

Reviewing the Plan for **Solihull's Future**

Solihull Local Plan Review

Reg 19 Draft Local Plan:
Open Space
Topic Paper

October 2020



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1. Introduction

1. This volume contains a series of papers supporting the Council's Draft Local Plan which has been published for consultation. The topic papers look at the relevant national and local guidance that impact on the emerging plan. They also provide a summary of the evidence base and how it has been used to shape the local plan. The topic papers do not contain any policies, proposals or site allocations and should be seen as explanatory supporting documents.
2. The topic papers have focussed on the issues that have been subject to more significant change from 2013 local plan and address the following:
 - Introduction
 - Reference relevant national & regional policy/references
 - Identify the evidence used to inform the policy/policies
 - Explain how evidence has been used to shape the policy
 - Explain how representations on previous iterations of plan have been used to shape the policy

2. Background

Open Space Policy in the Solihull Local Plan 2013

3. The 2013 Local Plan identified “Improving Health and Wellbeing” as key challenge (J) and the consequent objectives: ‘Enable people to pursue an active lifestyle and make healthier choices’. Policy P20 ‘Provision for Open Space, Children’s Play, Sport, Recreation and Leisure’ brought previous UDP policies relating to open space, children’s play, playing pitches and waterways together under one main policy.
4. The future enhancement and connectivity of open spaces and/or recreation opportunities features in four of the five area spatial strategies.
5. The 2013 Policy P20 sought to recognise the importance and multi-functional benefits of public open space, sports and recreational facilities. The policy sets out provisions for the protection of existing, and delivery of future open space, sports and recreational facilities, including new indoor sports and recreational facilities. In terms of waterways, the policy sought to encourage greater recreational and leisure use and enhancement of the river and canal network, subject to other policies in the Plan.
6. The 2013 policy is supported by evidence in the Green Spaces Strategy (2006), the Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy and Solihull Green Infrastructure Study 2012.
7. The Council’s in-house Conservation, Landscape Architecture, Urban Design and Ecology team providing advice on planning applications and policy development, as well as work with the Council’s Parks and Public Health teams to deliver new open spaces.

3. Local Plan Review

Introduction

8. In July 2015, the Council decided that instead of pursuing a Local Area Plan (LAP) for potential development around the HS2 Interchange, it should be pursued through a review of the Solihull Local Plan (SLP), which was adopted December 2013. Two further factors also pointed to an early review of the plan; namely to deal with the legal challenge to the housing requirement in the SLP and to address the housing shortfall that is occurring in the wider housing market area.

Scope, Issues and Options

9. The Local Plan Review Scope, Issues & Options was published for consultation during December 2015 and January 2016¹. The document indicated that the Council considered that Challenge J relating to health and wellbeing remained relevant, and that Policy P10 would not require any further amendments.
10. The Interim Sustainability Appraisal published at the SIO stage analysed the 2013 policies against the 21 topics in the SA Framework.²
11. The interim SA did not find any negative outcomes under the existing policy, and does not recommend any further changes.
12. Consultation representations³ on Policy P20 indicated that minor amendments were required to provide greater clarity with regard to open space requirements for new developments and to provide sufficient sport and play space. Sport England referred to the upcoming Birmingham and Solihull Playing Pitch Strategy, and the need to review the supporting evidence base for the Local Plan Review.
13. In response to the representations, the Council stated it would further consider whether there is any justification to amend the policy.

Draft Local Plan Review (2016)

14. The Draft Local Plan Review document was published for consultation from December 2016 to February 2017.⁴ It sought views on a local plan review for the period 2018-2033 and included revised Policies P1-P21 from the adopted Local Plan, a housing requirement figure 15,765, including a contribution of 2,000 dwellings to the Greater Birmingham HMA shortfall. The spatial strategy provided for 20 new allocations, including 14 into the Green Belt.
15. Minor amendments were made to Policy P20 to reflect the consultation responses to the Scope, Issues and Options Stage and recommendations in the Sustainability Appraisal. Reference was included to the Green Space Strategy Review from 2014, and the need to consider not just provision of open space and facilities, but also their longer term maintenance.

¹ https://www.solihull.gov.uk/Portals/0/Planning/LPR/LPR_Scope_Issues_and_Options_Consultation_Full.pdf

² https://www.solihull.gov.uk/Portals/0/Planning/LPR/LPR_Scope_Issues_and_Options_Consultation_Full.pdf

³ https://www.solihull.gov.uk/Portals/0/Planning/LPR/Scope_Issues_and_Options_Summary_of_Representations_and_Responses.pdf

⁴ <https://www.solihull.gov.uk/Portals/0/InfoandIntelligence/Solihull-Local-Plan-Review.pdf>

Draft Local Plan – Sustainability Appraisal

16. In advance of the publication of the Draft Local Plan, the Sustainability Appraisal's Scoping Report was updated. The draft Policy P20 was considered to have a number of beneficial effects, with the remaining as neutral effects. None are considered to be adverse.

Draft Local Plan – Representations to Consultation

17. The Summary of Representations to the Draft Local Plan were reported to Cabinet Members on 18th July 2017.⁵ There were 1750 respondents to the consultation, comprising over 6,300 representations. The consultation did not have a specific question for Policy P20, but responses were under the theme 'Health and Supporting Local Communities.'
18. There was general support for the policy and recognition of the importance of open space and recreational facilities. It was commented that greater clarification could be given on open space in relation to larger commercial sites, to strengthen the protection of existing green spaces and for the plan to provide a range of facilities.
19. Considerable concern was raised regarding the loss of sporting facilities and playing pitches as a result of site allocations being proposed on existing sports grounds, and clarity was sought on the type and scale of re-provision.
20. Sport England supported the updated challenges in the Draft Local Plan, welcomed the use of Health Impact Assessments in Policy P18 and recommended that their guide 'Active Design' be referred to in policy. Sport England were clear they would only accept a robust and up-to-date strategic assessment as evidence to demonstrate any sport facilities (including playing fields) were considered surplus to requirements, and would object to any site allocations that did not provide for alternative provision for loss of playing field land or other sporting facility.
21. The Canal and Rivers Trust welcomed Policy P20 and recognition of the canal network's role in providing open space and contributing to green networks.
22. As part of the supporting evidence base, work was continuing on the Playing Pitch Assessment and supporting Strategy, and in 2018 an Open Space Assessment was commissioned to inform the baseline data and future standards for Policy P20.

Supplementary Consultation to the Draft Local Plan

23. A Supplementary Consultation was published in January 2019⁶, which related specifically to proposed housing allocations and not policies. The Draft Local Plan had consulted on red line sites in 2016 and indicated estimated capacities based on the SHELAA (2016). Following further more detailed work on site constraints and deliverability issues, concept masterplans were drawn up for the proposed housing allocations and published in a separate document as part of the consultation.⁷
24. Provision of public open space, children's play areas and green infrastructure were key principles informing the concept masterplans. Site allocations sought to retain sports grounds where possible, and stated that equivalent or enhanced alternative provision of any facilities lost to development would have to be made.

⁵ https://www.solihull.gov.uk/Portals/0/Planning/LPR/DLP_-_Summary_of_Representations.pdf

⁶ <https://www.solihull.gov.uk/Portals/0/Planning/LPR/Draft-Local-Plan-Supplementary-Consultation-Document.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.solihull.gov.uk/Portals/0/Planning/LPR/Solihull-Local-Plan-Review-Draft-Concept-Materplans.pdf>

4. Strategic & Policy Context

National Strategic Context

25. Citing the Open Spaces Society: "There is no universal definition of open/green space, in respect of size, quality or description. However open space is defined in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as land laid out as a public garden, or used for the purposes of public recreation, or land which is a disused burial ground. Open space may be managed under public or local acts of parliament (such as parks and open spaces held by local authorities under the Open Spaces Act 1906), or under schemes of management (made by local authorities for common land and town/village greens)."⁸
26. The importance of our local open spaces and green infrastructure has brought to the fore by the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the need to enjoy and access quality green spaces within walking distance of our homes, and for all people to have opportunities for physical activity in the outdoors.

Sport England

27. Established in 1996, Sport England are the national body responsible for growing and developing grassroots sport and getting more people active across England. It is their mission for everyone in England, regardless of their age, background or level of ability to feel able to take part in sport and physical activity.
28. Sport England run evidence-based campaigns to help more people become and stay physically active, such as 'This Girl Can'. They have a number of open funding programmes and award grants for a wide range of schemes, both big and small. Sport England also have a strategic direction function and have produced the following strategies:
 - Sporting Future - A New Strategy for an Active Nation (December 2015)
 - Sport England Strategy – 'Towards an Active Nation' (2016-2021)

25-Year Environment Plan

29. In January 2018 the Government published 'A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment'⁹ for England. The 151-page document covers a wide-range of issues concerning the environment, and a long-term vision and strategy on tackling the issues relating to sustainable land management, nature recovery, health & wellbeing, resource efficiency, reducing pollution and waste, marine ecosystems and the global environment.
30. The 25-year Environment Plan complements, and to be implemented alongside the Government's Clean Growth Strategy and Industrial Strategy from 2018-2019.
31. The 25-year Plan recognises that a more radical approach is needed to halt and reverse the decline in biodiversity and to deliver the creation of 'more, bigger, better, connected' places for nature. Initiatives proposed of particular relevance include:
 - Creating or restoring 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat outside the protected site network, focusing on priority habitats as part of a wider set of land management changes providing extensive benefits.

⁸ <https://www.oss.org.uk/frequently-asked-questions-open-spaces/>

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan>

- Increasing woodland in England in line with our aspiration of 12% cover by 2060: this would involve planting 180,000 hectares by end of 2042.
- Ensuring that food is produced sustainably and profitably.
- Safeguarding and enhancing the beauty of our natural scenery and improving its environmental value while being sensitive to considerations of its heritage.
- Making sure that there are high quality, accessible, natural spaces close to where people live and work, particularly in urban areas, and encouraging more people to spend time in them to benefit their health and wellbeing.
- Focusing on increasing action to improve the environment from all sectors of society.

Local Context

32. The Borough's Council Plan (2020-2025)¹⁰ sits in the context of the Solihull Health & Wellbeing Strategy and our Covid-19 Economic Recovery Plan, based on the Council's belief that economic development, environmental sustainability and health and well-being must go hand in hand.

Love Solihull Strategy

33. Love Solihull¹¹ is an environmental initiative co-ordinated by Solihull Council that supports members of the local community in making a real difference.

34. The Love Solihull Strategy and associated action plan have a number of programmes which are relevant to this context:

- Provide individuals, no matter their background, with the opportunity to contribute to improving their community
- Encourage and inspire residents, businesses, partners, and community organisations to get involved with Love Solihull initiatives
- Provide and demonstrate the knowledge, values, attitudes, skills, and behaviours that help people to make informed and responsible decisions.

Examples of this initiative in action include getting communities involved in parks e.g. through Friends groups, who carry out activities such as litter picking and neighbourhood patrols.

Solihull Active

35. Solihull Active¹² is a campaign that aims to promote participation in sport and physical activity. The Solihull Active team aims to help everyone get 'more active, more often'. The team are a part of the Public Health Directorate at Solihull Council and provide support for people to take part in sport and physical activity across the Solihull borough, and lead a more active lifestyle.

36. The web portal provides advice for people of different circumstances and stages in life, and information on a host of sport and physical activity opportunities across the Borough.

¹⁰ https://www.solihull.gov.uk/Portals/0/Ourvisionandpriorities/Council_plan.pdf

¹¹ <https://www.lovesolihull.org/>

¹² <https://www.solihullactive.co.uk/>

Solihull Green Spaces Strategy (2006) and Green Space Strategy Review (2014)

37. In 2006 a Green Space Strategy (GSS) for Solihull was developed to help plan, manage and maintain Solihull's Green Spaces. The strategy was developed to set priorities for the future, especially in terms of planning policy.
38. This Green Space Strategy Review¹³ for Solihull forms a reassessment and updated version of the GSS completed in 2006, and takes into account the gains made in green space provision since 2006, changes in management regimes and funding constraints, revised planning policy framework and wider strategic objectives. The GSSR reviewed the standards for planning policy and carried forward those of the original GSS.
39. Solihull has been commended for its high quality parks and open spaces. In October 2020, 16 of Solihull's parks and open spaces were awarded Green Flag Award status,¹⁴ a similar amount to its larger neighbour Birmingham.

Solihull Health and Wellbeing Strategy

40. Solihull's Health and Wellbeing Strategy was reviewed in 2019¹⁵, and streamlined to focus on 4 main priorities:
 - Priority One - Maternity, childhood and adolescence: A healthy start in life
 - Priority Two - Adulthood and Work: Promoting health and wellbeing
 - Priority Three - Ageing and Later Life: Ageing well and improving health and care services for older people
 - Priority Four - All Age: Social Connectedness
41. The Board will be taking a 'Do, sponsor, watch' approach. This approach will help the Board focus on the big issues and also support a wider of set activities that will help contribute to the reduction in inequalities and the promotion of integration.
42. Physical activity is considered a 'Watch' area, i.e. one of those areas that are important in addressing inequalities but may be more relevant to a single organisation (rather than multiagency), already feature as 'business and usual' or already have an established infrastructure to support delivery.

Solihull Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan (2017-2019)

43. The Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS)¹⁶ and Action Plan was undertaken by consultants (KKP) in accordance with Sport England methodology. It builds upon a preceding assessment report which was jointly produced together with an assessment report for Birmingham City Council.
44. The Strategy identifies current levels of provision of playing pitches within Solihull across the public, education, voluntary and commercial sectors and to compare this with current and likely future levels of demand. The primary purpose of the PPS is to provide a strategic

¹³https://www.solihull.gov.uk/Portals/0/StrategiesPlansPolicies/LandscapeandEcology/Green_Spaces_Strategy_Review.pdf

¹⁴ <https://www.castlebromwichpc.gov.uk/solihull-celebrates-as-parks-and-green-spaces-win-green-flag-awards/>

¹⁵ <https://www.solihull.gov.uk/Portals/0/InfoandIntelligence/Health-and-Wellbeing-Strategy.pdf>

¹⁶ www.solihull.gov.uk/lpr/evidence

framework that ensures the provision of playing pitches meets the local needs of existing and future residents.

45. The Playing Pitch Strategy was updated in 2019 following the Supplementary Consultation to the Local Plan Review to assess in more detail the impacts of sites coming forward both in terms of scale and location. The Strategy identifies future 'match equivalent sessions' for different types of sporting grounds by 2036.

Solihull Open Space Assessment (2019)

46. The Council commissioned an Open Space Assessment in 2019¹⁷ to update the baseline evidence on open spaces (not including playing pitches) across the Borough, and to make recommendations for future needs and planning policy standards based on the Local Plan Review.
47. The Assessment cites evidence from 2018 report from Fields in Trust "Revaluing Parks and Green Spaces – Measuring their economic and wellbeing value to individuals".¹⁸ This is the first research study on parks and green spaces to use welfare weighting methodology, allowing for more informed evidence-based policy decisions. The headline findings from this report are as follows:
48. **The Total Economic Value to an individual is £30.24 per year** (£2.52 per month), and includes benefits gained from using their local park or green space and non-use benefits such as the preservation of parks for future generations. The value of parks and green spaces is higher for individuals from lower socio-economic groups and also from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. This research is the first to apply welfare weighting methodology to public parks and green spaces in the UK. The findings show that any loss of parks and green spaces will disproportionately impact disadvantaged and underrepresented communities, precisely those who value them the most.
49. **The Wellbeing Value associated with the frequent use of local parks and green spaces is worth £34.2 billion per year** to the entire UK adult population.
50. **Parks and green spaces are estimated to save the NHS around £111 million per year** based solely on a reduction in GP visits and excluding any additional savings from prescribing or referrals.

NPPF

51. Since the consultation on the Draft Local Plan Review (Dec 2016 – Feb 2017) the NPPF has been updated in July 2018, and then again to take into account the new standard methodology for assessing housing need in February 2019.
52. Section 8 of the NPPF relates to 'promoting healthy and safe communities'. Key paragraphs are:
- 91(c): Planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which: enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs – for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling.

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ <http://www.fieldsintrust.org/Upload/file/research/Revaluing-Parks-and-Green-Spaces-Report.pdf>

96: Access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities. Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate.

53. The NPPF seeks to protect existing open space, sports and recreational buildings, and states these should not be built on unless “the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.”

Planning Practice Guidance

54. The Open Space section was published at the outset of the PPG in March 2014, and has only been updated to refresh the references to the NPPF.
55. The PPG recognises the health benefits of open space, and also their contribution to the wider green infrastructure network. The PPG refers to the Sport England guidance on playing pitches and provides guidance on the designation of Local Green Space.
56. Given the lack of detail on open space assessments in the NPPF and PPG, assessments of provision tend to follow the PPG17 and Companion guidance, which set out a logical and clear structure to assess baseline and future needs.

5. Summary of Key Evidence

Solihull Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan (2017-2019)

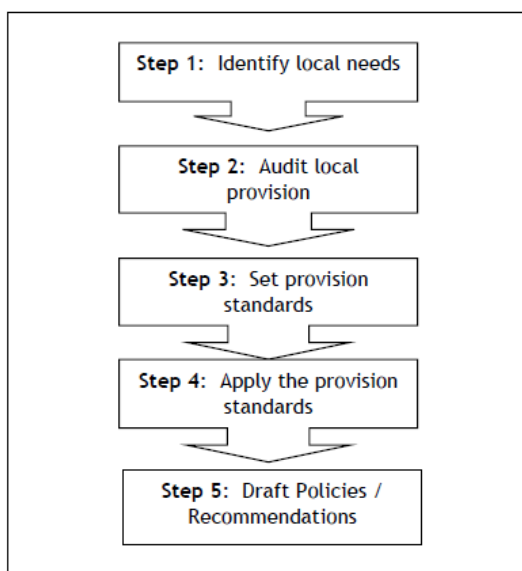
57. The PPS covers the following playing pitches including accompanying ancillary facilities:
- Football pitches (including 3G AGPs)
 - Rugby union pitches (including 3G AGPs)
 - Rugby league pitches
 - Cricket squares Hockey pitches (Sand/water based AGPs)
 - Other grass pitch sports (including baseball and Gaelic football).
58. In addition, tennis courts and athletics track are also included.
59. The Strategy concluded that current demand was either being met, or there were shortfalls in provision, i.e. for youth natural grass football pitches, full size 3G pitches, Rugby Union and Cricket. Taking into account future demand up to 2036 further shortfalls were identified across football, rugby union and cricket. The shortfalls were also presented spatially across the three broad Central, North and Rural areas within the Borough.
60. The 2019 Playing Pitch Strategy concluded:
- “The existing position for all pitch sports is either that demand is being met or that there is a shortfall, whereas the future position shows the exacerbation of current shortfalls and the creation of shortfalls for some pitches and for some areas where demand is currently being met.*
- As such, there is a need to protect all existing playing pitch provision until demand is met; or there is a requirement to replace any lost provision to an equal or better quantity and quality before it is lost. This is especially pertinent given the site allocations in the Draft Local Plan Review.*
- As there is no surplus provision identified, qualitative improvements to mitigate the loss of a playing field will not meet the requirements of planning policy i.e. paragraph 97 of the NPPF and Sport England’s Playing Field Policy. In cases where an alternative development leads to the loss of playing field or part of a playing field, a quantitative replacement will be required in addition to qualitative improvements and any replacement provision will need to satisfy Sport England and relevant NGBs.*
- In the main, the identified shortfalls do not mean that new provision is required. Instead, most shortfalls expressed can be met by improving pitch quality to increase capacity, whilst other options include gaining access to existing unused pitches, such as those located at currently unavailable school sites, pitch re-configuration or the restoration of disused/lapsed pitches (if feasible).*
- Notwithstanding the above, the creation of new provision may be required in key housing growth areas where there is expected to be a large increase in population. Furthermore, in relation to football, a shortfall of 3G pitches can only be met through increased provision. With resources to improve the quality of grass pitches being limited, an increase in 3G provision could also help reduce grass pitch shortfalls through the transfer of play, thus reducing overplay, which in turn can aid and sustain pitch quality improvements. For cricket, new provision in the form of NTPs that can be incorporated onto existing sites will help reduce grass wicket shortfalls without the requirement for entirely new squares ...*

From a rugby union perspective, most shortfalls can be alleviated through pitch quality improvements and an increase in floodlit provision, although in isolated cases there may also be a need for an increase in pitch provision. This will be aided if any new 3G pitches can be made World Rugby compliant.”

- 61. In response to the proposed growth in the Draft Submission Local Plan, and the need to replace sporting facilities for other large projects such as the new M42 motorway junction, the Council have commissioned a draft Playing Pitch Mitigation Strategy (PPMS)¹⁹. The aim is to quantify the future needs of the Borough to meet this estimated level of growth, and to identify ways of mitigating the impact upon or loss of existing playing pitch capacity.
- 62. The emerging recommendations of the PPMS have identified a potential requirement for the provision of approximately 34 hectares of additional playing field land, to be delivered by way of up to five new sports hubs in five key areas of the Borough. Sports Hubs are considered by the Council and Sport England to be more cost effective and allow for larger, good quality sites to be established, rather than numerous smaller sites that will be less sustainable, uncomplimentary to each other and potentially inadequate to service required needs. They also allow for the provision of good quality supporting infrastructure such as car parking and changing rooms or pavilions, and would help to deliver the Council’s key sport and recreation policy objectives in a comprehensive and strategic manner.
- 63. A report to Cabinet in August 2020 outlined areas of search for new sports hubs in five key areas of the Borough: Blythe, East of Solihull, Knowle/Dorridge, Meriden and Balsall Common.²⁰
- 64. This work is ongoing and the Council is working in partnership with Sport England, Governing Bodies, local clubs, landowners and site promoters.

Solihull Open Space Assessment (2019)

- 65. The Open Space Study is comprised of two reports, a Community and Stakeholder Consultation Report, carried out in 2018, and the Open Space Assessment, finalised in 2019.
- 66. The Open Space Study followed the methodology from the PPG 17 Companion Guide to:



¹⁹ <https://www.solihull.gov.uk/Portals/0/Planning/LPR/Cabinet-Report-August-2020-Land-for-Sport-Hubs.pdf>

²⁰ <http://eservices.solihull.gov.uk/mgInternet/documents/s83060/Appendix.pdf>

67. **Step 1** – The Community and Stakeholder Consultation Report (2018) examines local need for various types of open space, and outdoor recreation facilities. It has drawn on householder surveys, consultation with key stakeholders and community groups and neighbouring authorities. The findings from the Community and Stakeholder Consultation Report helped to inform the proposed standards in the Open Space Assessment.
68. **Step 2** – A comprehensive desktop audit was undertaken of current open space and play provision in the Borough. 242 open spaces and 64 outdoor play spaces were visited to sense-check the GIS data and to assess the quality of open spaces.
69. Unlike the previous GSS evidence audit, the open spaces were split by typology, rather than grouped as just 'Park' or 'Natural green space'. Areas for car parking were excluded from the typology site area.
70. **Step 3** – In order to set proposed standards for the different typologies, the Assessment took into account: the existing levels of provision across the Borough and by ward; the findings of the local needs assessment from community and stakeholder engagement; the findings from previous studies; and consideration of existing and national standards or benchmarks.

Quantity standards were proposed in terms of hectares per 1000 population, as well as accessibility standards depending on the typology. For example, it is considered acceptable to expect to travel further to an allotment than a children's play area.

A baseline quality mark was also recorded for each site, and included in an Appendix, a quality standards or benchmarks proposed for each typology, where applicable.

Step 4 – This compared the existing provision of each typology by ward, by area and by population ratio.

71. **Step 5** – This includes higher level strategic options which may be applicable at town, ward, and study area wide level, as well as draft policies to be considered in the emerging Local Plan.

Standards

72. The Open Space Assessment surveyed and mapped a range of typologies, but cemeteries/churchyards, orchards, and civic spaces were not progressed to proposed standards as these are less likely to come forward as a result of development, e.g. churchyards, or would be more appropriately considered in a different type of strategy, e.g. civic spaces. Furthermore, outdoor sports provision and school sports fields were mapped for the sake of completeness, but were not included in the standards, as these have been assessed as part of the Playing Pitch Strategy and Assessment.
73. The Assessment is clear that standards that have been proposed are for **minimum guidance levels of provision**. Therefore, even though a geographical area (Ward) may enjoy levels of provision exceeding minimum standards, this does not mean there is a surplus, as all such provision may be well used, a site may be of strategic importance, e.g. a Principal Park or Local Nature Reserve, and there may be lower provision in the neighbouring ward. It is also important to note that the quantity, accessibility and quality standards need to be considered together – they should not be considered in isolation. For example, even if there may be sufficient supply of a particular open space typology against the quantity standard, there may still be gaps in access, or the existing provision may be poor quality/not fit for purpose – and therefore there would still be shortfalls against the standards.

74. Given the Council's commitments to increasing biodiversity and space for wildlife under the Natural Capital Investment Strategy and Climate Change Prospectus, and the need for a green Covid-19 recovery, it is especially important to safeguard accessible natural green space, and local green spaces for recreation and enjoyment of the outdoors.
75. Below is a summary of existing provision of open space typologies across the Borough, based on the Assessment's mapping methodology. The figures for the population ratio are based on the ONS 2017 mid-year population statistics, which were the most current at the time of writing the Study.

Table 10 Summary of existing provision of open space across the Borough

Typology	Existing (ha)	Existing (ha/1000) ¹⁶
Allotments	18.60	0.09
Amenity Greenspace (>0.15ha)	149.39	0.70
Parks and Recreation Grounds (combined)	336.42	1.57
<i>Parks and Recreation Grounds</i>	<i>334.42</i>	<i>1.56</i>
<i>Outdoor Sport (Fixed)</i>	<i>2.00</i>	<i>0.01</i>
Play (Child)	5.47	0.03
Play (Youth)	1.55	0.01
Accessible Natural Greenspace	337.55	1.58
Cemeteries and Churchyards	41.01	0.19
Education	285.58	1.33
Outdoor Sport (Private)	98.48	0.46
Civic Space	0.79	0.00

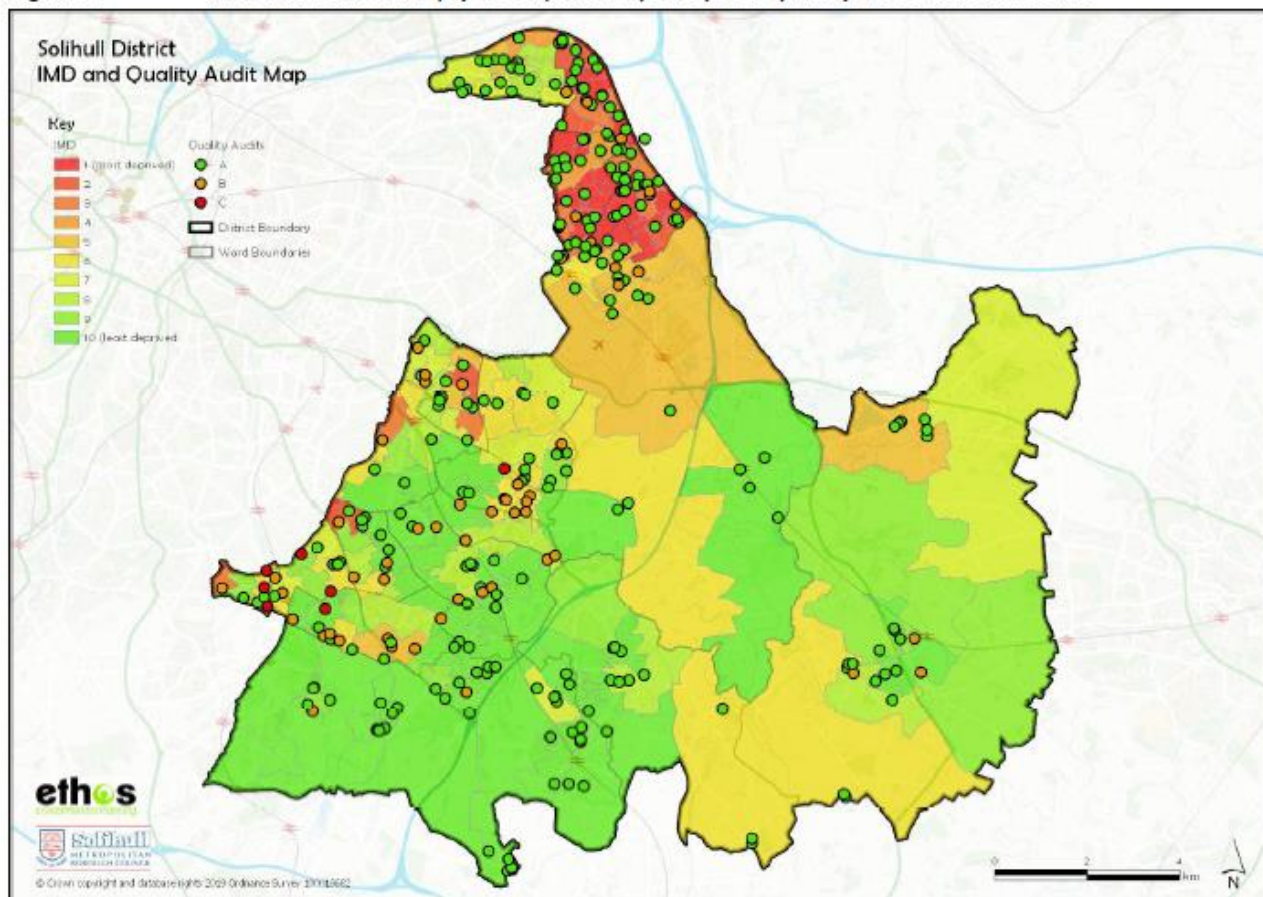
76. Below is a summary of the proposed Open Space standards:

Typology	Quantity standards (ha/1000 population)	Access standard
Allotments	0.20 (minimum size for new provision is 0.1ha)	720 metres or 15 minutes' walk time
Amenity Green Space (sites >0.15 ha)	0.70 (minimum size for new provision is 0.15ha)	480 metres or 10 minutes' walk time
Park and Recreation Grounds (public provision only)	1.55	720 metres or 15 minutes' walk time
Play Space (Children)	0.06 (minimum size for new provision is 0.01ha)	480 metres or 10 minutes' walk time
Play Space (Youth)	0.06	720 metres or 15 minutes' walk time
Natural Green Space	1.0	960m or 20 minutes' walk time ANGSt for sites above 20ha
Total for new provision	3.57 ha/1000	

77. 3.57ha/1000 population is the overall total provision recommended in the standards. This is compared to the current standard of 2.86ha/1000 population for public open space, which does not include allotments or generally youth play spaces, and adopts the Field in Trust guidance for LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs.

- 78. The Assessment shows that there is a disparity in provision of open space by size and typology across wards, and there is scope for more provision of children and young person's play areas.
- 79. The Borough generally enjoys high quality open spaces, as seen in the number of Green Flag awards, and the investments in green spaces in North Solihull under the regeneration programme are evident in the map below.

Figure 4 IMD ranks in SMB (by LSOA) with open space quality assessment results



6. How the Evidence has been used

Challenges and Objectives

80. 'Challenge J – Improving Health and Wellbeing for Everyone' from the 2013 Local Plan and 2016 draft Local Plan Review continue to be considered a key challenge in delivering the Local Plan.
81. The objectives have been updated to set clearer expectations that new development provides opportunities that enable people to pursue an active lifestyle, increase participation in physical activity including play, sport and recreation and make healthier choices.

Spatial Strategy

82. The spatial strategy seeks to locate development in accessible places with good connections to a range of services and facilities.

Broad Location/Site Allocation

83. The site allocations and concept masterplans have been informed by a design-led approach that respects landscape character, integrates green infrastructure and conserving and enhancing the natural environment.
84. Providing good quality open space has been a key factor of concept masterplans. The approach has been to allocate a minimum of 3.57ha/1000 population (at an average of 2.3 persons per dwelling) for sites of 200 or more dwellings, and 3.37ha/1000 population for sites under 200 dwellings. This is because it is unlikely that smaller sites would accommodate allotments. Types of children's play for each site have been proposed based on the Fields in Trust guidance.
85. More detail on type and range of open space provision will be included in an Open Space SPD to support the Draft Submission Local Plan on adoption.
86. In terms of playing pitch provision, where possible, playing pitches have been retained on site, e.g. Sites 2 and 16. A few of the sites would result in the loss of playing pitches, however, development will only be permitted on sites when alternative provision has been secured.

Policy Changes

87. Policy P20 has been updated in response to representations to the Local Plan Review Regulation 2018 consultation, changes in national policy, strategy and legislation and local policy drivers.
88. The policy has been strengthened to recognise the role of different types of open space for their natural capital contribution and importance for physical and mental health and wellbeing. More detail is given on the need for compensatory measures for any open space assets that are lost to development.
89. With regard to provision of new open space and facilities, reference is made in the policy for the need to fund maintenance as well as the initial capital project.
90. The policy refers explicitly to Sport England's Active Design guidance, as recommended by the sporting body.

91. Policy P20 makes provision for two Local Green Space sites that are designated on the Policies Plan.
92. Site policies have been introduced for each of the site allocations and where applicable refer to the need to secure the re-provision of playing pitches prior to development, and that these should be of equivalent or enhanced condition and accessibility.
93. The supporting text has been updated to state that in order to make the best use of community assets, new and enhanced sports provision in schools should be made available for wider community use where feasible.

7. Conclusion

95. This Topic Paper has set out to evidence how the Provision of Open Space, Children's Play, Sport, Recreation and Leisure have been taken into account through the formulation of the Local Plan policies and proposals.
96. The Draft Submission Local Plan is supported by an up-to-date evidence on playing pitches, in accordance with Sport England guidance and has prepared an assessment of open space in accordance with the national planning practice guidance.
97. The policies and proposals seek to provide an integrated open space network, that is of high quality, well-connected and serves multiple functions. In these challenging times of climate change emergency and Covid-19 pandemic, it has never been more important to enhance our open spaces and opportunities for physical activity and enjoyment of the outdoors.
98. The policies and proposals provide a strong framework for decision-making, especially in those instances where open space may need to be re-provided as part of new development, and to ensure that new development contributes to providing high quality open spaces for new communities.
99. The Council continues to take a pro-active approach in addressing shortfalls in open space provision and improving quality and accessibility of existing assets, and works in partnership with statutory bodies, key stakeholders and local communities.

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