

Thorough GIS mapping has taken place of all publicly accessible green space within the Bristol local authority boundary. As previously explained, the city has also been mapped by typology type (informal green space, formal green space, active sports space, natural green space and children and young people's space). This work has enabled the proposed distance standards to be tested using GIS to reveal which areas are not properly served by different types of space.

Data indicating the accessibility of green space defined by a walking distance by the Bristol Green Space Distance Standard can be found at www.bristol.city.gov.uk/parks

3.23 Assessment of need

A targeted public research programme has provided an accurate picture of how far people in Bristol are willing to walk and travel to different types of green space. This information has been used to directly inform the proposed distance standards – the standards for formal green space, informal green space and natural green space are derived only from public research. All the standards have been tested for their achievability and any diversion from user research is a product of this.

For the Strategy, three methods were used to inform a distance standard:

- Quality of Life surveys - completed by nearly 4,000 Bristol residents in 2004;
- A separate commissioned public survey - completed by 800 people
- Focus groups - engaged a further 139 people.

A comprehensive review of past research carried out by Bristol Parks was also carried out.

a) The *Quality of Life survey* asked if people found it easy or difficult to access parks and green spaces locally. The resulting data and the correlation between levels of satisfaction with quality, accessibility, frequency of visits and amount of green space have already been given (see appendix 2). A summary conclusion is that Quality of Life data that responds to the question about ease of access cannot directly inform a standard - expressed as a distance threshold. The correlation of ease of access with quality is some evidence that in establishing distance thresholds, a link to quality can be made. The provision of higher quality spaces is likely to result in a perception that they are easier to access.

b) The *general survey* commissioned for the Strategy was completed by respondents without additional support or guidance from the researcher – only a short explanation of grassy, open spaces and formal park/public garden was provided.

The survey results were as follows (the figures in the 2nd and 3rd column are cumulative i.e. they incorporate the figures in the previous column(s)):

Type of space	Willingness to walk...		
	No more than 5 mins (%)	No more than 10 mins (%)	No more than 15 mins (%)
Formal park	12.5	31.6	55.6
Play area	20.7	49.4	71
Woodland area	3.4	13.5	33.7
Natural area	3.4	13.1	32.4
Grassy, informal area	13.9	37	55.1
Sports space	15.8	37.1	60.1

The results show that the type of space to which people prefer to walk the shortest distance is a play area. Respondents are willing to walk furthest to urban woodland areas and natural areas – both having virtually identical response profiles.

c) Focus groups were planned to involve people of different ages, abilities and include people with young families. The groups were also planned to fully inform participants of the facts needed to make informed decisions and eliminate bias as far as practicable in the time allowed.

At the focus group sessions facilitators used accurate maps of the areas in which participants lived and circles representing different walking distances that could be overlaid on the map. The radii of the circles were calculated using NPFA figures in the ‘Six Acre Standard’.

The variety of different needs represented by participants helps make the overall sample representative and final distance thresholds credible. The results for the average distance people were willing to walk to different types of space were:

Informal space:	12.7 mins
Children and young people’s space:	13.4 mins
Formal space:	15.6 mins
Natural green space:	16.1 mins
Fixed sports space:	16.5 mins
Seasonal sports space:	16.9 mins

The two sets of results, from focus groups and from the P&GSS survey, are not strictly comparable. Respondents at focus groups were introduced by facilitators to a description of the different types of space and of the concept of them working together on one site. The survey respondents didn’t have this to the same degree and are more likely to be considering particular green spaces than types of space within them. Therefore a greater weighting should be given to the focus group

results. A judgement on how the two sets of results might compare with regard to willingness to walk is:

	Focus group	P&GSS survey
Informal space:	12.7 mins	15 mins
Children and young people’s space:	13.4 mins	10-12 mins
Formal space:	15.6 mins	15 mins
Natural green space:	16.1 mins	15+ mins
Fixed sports space:	16.5 mins	15 mins
Seasonal sports space:	16.9 mins	15 mins

In relation to equalities impacts, it is important to note a significant finding within these figures. That is parents with young children and people from black and other minority ethnic communities are generally not willing to walk more than 10 minutes to access a children’s play area. The researchers responsible for this part of the research gave a clear indication to the Parks and Green Space Strategy team that setting a standard for children’s play over 10 mins would have a negative effect those most likely to visit.

The final recommendation for distance thresholds from all the research is shown below. *The calculation of distance has been made using a formula derived from the National Playing Fields Association’s method of providing distances from walking times in the Six Acre Standard.*

	Time (minutes)	Distance – straight line (radial) (metres)
Children’s and young people’s space	12	505
Informal space	13	538
Formal space	15	600
Active sports space	16	629
Natural green space	18	686

Recommended accessibility standard from customer research (2006)

3.24 Review of national and local policy and guidance

The most important use of national guidance has been in the translation of consultees’ expression of walking ‘time’ to a distance equivalent. The council has used the National Playing Fields Association’s formula for converting time to distance which has been in common use across local authorities for a number of years.

Proposed distance standards have not been readily informed by other national guidelines. The methodology does of course respond to Planning Policy Guidance 17.

INFORMAL SPACE - there is no specific national guidance suggesting a standard expressly for the provision of informal green space. However the National Playing Fields Association's (NPFA) Six-Acre Standard designation of a Local Area for Play can be interpreted as applying to simply 'an open space' which may incorporate many green spaces that are informal, or indeed formal, in type. The NPFA distance threshold is 60 metres.

FORMAL GREEN SPACE - there are no existing national or local standards or related guidance relating specifically to the provision of formal space (see comment under 'informal space' above).

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SPACE - The NPFA's Six Acre Standard is widely used. The three 'designated' categories of play area identified in the Six Acre Standard are:

LAP - Local Areas for Play - a small (unequipped) area of unsupervised open space specifically designated for young children for play activities.

LEAP - Local Equipped Areas for Play - an unsupervised play area equipped for children of early school age.

NEAP - Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play - an unsupervised site servicing a substantial residential area, equipped mainly for older children but with opportunities for play for younger children.

The Six Acre Standard provides guidance on desirable walking distance to these areas. These differ reflecting the differing ages and abilities of the children at which each area is aimed, and are:

Play area type	Time	Pedestrian Route	Straight line 'as the crow flies' distance
LAP	1 minute	100 metres	60 metres
LEAP	5 minutes	400 metres	240 metres
NEAP	15 minutes	1000 metres	600 metres

The Children's Play Council is consulting on proposed Performance Indicators for Play (April 2006) for assessing local authority performance in ensuring the availability of quality facilities and spaces for all children and young people's play and informal recreation across their area. It is intended that the indicators should have the potential for use within the culture block of Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) and in the Joint Area Reviews of children's services, which form part of the Ofsted Every Child Matters inspection framework.

The draft indicators proposed by the CPC below are intended to be used to ensure that, wherever they live or spend the majority of their free time, children and young people have access to spaces and facilities for play and informal recreation which:

- pass the '3 frees' test i.e. are free of charge, where they are free to come and go and free to choose what they do while there;
- are accessible, welcoming and engaging for all, including those who are disabled or have specific needs and wishes;
- allow for the differing needs people of different ages and with different play interests and needs.

- *the indicators are influenced by the NPFA Six Acre Standard.*

Examples of places and facilities for play and informal recreation.	Straight line distance (m) (as the crow flies)
Small equipped play areas (up to 4 items primarily aimed at young children)	60
Large equipped play areas (5 to 7 items aimed primarily at children from 7 to 10 years old)	240
Junior bike, skate and skateboard facilities, kick about areas	260
Adventure playgrounds	600
Neighbourhood equipped play areas (8+ items, of which some are of interest to older children)	600
Teenage wheeled sports area	600
Ball courts, multi-use games areas	600
Hangout/youth shelters	600

Children’s Play Council proposal for consultation (April 2006)

NATURAL GREEN SPACE - English Nature (now Natural England) believes that local authorities should consider the provision of natural areas as part of a balanced policy. Its Accessible Natural Green Space standard recommends that provision should be made of at least 2 ha of accessible natural green space per 1000 population according to a system of tiers into which sites of different sizes fit:

- No person should live more than 300 m from their nearest area of natural green space;
- There should be at least one accessible 20 ha site within 2 km from home;
- There should be one accessible 100 ha site within 5 km; and,
- There should be one accessible 500 ha site within 10 km.

ACTIVE SPORTS SPACE - the National Playing Fields Association’s Six-Acre Standard considers that a travelling time of approximately 20 minutes by motor transport, to synthetic pitches or athletics tracks, and a 10-15 minute cycle-ride or walk to local facilities is reasonable. It advocates that local playing fields be available within 1.2km of all dwellings to provide opportunities for outdoor sports.

Note: the Bristol Playing Pitch Strategy provides a distance threshold/catchment radii for future ‘Hub’ Sites of 3000 metres. A Hub Sites are multi-sport, multi-activity sites that provide an optimum basis for planning and allocation of resources.

3.25 Benchmarking

Of the Core Cities (Bristol, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Sheffield, Birmingham, Nottingham, Leeds) Leeds, via Comprehensive Performance Assessment, has a current target of three different sports facilities (one of which must have a recognised quality award e.g. Green Flag) within a 30 minute walk in

urban areas. There is no updated methodology for viable accessibility standards to date in response to PPG 17.

Sheffield currently has a Site Categorisation Strategy which recognises green space at a city, district and local level. The Local Plan adopts a standard in the Local Plan of Informal Open Space (informal recreation space & landscaped amenity areas) being provided at 400m at a local level and 1200 metres at a district level. Sheffield will advocate a district scale (1200m) provision for improvement of open space in lieu of a complete set of audits to inform future standards.

Teignbridge District Council has been advised to adopt distance standards of 240m (5 mins) for toddlers and young children’s play space, 480m (10 mins) for older children/teenagers and 600m (15 mins) for parks and gardens/informal open space/natural green space. No distance standard for playing pitches has been advised or for other fixed sports facilities.

3.26 Advisors advice

No advice was sought for the adoption of distance standards for Bristol.

3.27 Testing the standard

The distance standards have been carefully and comprehensively tested to assess if they are both achievable and affordable - whilst at the same time meeting the public’s expressed willingness to walk to use green space. The result has been that standards have been able to be set that meet users expectations.

As with the quality standard, with the distance standard(s) it is important to adhere to PPG 17 in aiming for the local standard(s) to be achievable. This applies to the ability of the city’s existing green space allocation to respond to customer need (and the opportunity for the provision of new green space) and also to the standard being deliverable financially.

Green space of all types has been comprehensively mapped using GIS computer software and, using the NPFA formula of converting distance into a walking time, and vice versa, this has enabled distance standards to be easily tested. The outcome of customer research has been tested and mapped to compare with existing provision and also ‘theoretically’ applied to the city’s footprint.

The result of this has been that all the distance standards proposed can be set in order to meet user expectations.

Distance Standards			
	Initial standard – user preference only	Revised Distance following feasibility	Time equivalent of distance standard
Distance to the nearest green space		400	9
Children’s play	400	450	10

Bristol Green Space Provision Standards Development Guide

space			
Formal green Space	600	600	15
Informal green space	540	550	13
Natural green space	690	700	18
Active Sports spaces	630	Referred to playing pitch strategy	n/a

3.3 Standards Development - Quantity

3.31 The proposed Green Space Quantity Standard

The amount of open space per resident varies hugely between and within cities. At 3.8 hectares per 1000 residents (38 square metres per capita) Bristol is comparatively rich in green space, but this varies greatly between central and Victorian districts (quite low) and the outer suburbs. This is one factor explaining why deriving quantity standards – which might seem the simplest and most obvious dimension of provision – has been difficult. This is the case in Bristol as in other cities attempting this exercise.

The total Bristol Green Space Quantity Standard has citywide and locality components:

- **Locality component** – the minimum amount of green space that any area should have.
- **City wide component** – the total amount of space within all the city’s large destination parks (Blaise/Kingweston, Oldbury Court/Snuff Mills, The Downs, Hengrove Play Park, and the area of Ashton Court that sits within the city’s boundary). For practical purposes, there is negligible likelihood of the area of destination parks in Bristol being reduced. By definition, people are prepared to travel to destination parks, and there is no evidence of a lack of carrying capacity, so the actual is proposed as the standard. However this figure could be increased if [a] Hengrove Park is developed as a destination park [b] some widely used city centre parks were treated as ‘destinations’ and therefore added to the total.

The total Bristol Green Space Quantity Standard is the figure that can be used to compare Bristol and its standards with other cities. However, for planning and land management purposes the locality component aims to ensure adequate supply in every neighbourhood. The city wide component is largely fixed.

Proposed minimum quantity standard:

	sq m/capita	Hectares/1000 pop
Locality Component	18.0	1.80
City wide component	9.8	0.98
Total Bristol Standard	27.8	2.78

Locality quantity standards for each type of space have been set as follows:

Locality Standards for different types of space		
	sq m/capita	Hectares/1000 pop
Children’s play space	0.3	0.03

Formal green space	2.0	0.20
Informal green space	8.0	0.80
Natural green space	9.0	0.90
Active sports space	Refer to Playing Pitch Strategy and PGSS	Refer to Playing Pitch Strategy and PGSS

NB: The Locality Standard is slightly less than the total of standards for individual types, and would be more so if a standard were given for active sports space. This discrepancy arises in the way the standards are set, and is consistent with the fact that a proportion of the land is multi-functional i.e. land requirements for individual types can overlap. An obvious example is that football pitches are used as such only at certain times and act as informal open space for the remainder. The reason some discrepancy is not necessarily easy to understand for the non-specialist. However, it is based on sound principles and it is not obvious how it could be avoided.

It is worth noting that the extent of multiple use is far greater at the destination sites, where it is the rule not the exception. This is why no attempt has been made to give a typological breakdown of the overall Bristol quantity standard, only for the locality component.

Children’s Play Space

The standard for Children’s Play Space has been adjusted upwards from the outcome of the assessment exercise* (0.02 ha/1000 people), because the impact of applying the distance standard for play and the proposed minimum of 600 sq metres for a play site equates to an increased level of provision. The distinction between types of children’s and young people’s provision, discussed above for distance standards, applies equally to the quantity standards. The majority of existing space is for children’s play and the standard is proposed only for this.

*Refer to pages 25 and 26.

Formal Green Space

Formal green space can take the form of extensive picturesque landscapes or small ornamental gardens - so space requirements, and consequently the standard, are particularly in need of intelligent interpretation – it is recognised as a comparatively weak indicator.

Informal Green Space

Unsurprisingly, parts of Bristol greatly exceed the standard for Informal Green Space. Frequently these sites are “back land” and suffer from low legitimate use and high levels of vandalism and abuse.

Natural Green Space

Whilst significant areas of green space have been consciously managed for wildlife benefits for many years, other areas of open space in some areas of Bristol have also been neglected for many years and have developed nature conservation interest by natural processes. The assessment suggests that there

is significantly greater extent than is needed for people to have good access to natural green space. This view is likely to be controversial as many people regard natural green space as having intrinsic value, with no limit to the amount which is beneficial.

Active sports space

The same issues discussed for the distance standards apply to the quantity of active sports space.

Guidelines for applying the quantity standard

- Likely population growth in the locality should be taken into account, to ensure the standard is achievable into the future.
- The overall standard (as opposed to the breakdown by type) is most relevant to planning decisions, as conversion is possible between types. Moreover, the database only records one type for any area, and an assessment should be made of what areas in the locality support multiple uses.
- As previously explained, a separate assessment in the Playing Pitch Strategy has already been established to determine playing pitch requirements, using a database of teams which is updated regularly.
- Children's play spaces should ideally be at least 600 square metres in area – it is difficult to provide a balanced range of facilities in a smaller area.
- The locality standards should be applied within a credible area – they were drafted on the basis of 16 Local Need Areas, but could be applied to other areas such as neighbourhood partnership areas (often 2/3 council wards). If the analysis is applied to smaller areas it will be less valid. If any of the destination parks is within the locality in question, it clearly contributes to satisfying locality needs and should be included in the analysis.
- The standard aims to guarantee adequate provision for users. There are other reasons for protecting open space, which the planning system embodies in a range of policies – such as those for nature conservation, archaeology, flood plain protection and the like. *The quantity standard supplements, and does not replace, these. As a result, in most areas more open space will be protected than the minimum standard identifies.*

3.32 Assessment of provision

Thorough GIS mapping has taken place of all publicly accessible green space within the Bristol local authority boundary. The city has also been mapped by typology type (informal green space, formal green space, active sports space, natural green space and children and young people's space). This work has enabled the total amount of accessible green space in the city to be expressed and the total amount of each typology type. The amount of any green space or

any type can also be expressed by local area - commonly by ward or by the Local Need Areas the strategy considers. The quantity provision data can be configured to be expressed in other areas as required.

The amount of green space currently provided in the city is:

	Area (ha)	Area m ² /person
Formal green space	103	2.6
Informal green space	653	16.4
Children and young people's space	14.7	0.37
Natural green space	734	18.4
Active sports space*	8.1	0.2
Total amount of (accessible) green space	1512.8	37.97

*this figure does not include seasonal sports pitches as these are accounted for (in this table) within the figure for Informal Space.

Data indicating the quantity of green space by area (assessed 2005/6) can be found at www.bristol.city.gov.uk/parks

3.33 Assessment of need

It has not proved possible to inform a robust quantity standard from user research. The public's satisfaction with quantity is in fact correlated with (and determined by) local quality and not with local quantity. User research has helped determine a preference for different types of space and this has been used to inform other policies in the strategy.

Bristol Parks has for several years invested in the Council's annual Quality of Life surveys and from 2001 onwards a question to elicit satisfaction levels for different types of green space and green space overall has been presented. Analysis of the results has shown that satisfaction with amount does not appear to reflect what is on the ground with regard to green space provision locally (see Appendix 5). Further, respondents that represent high satisfaction tend to do so with the quality, the accessibility and the quantity of green space together (see Appendix 2), indicating that motives for satisfaction with amount are likely to be based on other factors than actual provision.

It was recognised when planning new public research for the strategy that it would be unlikely that a quantity standard could be informed directly i.e. expressed in units. The value the public attach to the environment generally and the difficulty of applying a useful measure to any response would prevent this. However a decision was made that eliciting *preferences* for *different types* of space was achievable and once a decision had been made for an overall quantity standard then this information can be used to inform how it is applied to the typology.

The research process involved working with different focus groups including groups of interest or need and groups in different areas of the city. Focus group work engaged with 99 people between January and March 2006.

A consultation tool was created to elicit preferences for different types of space as defined by the Strategy. The tool allowed participants to make decisions on the level of provision for the five types of space and tied this to the quality at which they should be maintained. The allocation of a realistic budget to fund this quality forced participants to express true preferences that recognised constraints in providing different types of space. The table below provides the results of consultation:

Type of space	Percentage change in provision of space by consultees
Formal space	- 43%
Informal space	+ 13%
Natural green space	- 8%
Children's space	+ 316%
Active sports – fixed	+ 68%
Active sports – seasonal	- 2%

The result showed that participants preferred to see both the provision and quality of children and young people’s space significantly increase from what is currently available in the city at the expense of other types of space. This was despite being aware of the high cost of providing this type of space.

The result also indicated that the public would be more inclined to reduce formal space in order to invest more in other types. A caveat here is that there was also strong evidence to show that formal (or traditional) *parks* (which can incorporate more than one type of space) were the most popular type of green space. During focus groups it was possible to draw a distinction between formal green space and formal (traditional) parks.

3.34 Review of national and local policy/guidance

Bristol City Council has worked hard to derive a local quantity standard that acts as a robust planning and management tool to be used to both inform new development and effectively be applied to an existing built environment. The need for the standard to respond to the city as it is and respond to its projected expansion has limited the influence of national guidance. However national guidance has been and will continue to be closely monitored to inform the application of policy, particularly with regard to natural green space and children and young people’s space. The quantity standard does of course respond to Planning Policy Guidance 17.

INFORMAL SPACE - there is no specific existing national or local standards or related guidance relating specifically to the provision of informal space. The National Playing Fields Association’s (NPFA) Six-Acre Standard designation of a Local Area for Play (LAP) can be interpreted as applying to simply ‘an open space’ which may incorporate many green spaces that are informal (or formal) in type. However the NPFA does not suggest a level of provision by quantity for a LAP.

FORMAL SPACE - there are no existing national or local standards or related guidance relating specifically to the provision of formal space.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SPACE - The NPFA's Six Acre Standard provides recommendations for a level of provision for all new developments which is widely used. The Standard equates to 2.4 hectares per 1000 people which consists of 24 sq metres per capita, and is broken down into provision standards for outdoor sport (16 sq m - of which 12 sq m is for pitch sports) and playgrounds including casual/informal play space (8 sq m).

NATURAL GREEN SPACE - English Nature (now Natural England) believes that local authorities should consider the provision of natural areas as part of a balanced policy through its Accessible Natural Green Space standard which recommends that provision should be made of at least 2 ha of accessible natural green space per 1000 population (20 sq m per capita) according to a system of tiers into which sites of different sizes fit:

- There should be at one accessible 20 ha site within 2 km from home;
- There should be one accessible 100 ha site within 5 km; and,
- There should be one accessible 500 ha site within 10 km.

ACTIVE SPORTS SPACE – in the NPFA's Six Acre Standard it recommends a provision of 12 sq metres per capita for pitch sports.

3.35 Benchmarking

Benchmarking has not directly helped inform a quantity standard for Bristol. Evidence from other authorities has shown that quantity standards where established vary significantly - as does the methodology to derive them. An additional complication is that authorities have tended to choose different ways to distinguish green space into types or applied quantity standards using a hierarchy. The result is that quantity standards across authorities are rarely comparable. Benchmarking evidence does support the PPG 17 requirement for a local standard to be applied locally.

Bristol is changing. By 2026 significant population and employment growth is expected. The population of Bristol could rise by some 39,700 by 2026 and the draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the South West expects that 28,000 new homes will be needed. The draft RSS shows that most of the future housing growth required in Bristol is intended to be located within the existing urban area, but it is assumed some will also need to be on the fringe of the city on green field sites.

All of this means that in addition to Bristol requiring a green space standard that meets the needs of existing communities it must also respond to the additional pressure on land created by a demand for housing and an expanding population. The key message here is that, unlike some other authorities, it is not able to propose a supply-led standard.

Of the Core Cities (Bristol, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Sheffield, Birmingham, Nottingham, Leeds) Sheffield currently has a 6 ha per 1000 population standard for public open space. This is a supply-led standard.

Sheffield will be moving from a supply led to a needs based approach. This is likely to be based on the 9 typologies identified in PPG 17 in contrast to Bristol's five. Other Core Cities, in particular Newcastle, are developing new local standards in line with PPG17 but none have as yet been adopted as council policy.

The table below shows examples of planned provision for green space in plans or strategies from district and borough councils (2006):

Authority:	Provision – Ha/1000 population (urban areas only)					
	Parks and gardens	Natural and semi-natural green space	Amenity green-space	Provision for children and young people	Outdoor sports facilities	Total (m2 per capita)
South Northants DC	1.55 (inc 0.4 formal)	1.15	1.55	0.95 (Childn) 0.2 (YP)	2	7.4 (74)
East Northants DC	0.6	1.3	0.8	0.1	1.69	4.49 (44.9)
Corby BC	2	1.6	1.51	0.8 (Childrn) 0.35 (YP)	1.8	8.06 (80.6)
Tamworth BC	0.6	2.7	1.15	0.5	1.5	6.45 (64.5)
Halton BC	1.25	2.75	1	0.2	None set	5.2 (52)
Oswestry BC	0.35	0.9	0.97	0.3	2.5	5.02 (50.2)
Wellingboro	0.7	1.8	1.2	0.625	2.4	6.725 (67.3)
Stevanage BC	0.73	1.78	1.09	0.8	2.2	6.6 (66)
Knowsley MBC	0.8	None set	1.31	0.2	1.85	4.16 (41.6)

The table below shows open space overall provision figures of other local authorities. Local standards vary from 19m² per capita to 41m² per capita. Of the areas most similar to Bristol, Trafford has a standard of 21, and Southwark a standard of 30:

Local Authority	Open Space Standard / m2 per capita
North Devon	41
Poole	30
Swindon	19.6
Maidstone	24.8
Basingstoke	28
Southwark	30
Cambridge	33

Norwich	24
Lichfield	30
Harrogate	34
Trafford	21
Average	28.7

Teignbridge have developed quantity standards to a local typology which embraces both a supply-led and needs-based approach. For example the known need for a greater number of playing pitches has led to a standard that increases present supply. Overall however, a quantity standard that simply averages out the supply available in the two districts that apply has been proposed and the standard for parks and gardens, informal space and natural green space is set at current provision.

3.36 Advisors advice

Co-operation with Core Cities members has demonstrated the inherent difficulties in deriving a meaningful and defensible quantity standard. This resulted in both Bristol and Newcastle jointly seeking direct support from CABE Space - but the issue was not satisfactorily resolved.

3.37 Testing the standard

The Bristol quantity standard has been developed via a thorough process of testing and application. A number of methodologies have been devised which have included user research, NPFA guidance and expert advice. The outcomes of these have been theoretically applied to the city in order to fully understand their impact. The final chosen methodology is derived from expert opinion and analysis and is also informed by the processes of deriving and testing other methods.

A number of methods of deriving quantity standards have been explored.

a) Initially user research was assessed but as already described, this was not successful.

b) An second process was followed by a multi-disciplinary team consisting of officers from Bristol parks, Planning, Regeneration Property and Housing to derive standards from case studies of three local needs areas. The methodology involved participants:

- ranking the importance of individual open spaces in these areas
- attempting to identify a threshold in the ranking hierarchy above which spaces were essential/needed - below which they were not.
- from this, the quantity of open space of each type above the threshold, divided by local population, would give a quantity standard.

While the ranking was comparatively easy, the threshold was difficult to set without being unduly biased by the current quality and attractiveness of sites. In

principle sites could be subdivided, with part being “needed” and part “surplus” but it was effectively impossible to deal with this concept. The indicative results from the three LNAs were widely divergent, and participants were not confident that the exercise was robust.

c) A range of other approaches was considered, including setting quantity standards for some types but not for others, producing a hierarchy of site sizes geared to distance as a surrogate for local quantity standards, or setting different quantity standards for different urban forms (e.g. Victorian suburbs, twentieth century council estates etc). The option of doing without quantity standards altogether was also considered, but in Bristol, where there is expected to be strong pressure on land over the next couple of decades, it is particularly desirable to have a standard - provided it is meaningful and set appropriately. A quantity standard is also required for the council to demonstrate compliance with PPG17.

The proposed Bristol quantity standard is based on the following methodology:

A number of officers from various disciplines, chosen for their expertise and depth of knowledge of Bristol and its green spaces, undertook the following exercise. The final proposed locality standards (an overall standard and a standard for each type of space) are a product of the combined decisions they made on the adequacy of the supply of green space for recreational need.

1. Participants considered 14 of the 16 Local Need Areas that the strategy considers. The Local Need Areas of Avonmouth and Ashton Court contain such small population that they were deemed unrepresentative and would have distorted the overall results.
2. For each Local Need Area the adequacy of supply of each type, and of open space as a whole, is ranked on a sliding scale on which “completely inadequate”, “enough”, “optimum” and “too much” are marked. **Adequacy is judged on the basis of how well recreational need is satisfied in quantity terms.** In some cases a Local Need Area may need to be subdivided (as it was diverse in urban form and layout) and an average score for the different parts is provided.
3. Participants consider maps of each Local Need Area and use their knowledge and experience to judge and make a decision as to whether the supply of space is “completely inadequate”, “enough”, “optimum” or “too much”.
4. Next, the actual (known) area per capita for the Local Need Areas is plotted onto the sliding scale at the points corresponding to the participants’ assessment of adequacy.
5. This gives a series of quantities below and above the point of “enough”. It is then comparatively straightforward to identify a best fit quantity for the standard.
6. This best fit is the **locality standard**, which is applicable to both resource planning and development control decisions.

A key feature of the method is that the adequacy of provision is plotted before the corresponding quantities are investigated, so the exercise is not influenced by a wish to achieve any particular result.

The feasibility of the draft quantity standard was then tested with the support of GIS data:

- Three out of 16 Local Need Areas (three out of the 14 non-aberrant LNAs) fall short of meeting the overall locality standard, in each case by a significant margin.
- Six Local Need Areas have more than double the overall locality standard.
- Overall, current provision exceeds the Bristol quantity standard by some 26% (395 ha out of 1505 ha).
- The analysis of sufficiency of individual types is less robust because the database does not record multiple use. Therefore the following statistics are certainly over-stating the level of deficiency of individual types:
 - Seven Local Need Areas are short of formal green space
 - Three Local Need Areas are short of informal green space
 - Seven Local Need Areas are short of children's play space
 - Six Local Need Areas are short of natural green space
- Deficits in formal space and children's play could be made up in all cases by conversion from other types, because area requirements are quite low for these types (and because in those Local Need Areas with an overall shortage of space, formal and children's types are paradoxically in adequate supply).

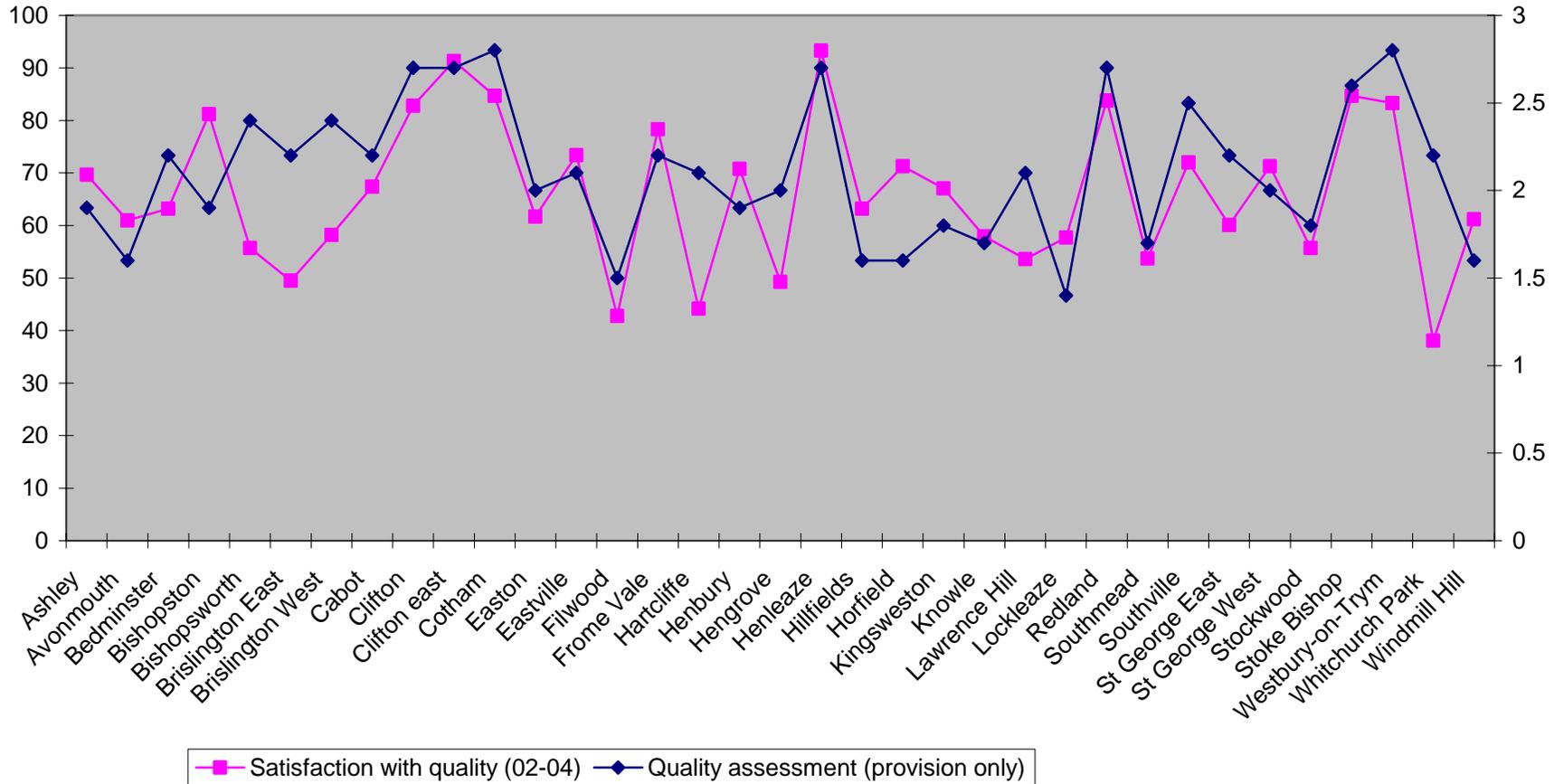
Conclusion

The impact of the quantity standards is to give meaningful policy protection to sites in parts of the city which are comparatively low in green space, and also to encourage creative conversion between types elsewhere. The high figure for open space that is above the total standard does support the view of the strategy that overall there is more than enough accessible green space in Bristol.

However it is important to clarify that the quantity standards are not targets – the optimum solution in many areas is somewhere above the minimum level at which the standard is set.

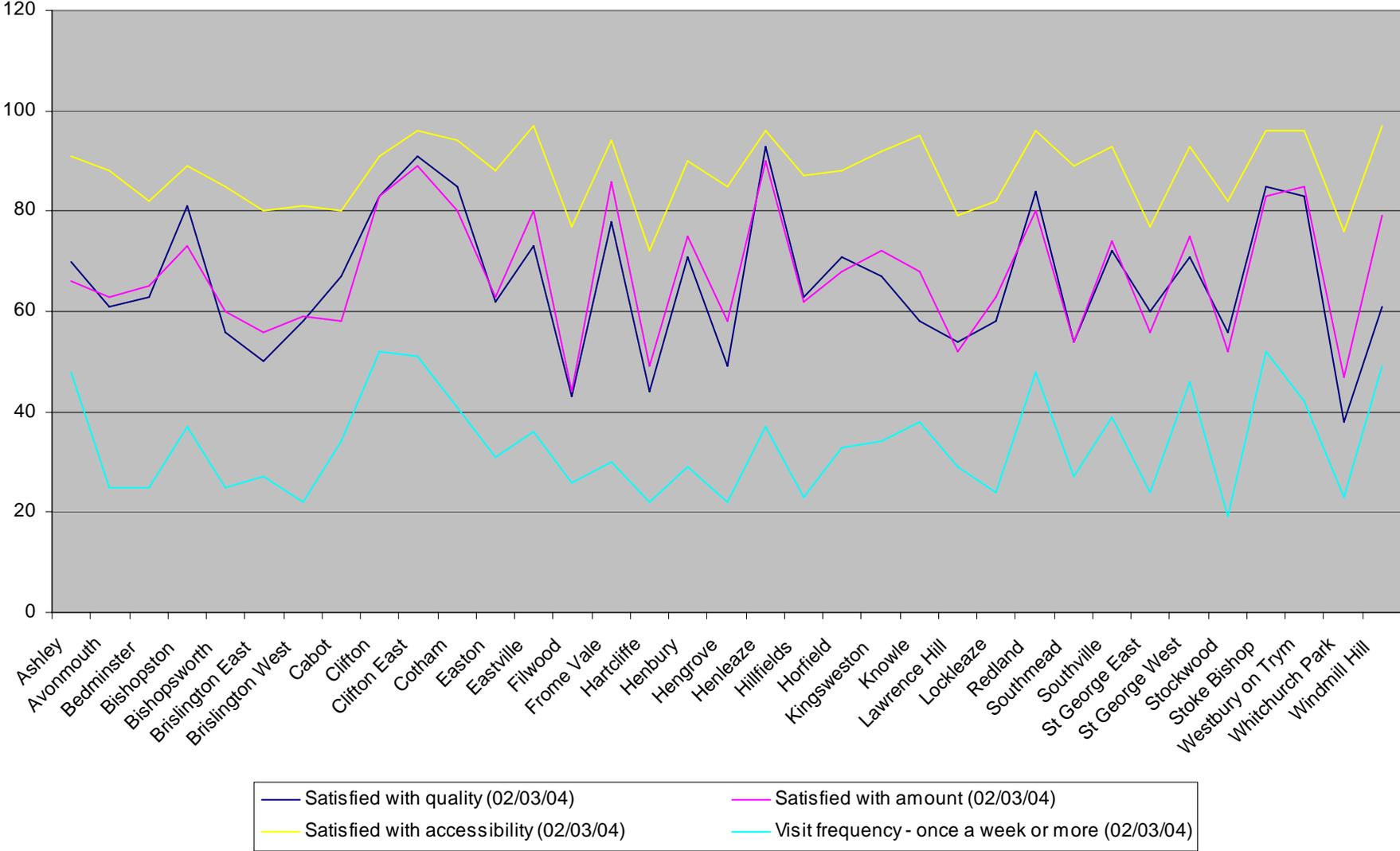
Moreover, other planning policies such as for wildlife sites and biodiversity, or flood plains, or historic landscapes, may independently protect open space beyond the extent strictly required for recreation.

Appendix 1 – Correlation between public satisfaction with quality (measured through quality of life survey 2002/3/4) and Bristol Parks’ Quality Assessment outcome by ward:



The graph shows that, statistically, there is a ‘substantial to significant correlation’ between public satisfaction with quality and actual quality (pearson correlation co-efficient – $r=0.6$). Although some discrepancies are evident these are to be expected for a number of reasons – the relationship between the objective assessment of facilities and the connection of public satisfaction with different social, mobility and lifestyle factors is one example. The dominant types of space in a ward may also be a factor – a dominance of informal space will bring lower satisfaction but the quality of that space may be good.

Appendix 2 – Correlation between satisfaction with the quality, amount and accessibility of green space and frequency of visits by ward (measured through quality of life survey 2002/3/4):



Appendix 3 – Provision costs for all sites by typology to reach a standard of ‘Good’ and ‘Excellent’

BRISTOL PARKS AND GREEN SPACE STRATEGY

GRAND SUMMARY OF PROVISION COSTS

TYPOLOGY	Area - full rate	Area - 50% rate	Area - combined	GOOD STANDARD		
				Full rate £/m2	50% Rate £/m2	Combined Totals £
Formal and Ornamental Green Space (S)	78,797		78,797	38.27	19.14	£3,015,676
Formal and Ornamental Green Space (M)	126,720		126,720	29.13	14.57	£3,691,869
Formal and Ornamental Green Space (L)	745,449	93,131	838,580	12.95	6.47	£10,256,402
Informal Green Space #	5,589,842	910,349	6,500,191	5.12	2.56	£30,928,769
Childrens Play and Young Persons Space (S)	23,442		23,442	124.25	62.13	£2,912,717
Childrens Play and Young Persons Space (M)	33,186		33,186	111.37	55.69	£3,695,938
Childrens Play and Young Persons Space (L)	84,797	4,916	89,713	35.07	17.54	£3,060,079
Natural Green Space	5,679,491	3,186,812	8,866,303	1.09	0.55	£7,935,530
Sports Seasonal	964,283	421,252	1,385,535	11.04	5.52	£12,975,215
Sports Fixed	80,165		80,165	55.33	27.66	£4,435,466
TOTALS						
	13,406,172	4616460	18,022,632			
Check Total	18,022,632					£82,907,661

Footnote: The difference between the £87m capital cost of the strategy quoted in the draft summary document and the total ‘provision’ figure here is a reflection of the combined application of the quantity and distance standards for play and the target area for new playgrounds of 600m2. The planning assumption is that the resulting increase in the number of children’s playgrounds will absorb the balance of £4.1m funding.

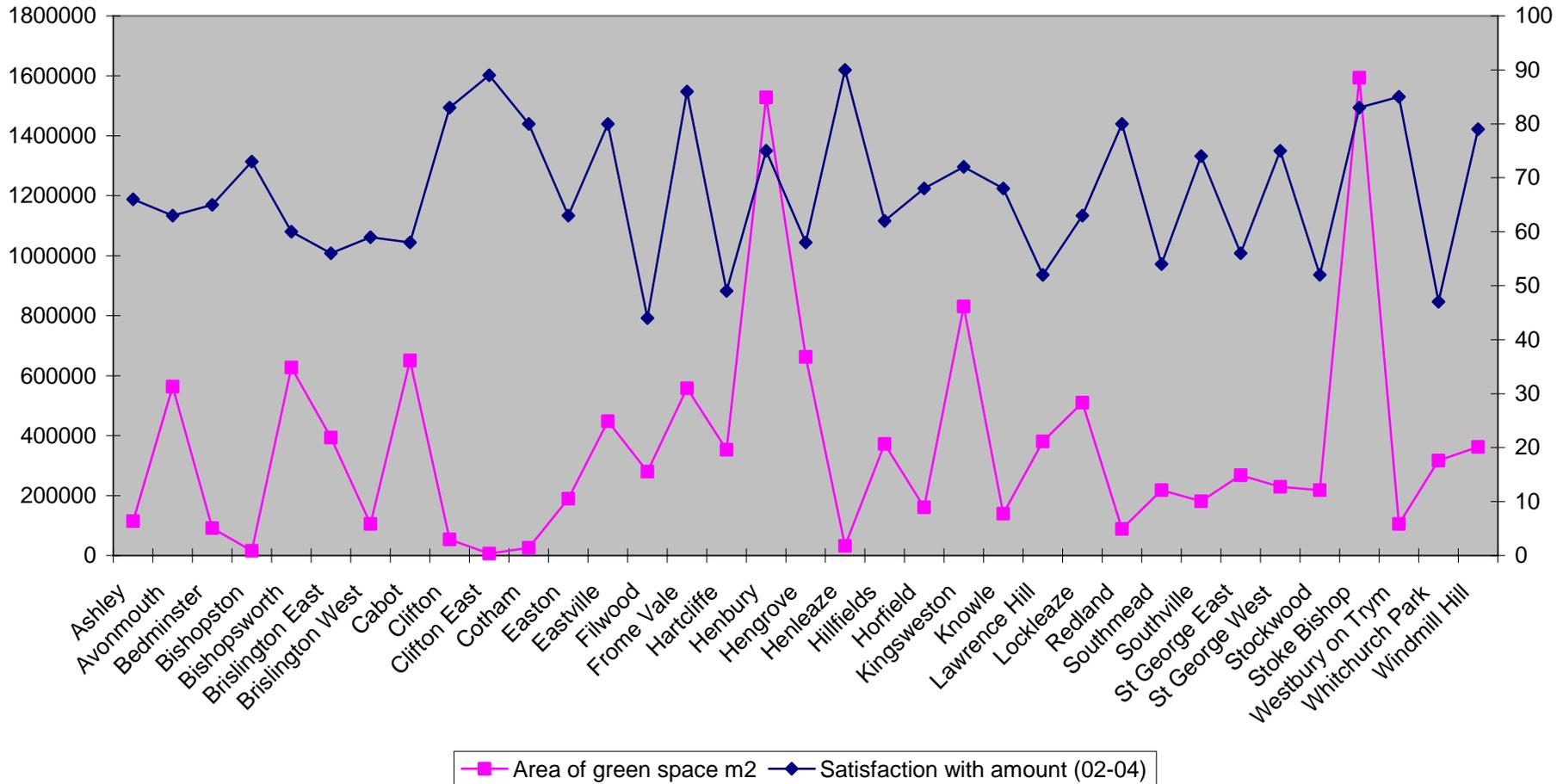
Appendix 4 – Condition and Maintenance costs for all sites by typology to reach a standard of ‘Good’ and ‘Excellent’

[BRISTOL PARKS AND GREEN SPACE STRATEGY](#)

[GRAND SUMMARY OF EXTRA CONDITION AND MAINTENANCE COSTS \(11 June 2007\)](#)

TYPOLOGY	Area	GOOD STANDARD			
		CONDITION WORK		MAINTENANCE WORK	
		Rate £/m2	Totals £	Rate £/m2	Totals £
Formal and Ornamental Green Space (Small)	78,797	1.20	£94,543	0.54	£42,461
Formal and Ornamental Green Space (Medium)	126,720	0.71	£90,342	0.24	£30,113
Formal and Ornamental Green Space (Large)	860,964	0.69	£594,570	0.34	£288,714
Informal Green Space (excluding Destination Sites)	4,051,219	0.18	£723,985	0.07	£279,884
Informal Green Space - Destination sites	2,272,248	0.16	£365,462	0.07	£156,981
Childrens Play and Young Persons Space (Small)	23,442	3.71	£86,978	0.15	£3,400
Childrens Play and Young Persons Space (Medium)	33,186	3.28	£108,983	0.14	£4,666
Childrens Play and Young Persons Space (Large)	89,713	3.53	£316,782	0.17	£15,690
Natural Green Space (excluding Destination Sites)	4,683,723	0.09	£422,913	0.03	£163,077
Natural Green Space - Destination sites	4,182,580	0.07	£283,247	0.03	£145,629
Sports Seasonal	1,389,078	0.50	£695,666	0.11	£147,574
Sports Fixed	80,165	1.54	£123,366	1.43	£114,648
<u>TOTALS/ANNUM</u>	17,871,835		£3,906,835		£1,392,836
Cost increase for since July 06 4.47% (Continental)			£4,081,470		£1,455,096
<u>COMBINED TOTALS/ANNUM</u>			£5,536,566		

Appendix 5 – Correlation between satisfaction with amount of green space and actual amount of green space by ward:



The graph shows that, statistically, there is no correlation between public satisfaction with quantity of green space and actual quantity (pearson correlation co-efficient – $r=0.005$). Within these findings will be the influence of the city’s destination parks but they are not thought to make a significant effect on correlation. For example residents of Clifton East are likely to use the Downs but it does not show as a resource in that ward – hence satisfaction rises despite actual amount being one of the lowest in the city.

