

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

PART 3: GENERAL OPEN SPACE ISSUES

- 3.1 KKP has carried out extensive consultation with users and non-users of open spaces throughout Malvern Hills District, during which many issues concerning open spaces in the District have been raised and discussed. Typology and site specific issues are covered in the relevant sections of this report. This section sets out those generic issues, which cut across more than one typology.
- 3.2 Open space is owned and managed by a wide variety of agencies in Malvern Hills District, including Malvern Hills District Council (MHDC), Worcestershire County Council (WCC), Malvern Hills Conservators and a large number of town and parish councils. Developing an accurate picture of open spaces in Malvern Hills District is, therefore, complex. For example, many parish council records are dated and the quality of information gathered has often been dependent on the clerk's local knowledge.

Accessibility

- 3.3 Consultation identifies a perception amongst residents that the District is well provided for in terms of open space, with particular reference being made numerous times to the Malvern Hills and the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). However, when asked to consider provision of open space in terms of individual typologies, consultees consider there to be a lack of formal open space provision in the urban centres/residential areas of the District. In particular residents deem there to be a lack of park and garden provision and provision for children and young people. This perception is supported through catchment mapping, which demonstrates significant catchment gaps for both typologies (see later sections).
- 3.4 One of the key attractions for the Malvern Hills District is the Hills themselves. Numerous consultees highlight that the Hills experience high visitor pressure and can become 'congested', especially during the summer months. Consultation also suggests that many visitors to the District visit only the Hills and, therefore, do not always contribute greatly to the local economy. There is a need, from the perspective of both visitors and residents, to take greater advantage of the AONB. MHDC should investigate opportunities to better integrate the Hills with the surrounding areas through the improvement and greater promotion of the extensive PROW network. Visitors, and residents to some extent, should be encouraged to explore the whole District. This could be achieved through greater awareness of other attractions, e.g., Worcestershire Wildlife Trust (WWT) nature reserves, the Abberley and Malvern Hills Geopark and the Elgar route.

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

3.5 Consultation identifies that residents regard the rural transport service to be lacking, particular in regards to linking open spaces and leisure facilities throughout the District. In particular, access to St Wulstan’s Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and WWT nature reserves is highlighted as being difficult without access to a personal car. The Hills Hopper bus service, operated during the summer months, is commended by consultees and is considered a successful and worthwhile scheme. However, the service is focused upon access to and from the Hills and is targeted at visitors, although it is accessible and well used by residents. There is demand for improving the ease of mobility throughout the District. Suggestions include expanding the ‘hopper’ service to better incorporate areas such as Tenbury Wells. Consultation with a number of stakeholders and open space user groups strongly identifies the need to encourage visitors to explore more of the District to relieve visitor pressure on the Hills. Rolling out the ‘hopper’ service, if feasible, could be used as an opportunity to enhance access to open space and recreational sites for residents.

Quality

3.6 The methodology for assessing quality is set out in Part 2 (Methodology). The table below summarises the results of all the quality assessment for open spaces in Malvern Hills District. The threshold for assessing quality has been set at 60%; this is based on Green Flag criteria. A summary of data by analysis areas is provided an each typology section.

Table 3.1: Quality scores for all open space typologies

Typology	QUALITY Scores					Number at:	
	maximum score	lowest score	MEAN score	highest score	spread	below 60%	above 60%
Parks and Gardens	151	26%	60%	62%	35%	5	1
Semi / Natural greenspaces	109	9%	32%	65%	56%	19	2
Green corridors	63	38%	44%	54%	16%	3	-
Amenity greenspace	113	22%	44%	73%	50%	100	13
Children’s play areas	80	28%	62%	90%	63%	16	28
Allotments	116	32%	41%	55%	23%	10	-
Cemeteries	153	27%	47%	64%	37%	7	2
Civic spaces	138	40%	46%	53%	13%	2	-

3.7 The average quality scores for the different typologies of open space vary greatly across Malvern Hills District, from 62% for children’s play areas to only 32% for natural and semi-natural open spaces. The mean score for the majority of

MALVERN HILLS DISTRICT COUNCIL

OPEN SPACE, SPORT & RECREATION STUDY:

ASSESSMENT REPORT

typologies, with the exception of parks and gardens (60%) and children's play areas (62%) falls below the 60% threshold.

- 3.8 All allotment sites fall below the 60% threshold. This is, in part, due to poor path quality and the absence of toilet facilities. However, site assessments consider that provision of toilet facilities will only be of benefit at one of the sites, Madresfield Road allotments. Over two thirds (88%) of amenity greenspace has been assessed as poor quality. Site assessments note that seating provision will be of benefit/appropriate to 32 of the 83 amenity greenspaces currently without any. In addition to this 32% of the amenity greenspaces visited are either highway verges or roundabouts. All but two of these sites have received a low quality score. This may be an artificially low score because the criteria against which amenity greenspaces were assessed covers elements such as seating, litterbins and paths which are not always appropriate to sites such as highway verges and roundabouts.
- 3.9 The main problem impacting on the quality of open spaces across Malvern Hills District is dog fouling. It is a problem across many sites, including semi-natural green spaces, parks and amenity greenspaces. Users express the need for increased enforcement and education regarding the associated health risks and potential penalties. Site visits identify that 26% of sites that do not already have dog foul bins provided would benefit from having dog bins on site. These are mainly semi natural sites, parks and amenity greenspaces. However, the resource implications are significant, as they require regular emptying, particularly in summer. As dog waste is no longer considered hazardous waste it can now be disposed off in ordinary litterbins. Awareness of this can be raised to encourage responsible behaviour by dog owners.
- 3.10 Vandalism is also a frequent problem afflicting, in particular, play areas. The issue has been so severe in some incidences that it has resulted in the closure of play areas for significant periods of time. Signage and seating provision is the main target for vandalism within open spaces. MHDC is opting to replace wooden seating provision with metal seating to withstand greater damage.

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

Value

3.11 The methodology for assessing value is set out in Part 2 (Methodology). The table below summarises the results of all the value assessments for open spaces in Malvern Hills District. The threshold for assessing value differs depending on the typology. A summary of data by analysis areas is provided in each typology section.

Table 3.2: Value scores for all open space typologies

Typology	VALUE Scores					Number:	
	maximum score	lowest score	MEAN score	highest score	spread	below 20%	above 20%
Parks and Gardens	110	11%	17%	43%	32%	5	1
Semi / Natural greenspaces	110	6%	24%	52%	45%	11	10
Green corridors	100	22%	35%	42%	20%	-	3
Amenity greenspace	100	1%	24%	57%	56%	52	61
Children's play areas	55	20%	43%	67%	47%	-	44
Allotments	105	20%	30%	41%	21%	-	10
Cemeteries	100	7%	22%	48%	41%	5	4
Civic spaces	100	13%	15%	17%	4%	2	-

3.12 Generally, value scores across all the typologies are high, with only the mean score for parks and gardens and civic space falling below the value threshold (20%). All allotments, although assessed as low quality, have been assessed as having high value. This reflects the ecological/biodiversity value, educational value, social inclusion and health benefits offered by allotment provision.

Community safety

3.13 Residents and open space users report that there is inadequate policing of open spaces across the District. There is demand for a high visibility formal authority presence, e.g., open space wardens/rangers, within key open spaces to enforce, for example, dog foul bylaws, act as a deterrent for anti-social behaviour and reassure genuine users to improve the perception of safety associated with open spaces. However, officer consultation suggests that perception of anti-social behaviour is higher than actually occurs and street scene officers do include a number of key open spaces in their patrols engaging with any irresponsible users and young people if they are causing a nuisance. Street scene aims to provide a highly visible presence within key open spaces to deter anti-social behaviour. This suggests that there is a need to raise awareness amongst residents regarding the activities of the service/officers.

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

- 3.14 The community safety team within MHDC recognises that open spaces can, due to their nature, become 'hot spots' for anti-social behaviour. To address this, an 'activity planner' has been produced for Priory Park and Michaels Crescent, both of which experience regular problems. These outline a number of focused actions to be undertaken to tackle common issues such as underage drinking and vandalism.
- 3.15 There are mobile CCTV facilities, both overt and covert, which are used to police anti-social behaviour 'hot spots' in Malvern Hills District. This facility has successfully been used to deter anti-social behaviour activities in Priory Park in the past.