

# MALVERN HILLS DISTRICT COUNCIL OPEN SPACE, SPORT & RECREATION STUDY: ASSESSMENT REPORT

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## **PART 2: OPEN SPACE METHODOLOGY AND BACKGROUND**

2.1 This part of the report details the methodology employed in the study. It also identifies a series of generic issues relating to open space provision in Malvern Hills District that are applicable to more than one typology.

### **Methodology**

#### ***Background information***

2.2 An extensive range of desk background information has been reviewed and incorporated into the assessment of key issues for each typology. The national, regional and local policy context is detailed in Section 1. Other background documentation reviewed for the study is listed below:

- Malvern Urban Greenspace Study (MUGS), May 2003
- Malvern Hills District Local Plan, July 2006
- MHDC, Village Facilities and Rural Transport Survey, January 2004 (Updated October 2004).
- MHDC, Open Space in Malvern, Tenbury and Upton, January 2004.
- ANOB Partnership, The Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (ANOB) Management Plan 2004 – 2009.
- Malvern Hills Conservators, Annual Report, 2005.
- MHDC, Great Malvern Town Centre Strategy, 2004.
- Worcestershire Biodiversity Partnership, The Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP), 1999.
- MHDC, Malvern Hills Community Safety Strategy, 2005 – 2008.
- Abberley Parish Council, Abberley Parish Plan.
- West Malvern Parish Council, Playground Report, June 2006.
- Leigh and Bransford Parish Council, Leigh and Bransford Parish Plan, April 2005.
- Rushwick Parish Council, Rushwick Parish Plan.

### **Consultation**

2.3 The core of this phase revolved around extensive consultation with key individuals, interest and community groups, sports clubs, Malvern Hills District Council (MHDC) officers and agencies working in and around Malvern Hills District. Qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted either face-to-face or by telephone with consultees provided by MHDC and those uncovered by KKP during consultation. A full list of consultees is included in Appendix 7.



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## **Database development**

- 2.4 All information relating to open spaces in Malvern Hills District is collated in the project open space database (supplied as an electronic file). Sites were originally identified using the MHDC Local Plan CN13 sites and the Malvern Urban Greenspace Study 2003. Additional sites identified during consultation have also been added to the database.
- 2.5 Although every effort has been made to collate information from neighbouring authorities, it has been found that either the information is unavailable or does not exist.
- 2.6 As recommended in PPG17, each site has been identified and classed based on its primary open space purpose, so that each type of space is counted only once. Some sites contain multiple open space uses, for example parks can include children's play areas. Where this occurs, each open space use within the site has been identified separately and the relevant assessment undertaken by KKP. The database details for each site:

### **Data held on open spaces database (summary)**

- KKP reference number (used for mapping).
- Site name.
- Local authority reference number.
- Nearest road/settlement.
- Ownership.
- Typology.
- Size (hectares).
- Access.
- Site visit data.

- 2.7 Sites are identified using road names and locations as opposed to official site names. For the key sites, identification has been enhanced with actual site names. However, for some typologies this is impossible, e.g. amenity greenspaces and natural and semi natural sites which, in the main, do not have official names anyway.

## **Site visits**

- 2.8 In total, 207 open space assessments were carried out to evaluate the quality and value of sites. Two tailored forms were used to examine sites depending on the type of open space being assessed. Separate forms are used for open spaces and children's play areas. The open space assessment form is tailored to reflect the individual characteristics of different open spaces and a scoring system (i.e. different maximum scores) is applied to each typology to provide a more meaningful evaluation. Examples of the different assessment forms used can be found in Appendix 2-5.



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- 2.9 KKP assesses both quality and value during site visits. Quality and value are fundamentally different and can be completely unrelated. For example, a high quality space may be located where it is inaccessible and therefore of little value; while, if a run down space is the only one in an area, it may be immensely valuable. Therefore, they are also treated separately in terms of scoring. Each type of open space assessed receives a quality score and a separate value score.

## ***Analysis of quality***

- 2.10 Data collated from site visits has been utilised to calculate a quality score for each site visited. Scores in the database are presented as a total score and percentage figure.

### *Open space assessment form*

- 2.11 The criteria used for the main open space assessments are summarised below and are based upon those used for Green Flag (national standard for parks and green spaces in England and Wales, operated by the Civic Trust) and 'Green Space Strategies: A good practice guide', published by CABE Space (2004).

#### **Open space site visit criteria for quality (summary)**

- Physical access, e.g., public transport links, directional signposts.
- Access-social, e.g., appropriate minimum entrance widths.
- Parking, e.g., disabled parking.
- Information signage, e.g., presence of up to date site information.
- Equipment and facilities, e.g., assessment of both adequacy and maintenance of provision such as seats, benches, bins, toilets.
- Location value, e.g., proximity of housing, other greenspace.
- Site problems, e.g., presence of vandalism, graffiti.
- Healthy, safe and secure, e.g., staff on site.
- Maintenance and cleanliness, e.g., condition of landscape.
- Typology specific profile, e.g., presence of environmental education facilities (natural/semi-natural provision).
- Groups site meets the needs of, e.g., elderly, young people.
- Site potential.

### *Children's play area assessment form*

- 2.12 Quantitative and qualitative site assessments were conducted for all sites classified as provision for children and young people to identify, for example, the range, nature and type of equipment provided. The criteria used for the children's play area assessments is summarised below and is also based upon those used for Green Flag (national standard for parks and green spaces in England and Wales, operated by the Civic Trust) and guidance taken from 'The Six Acre Standard', published by the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA).



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## Children's play area site visit criteria (summary)

- Signage.
- Fencing.
- Seating.
- Number of pieces of equipment.
- Surface.
- Provision for toddlers, children, teenagers.
- Type (NPFA classification).

### *Children's play area classifications*

2.13 The quantitative element of the children's play area site visits identified the number and type of equipment provided at each site. Depending on their size and total number of pieces of equipment each has been given a classification utilising NPFA guidance:

- Unclassified. This area is classified as such when there is less than 0.01 hectares of play area.
- No equipment.
- A local area for play (LAP). This area must contain more than or equal to 0.01 hectares and contain more than or equal one piece of play equipment.
- A local equipped for play (LEAP). This area must contain more than or equal to 0.04 hectares and contain more than or equal to five types of play equipment.
- A neighbourhood equipped area for play (NEAP). This area must contain more than or equal to 0.1 hectares. This area may be divided into sub sections and possibly contain play equipment catering for a variety of ages, including multi use games areas (MUGA).
- A settlement equipped play area (SEAP) caters for all ages, includes MUGA, skateparks, youth shelters, adventure play equipment and is often included within large parks site.

### **Analysis of value**

2.14 The value of sites has been assessed by analysis of two sets of criteria: (i) site visit assessment data; and (ii) other data and information as detailed in the table below. Scores in the database are presented as a total score and percentage figure.

2.15 PPG17 describes value of sites as relating to the following three issues:

- Context of the site, i.e. its accessibility, scarcity value and historic value.
- Level and type of use.
- The wider benefits it generates for people, biodiversity and the wider environment.



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## Value - site visit criteria (summary)

- Level of use (observations only).
- Context of site in relation to other open spaces.
- Structural and landscape benefits.
- Ecological benefits.
- Educational benefits.
- Social inclusion and health benefits.
- Cultural and heritage benefits.
- Amenity benefits and a sense of place.
- Economic benefits.

## Value - non site visit criteria (summary)

- Designated site such as LNR or SSSI.
- Educational programme in place.
- Historic site.
- Listed building or historical monument on site.
- Registered 'friends of group' to the site.

## Weighting and scoring system

2.16 KKP utilises one site visit assessment sheet to assess all typologies of open space (allotments, amenity greenspace, parks and gardens, green corridors, natural and semi natural greenspace). It has developed a weighting and scoring system to take account of the individual typologies and reflect their different natures and characteristics (each typology will therefore have a different maximum score). For example, the maximum score for allotments does not include scores for picnic benches. Similarly, the maximum score for amenity greenspace does not include scores for toilets. The maximum scores achievable for each typology are set out below together with the equivalent data for value.

Table 2.1: Maximum scores for quality and value of open spaces in Malvern Hills District

| Open space assessment form       |                         |                       |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Typology                         | Quality - maximum score | Value – maximum score |
| Allotments                       | 116                     | 105                   |
| Amenity greenspace               | 113                     | 100                   |
| Cemeteries                       | 153                     | 100                   |
| Civic spaces                     | 138                     | 100                   |
| Green corridors                  | 63                      | 100                   |
| Parks and gardens                | 151                     | 110                   |
| Natural/semi-natural greenspaces | 109                     | 110                   |



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| Play area assessment form               |                         |                       |
|---|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Typology                                | Quality - maximum score | Value – maximum score |
| Provision for children and young people | 80                      | 55                    |

2.17 On the assessment form itself some elements receive a direct score (1 – 5 scale) and other elements simply have a tick option if present (receiving a score of 3 for every tick). Some tick options are simply collated and analysed as additional data, receiving no score. Examples of the applied scoring and weighting can be found in Appendix 6.

### ***Setting thresholds for quality and value***

2.18 In order to determine sites as high or low quality and value, (as suggested by PPG17) the database colour codes each site visited against a set threshold (high is green and low is red).

### ***Quality score thresholds***

2.19 The threshold for assessing quality has been set predominately at 60%; this is based on the pass rate for Green Flag, which is the only national quality benchmark available (site visit criteria is also based on Green Flag criteria).

### ***Value score thresholds***

2.20 The threshold for assessing value has been set at 20%; this is based on KKP's experience and expertise in carrying out PPG17 assessments and has been tried and tested with a number of local authorities. If a site only scores high for one element (i.e. educational benefits) the site is still of high value. However, this is not necessarily reflected in the total score and therefore the threshold is reduced to better reflect this. There are no national benchmarks available for assessing value.

### ***Using value scores***

2.21 As a result of the analysis of sites against the assessment criteria, sites with a low value score are identified for further detailed consideration to assess their potential future role.

2.22 Value scores provide a rational basis for determining where to focus investment in order to maximise the value of a space. The assessment of value allows an objective approach to identifying those spaces which should be given the highest level of protection in the planning system and those which require further investigation to determine ways of improving their value.



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## **Geographic analysis**

2.23 All sites in the open spaces database have been mapped using MapInfo. Catchment areas have been applied to each site depending on its typology, size and classification. The effective catchments have been identified using as a starting point data and guidance issued by the Greater London Authority (GLA) (2002): 'Guide to preparing open space strategies' which is used by a number of local authorities . The data and guidance has then been adjusted to local circumstances in the light of the residents and other views expressed in the public consultation.

2.24 The following catchments are used to identify the coverage of current provision:

*Table 2.2: Summary of catchment areas*

| <b>Classification</b>                               | <b>Size of site</b>    | <b>Catchment area</b> |
|---|------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Parks</b>  |                        |                       |
| Local parks   | 2 ha or less           | 400 metres            |
| District parks                                      | 2 – 20 ha              | 1,200 metres          |
| <b>Amenity greenspace, natural and semi natural</b> |                        |                       |
| District-wide significance                          | More than 10ha         | 1,600 metres          |
| Settlement significance                             | Between 1ha and 10ha   | 900 metres            |
| Neighbourhood significance                          | Between 0.66ha and 1ha | 600 metres            |
| Local significance                                  | Up to 0.66ha           | 120 metres            |
| <b>Allotments</b>                                   |                        |                       |
| District-wide significance                          | More than 10ha         | 3,200 metres          |
| Settlement significance                             | Between 1ha and 10ha   | 1,800 metres          |
| Neighbourhood significance                          | Between 0.66ha and 1ha | 1,200 metres          |
| Local significance                                  | Up to 0.66ha           | 240 metres            |

2.25 It is difficult to assess green corridors against catchment areas due to their very nature and usage, often as access to other open spaces. Instead maps demonstrate the coverage of existing provision and a more accurate picture of accessibility is built up through the consultation.



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2.26 Catchment areas for play areas are assessed through the following distances and walking times, provided by the NPFA.

Table 2.3: Methodology to calculate play catchment areas:

| Facility | Time       | Pedestrian route | Straight line distance |
|----------|------------|------------------|------------------------|
| LAP      | 1 minute   | 100 metres       | 60 metres              |
| LEAP     | 5 minutes  | 400 metres       | 240 metres             |
| NEAP     | 15 minutes | 1,000 metres     | 600 metres.            |
| SEAP     |            |                  | Over 1,000 metres      |

2.27 The straight-line distance is used as the radial distance of each facility's catchment area. This distance has been used to plot play sites' catchment areas in this study. As pedestrian routes to play areas vary between households the straight-line distance indicated by the NPFA is more defensible. The report therefore uses the straight-line distances to plot catchment areas.

### Settlement hierarchy

2.28 PPG17 and the Companion Guide 'Assessing Needs and Opportunities' notes that, in rural areas, there can be villages with small populations and significant distances between settlements. It is rarely possible for every settlement to have the full range of facilities and some forms of provision tend to be concentrated in larger villages or towns. This report adopts the principle of a settlement hierarchy for some typologies of open space. This is used to inform the identification of deficiencies in provision. The settlement hierarchy takes into account the findings of the community consultation undertaken for this study and follows the current hierarchy used by MHDC in its adopted District Local Plan Development Strategy (Policies DS11 and DS12). Where a settlement is deficient against the hierarchy (e.g., it does not have any provision or residents are not within the catchment of existing provision), a deficiency is identified.



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Table 2.4: Settlement hierarchy – minimum levels of provision

| Typology                                | Malvern Town  | Category 1   | Category 2   | Category 3/4                                       | Justification   |
|---|---|--|--|--|---|
| Parks and gardens                       | All residents to be within 1,200 metres of park or garden                     | Settlements of Upton and Tenbury – all residents to be within 1,200 metres of park or garden<br>All other settlements – no minimum provision | No minimum provision                               | No minimum provision                               | Formal provision of a strategic nature required in the District's major towns   |
| Natural/semi-natural greenspace         | All residents to be within 1,600 metres of natural/semi-natural provision     | All residents to be within 1,600 metres of natural/semi-natural provision  | No minimum provision                               | No minimum provision                               | Strategic high level provision for main settlements   |
| Amenity greenspace                      | All residents to be within 900 metres of amenity greenspace                   | All residents to be within 900 metres of amenity greenspace  | One amenity greenspace in settlement               | One amenity greenspace in settlement               | Reflects importance attached to amenity greenspace in consultation, both for recreational use and as contribution to aesthetic appearance of the District |
| Provision for children and young people | All residents have access to LEAP provision<br>Minimum 1 SEAP in Malvern Town | All residents to have access to LEAP provision   | All residents to have access to informal provision | All residents to have access to informal provision | Reflects importance attached to play provision in consultation and need for all settlements to have access to at least some form of provision             |
| Civic spaces                            | 2 civic spaces  | Settlements of Upton and Tenbury only – one civic space<br>All other settlements – no minimum provision                                      | No minimum provision                               | No minimum provision                               | Reflects demand for civic spaces for staging events in the District's major towns.  |



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## Analysis areas

2.29 Malvern Hills District has been divided into analysis areas. These have been adopted to create a more localised assessment of provision and for examination of open space/facility surplus and deficiencies at a local level. The use of analysis areas allows local circumstances and issues to be taken into account. To provide greater analysis, some typologies are assessed using different levels of analysis areas. These are summarised below.

Figure 2.1: Analysis areas in Malvern Hills District

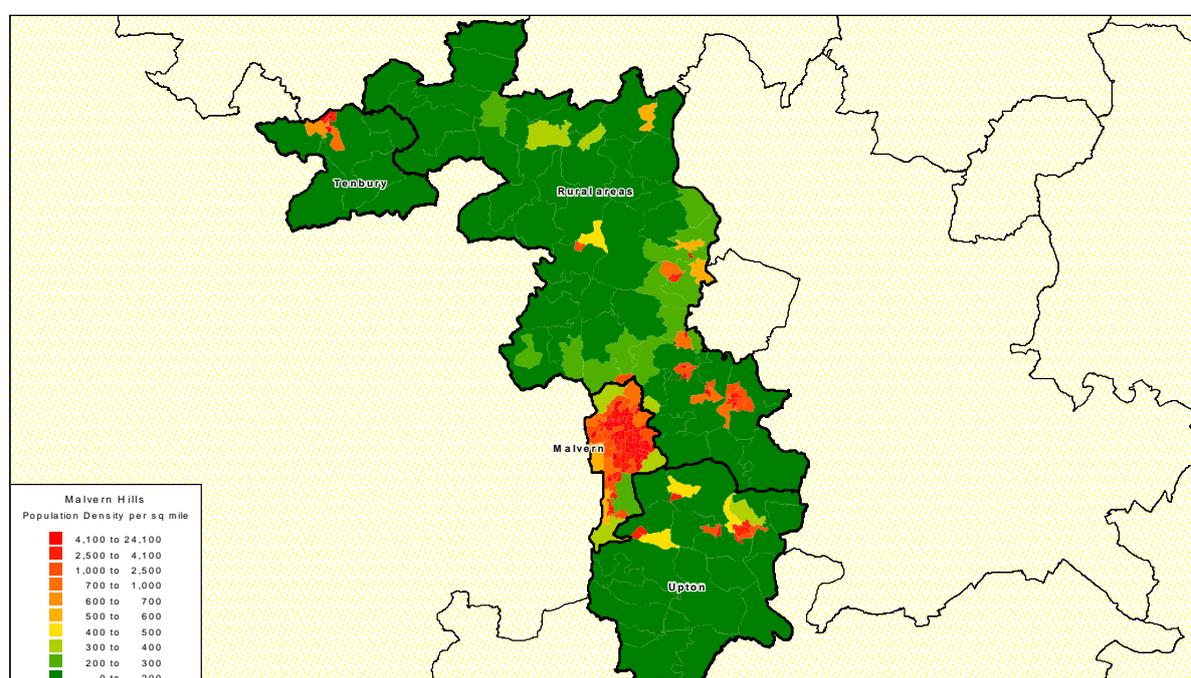


Table 2.5: Analysis areas by wards

| Analysis area (population)     | Electoral wards  |  |
|--------------------------------|--|--|
| Malvern Town area (33,216)     | <input type="checkbox"/> Chase<br><input type="checkbox"/> Dyson Perrins<br><input type="checkbox"/> Link<br><input type="checkbox"/> Pickersleigh   | <input type="checkbox"/> Priors<br><input type="checkbox"/> Wells<br><input type="checkbox"/> West   |
| Rural areas (31,024)           | <input type="checkbox"/> Alfrick and Leigh<br><input type="checkbox"/> Baldwin<br><input type="checkbox"/> Broadheath<br><input type="checkbox"/> Hallow<br><input type="checkbox"/> Kempsey | <input type="checkbox"/> Martley<br><input type="checkbox"/> Powick<br><input type="checkbox"/> Teme Valley<br><input type="checkbox"/> Woodbury<br><input type="checkbox"/> Lindridge |
| Tenbury Town area (3,830)      | <input type="checkbox"/> Tenbury   |  |
| Upton and Hanley areas (4,085) | <input type="checkbox"/> Upton and Hanley<br><input type="checkbox"/> Ripple   | <input type="checkbox"/> Longdon<br><input type="checkbox"/> Morton  |

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- 2.30 N.B. analysis areas are made up of electoral wards, which in the case of the Tenbury and Upton and Hanley wards includes some of the adjacent rural areas of Tenbury and Upton towns.