

Open Space and Recreation Assessment in Southend-on-Sea Borough

Final Report

August 2004



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Glossary of terms

The following abbreviations are used in the report, and whilst they are also explained at the appropriate points in the main text they are also defined here for convenience.

| Abbreviation | | What it means |
|--------------|--|---|
| CABE | | Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment |
| LAP | | Local Area for Play |
| LEAP | | Local Equipped Area for Play |
| LTP | | Local Transport Plan |
| MUGA | | Multi Use Games Area |
| NEAP | | Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play |
| NPFA | | National Playing Fields Association |
| PPG | | Planning Policy Guidance |
| RPG | | Regional Planning Guidance |

1. Introduction

1.1 General

This is a report of an assessment of open space and recreation facilities in Southend-on-Sea Borough. Together, with the accompanying document 'A Playing Pitch Assessment' this report is intended to provide the following:

- An indication of existing basic recreation needs within the Borough, taking into account the Government's Planning Policy Guidance 17 requiring local authorities to undertake such assessments.
- A framework of guidance to inform the future planned development of the Borough, including the Local Development Plan review.
- A means to help determine future decision making and investment decisions by the Council and relevant partners with regard to the improvement of local recreation and open space opportunities.
- An articulation of the views of local residents and interest groups through drawing upon the results of consultation exercises.
- Assistance in helping to draw together all other relevant policies and strategies having a bearing upon open space and recreation opportunities to enable better joined up planning and decision making.

1.2 This report

In the following sections, this report:

- Summarises national and local policy of relevance to this assessment, and identifies some of the implications.
- Describes the methods used to undertake the assessment.
- Reviews the results of relevant surveys and consultation into local needs.
- Examines the quantity, distribution and (wherever possible) quality of existing recreation and open space opportunities.
- Draws together the above review of needs and provision into a series of issues and conclusions relating primarily to the quantity and quality of existing provision.

- Makes recommendations, including standards designed to reflect the needs of both existing residents, as well as the likely demands resulting from housing development.

2. Policy context and issues

2.1 General

The role of open space and recreation facilities in building attractive, modern communities is now formally recognised by national government policy seeking to achieve urban renaissance. Government policy in this regard very much sets the agenda in terms of many of the themes and issues explored in this report. In particular it emphasises the role of open space and recreation opportunities in helping to build attractive communities and local environments, social cohesion, and encouraging healthier physical lifestyles.

2.2 National Policy

2.2.1 Sustainable Communities: building for the future

This government programme is claimed to mark a 'step change' in helping deliver sustainable communities for all. It is part of the Government's wider drive to raise the quality of life in local communities through increasing prosperity, reducing inequalities, more employment, better public services, better health and education, tackling crime and anti-social behaviour.

It builds on the government's existing policies, notably those in the Urban and Rural White Papers, (Our Towns and Cities: the Future and Our Countryside: the Future - November 2000). It stresses the way communities develop, economically, socially and environmentally, must respect the needs of future generations as well as succeeding now. It states that some of the key requirements of sustainable communities are:

- A flourishing local economy to provide jobs and wealth
- Strong leadership to respond positively to change
- Effective engagement and participation by local people, groups and businesses, especially in the planning, design and long-term stewardship of their community, and an active voluntary and community sector
- **A safe and healthy local environment with well-designed public and green space**
- Sufficient size, scale and density, and the right layout to support basic amenities in the neighbourhood and minimise use of resources (including land)
- **Good public transport and other transport infrastructure** both within the community and linking it to urban, rural and regional centres
- Buildings - both individually and collectively - that can meet different needs over time, and that minimise the use of resources
- A well-integrated mix of decent homes of different types and tenures to support a range of household sizes, ages and incomes
- **Good quality local public services**, including education and training opportunities, health care **and community facilities, especially for leisure**

- A diverse, vibrant and creative local culture, encouraging pride in the community and cohesion within it
- A "sense of place";

As can be seen, high quality open space and recreation facilities figure prominently in these stated requirements.

2.2.2 Cleaner, Safer, Greener Public Space

In April 2001, the Prime Minister made a speech, which outlined the importance of "liveability" in our towns and cities. He talked about *"the need for Britain to feel proud of its public spaces, not ashamed. How we need to make it safer for children to walk or cycle to school. How we need local parks, which are well looked after and easily reached with a pushchair. And the need for streets to be free of litter, dog mess and mindless vandalism."*

The government is therefore attaching great importance to the role of open space in realising attractive sustainable local communities.

The Government's aim is for everyone to have access to attractive, high quality and sustainable public spaces and local environments that cater for the diverse needs of communities. This means ensuring that public spaces are:

- **Cleaner** - by improving how they are maintained and how services are managed and delivered.
- **Safer** - by improving how they are planned, designed and looked after.
- **Greener** - by ensuring access to high quality parks and more attractive public spaces.

2.2.3 Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17)

The revised version of PPG17 – Sport and Recreation was published in July 2002.

The PPG states that objectives for open spaces/sport and recreation should be linked with supporting an urban renaissance, supporting a rural renewal, promotion of social inclusion and community cohesion, health and well being and the promotion of more sustainable development.

PPG17 requires local authorities to undertake assessments and audits of open space/sports/recreational facilities in order to:

- identify the needs of the population;
- identify the potential for increased use; and,
- establish an effective strategy for open space/sports/recreational facilities at the local level.

These assessments and audits will help in resolving potential conflicts between different uses and users. The PPG states that land should not be built on unless an assessment has been undertaken which clearly shows that the open space/buildings and land are surplus to requirements:

“An application for planning permission may seek to demonstrate through an independent assessment that the land or buildings are surplus to requirements.

Planning conditions may be used to secure part of the development of a site for an open space/recreational facility that is in deficit.

Parks, recreation grounds, playing fields and allotments must not be regarded as 'previously developed land'. “

In terms of the PPG's guidance on planning for new open space/sports and recreational facilities 'General Principles' include:

- accessibility;
- contribution to town centre vitality and viability;
- quality of the public realm;
- adding to and enhancing the range of existing facilities;
- preferential use of brownfield land; and,
- considering the scope for using any surplus land for sport use - weighing this against alternative uses.

2.2.4 Other Government Policy.

In 2002 the Prime minister's Strategy Unit produced 'Game Plan',` a strategy for delivering the government's sport and physical activity objectives. One of its two overarching objectives was to bring about a major increase in participation in physical activity, primarily because of the significant health benefits, and to reduce the growing costs of inactivity.

Open space and other recreation opportunities clearly have relevance to the delivery of higher levels of grassroots participation in this regard.

2.3 Regional policy

2.3.1 Regional Planning Policy (RPG)

East of England Regional Assembly is preparing new RPG for the East of England (RPG14). It will contain a specific sub-regional planning strategy and policies for Thames Gateway South Essex. It will update RPGs 6 (East Anglia) and 9 (South East) to guide planning and transport policy up to 2021.

Draft RPG14 was approved by the Regional Assembly in February 2004 and has been 'banked' with the Secretary of State pending further work. Following discussions with Government Draft RPG14 will be finalised in the light of a number of additional studies to be carried out in the coming months and submitted formally to the Secretary of State in the autumn. A period of public consultation will follow.

RPG 14 when finalised will provide the strategic framework to guide local planning and development throughout the East of England, and will set the overall direction for planning within the Borough of Southend. At this time it allocates an additional 6000 dwellings to the Borough to be built between 2001-2021. This will have major implications for open space and recreational facilities within the Borough in two general ways:

- Extra residents within the Borough will place additional demands upon all types of recreation opportunity and open space.
- The Borough Council must ensure that valued open space is not sacrificed unnecessarily to meet the demand for new housing.

The additional 6,000 dwellings (based on an average household size of 2.2 persons as per the 2001 Census) could generate a further 13,200 people living in the Borough by 2021.

2.3.2 Thames Gateway South Essex

The Thames Gateway initiative is a major strategic drive to release the potential of the Thames corridor to the east of London as a place to both live and work. Southend-on-Sea is at the eastern end of the identified corridor. The current Vision for the Borough as part of the Gateway initiative sees Southend-on-Sea, along with Rochford, as a centre of cultural and educational excellence. To achieve this the aim is to:

- Transform Southend into a thriving cultural hub.
- Invest in the leisure and cultural infrastructure including theatres, swimming and sports facilities.

Clearly, the Vision has implications for the planning and provision of leisure facilities of all kinds. Parks, open spaces and other recreation features are part of the cultural fabric of the Borough.

2.3.3 Making it Happen: Thames Gateway and Growth Areas. A progress report by the Deputy Prime Minister.

Following on from the publication of *Sustainable Communities: building for the future*, this report deals with proposals for sustainable growth and housing supply in the wider South East over the next 15 years and provides an overview of Government action with partners to help deliver growth.

This report reasserts that the Government is not simply committed to the delivery of additional housing - it is committed to creating communities. Alongside housing growth, there is a need to plan for the delivery of schools and healthcare provision, for public transport **and good quality public spaces**, for quality and high design principles. The stated aim is to make growth areas attractive places in which to live and work.

2.3.4 Creating Sustainable Communities: Greening the Gateway

This document sets out the Government's vision for the landscape of the Thames Gateway and the positive contribution that the network of green open spaces should make to the quality of life for all those who live and work there. It is a statement of intent outlining the Government's approach to the outdoor environment. The more detailed strategies and action plans of other organisations (including those of the Borough Council) need to fit within it. It is intended to be a clear indication of the way in which *Greening the Gateway* can help in delivering sustainable communities.

The Strategy established several overarching principles to serve as a guide to landowners and agencies, and help to ensure that the whole landscape evolves successfully to become greater than the sum of its parts. These are summarised below.

Planning in advance: If the greenspace framework for the Gateway is to be used to complement other changes such as new built development and transport infrastructure, then it must be strongly promoted. Establishing the scale, extent and overall pattern of greenspace provision as a clear priority in the early stages of regeneration is likely to make the desired integration much more achievable. The management and maintenance requirements should also be given serious consideration from the outset. Greenspace must not be a mere afterthought in the development process.

Developing an environmental evidence base: The general principles in this strategy need to be applied in the context of current physical and social circumstances. In some areas there may be a need for additional survey work in order to increase the understanding of existing land use and environmental pressures.

Encouraging inclusiveness and integration: All elements of greenspace have important contributions to make, whether in public or private ownership and no matter how large or small an individual parcel of land may be. Every effort should be made to respect and strengthen physical linkages in the landscape, and to take adjacent land uses into consideration as development progresses. Greenspace should also be fully integrated with built development. The success of commercial and residential developments very often depends on the relationship between the buildings and the greenspace within and immediately beyond the site boundary. Every effort should be made to establish Thames Gateway's framework of bold structural greenspace as far ahead of built development as is practicable.

Protecting local character and distinctiveness: The wide variety of underlying soils, the pattern of streams and rivers, and the varied buildings and vegetation all add to the inherent character of Thames Gateway. Sensitive landscape treatment is one of the most important ways in which the growth area can maintain its diversity and avoid the risk of blandness.

Protecting designated sites: Hundreds of individual sites within the Thames Gateway area are protected by law because of the importance of their archaeological or natural heritage. These important sites form one fundamental element for the greenspace network. Therefore it is imperative that they are protected from both direct damage and the cumulative effect of changes to adjacent land. It is particularly important for the specially designated sites to be given maximum protection

Habitat restoration and creation: The scale and the interconnectedness of habitats both have considerable influence over their value for wildlife and also for people's enjoyment. The UK Biodiversity Action Plan sets targets for increasing certain priority habitats and so the protection and conservation management of designated sites should be complemented where possible by habitat creation.

A dynamic landscape: Greenspace is not static. The use and management of land in Thames Gateway needs to be responsive to changing circumstances. For example, temporarily vacant brownfield land may play an important role in providing scope for informal recreation and nature conservation. More formal recreation grounds may provide temporary storm water storage as a part of sustainable flood protection. Even sites undergoing built development may provide an opportunity for local environmental education, skills training or archaeological interpretation.

Community involvement: The immediate impact and the continuing success of the Thames Gateway landscape will be determined in large part by the extent of support from local people. Participation is the key to community commitment and plans for the greenspace network should be shaped through local consultation.

Elsewhere within the Strategy the importance of green routes is stressed. The Thames Gateway is already criss-crossed by navigable waterways, roads and railway lines, and more transport routes will be added. Much of the incidental land associated with such linear routes tends to be green. It is relatively undisturbed and serves as an ecologically diverse linear "sanctuary" for wildlife. Roadside avenues contribute to the greenspace network in a more formal way. Planning the greenspace network of Thames Gateway at a strategic scale will help to ensure that there are safe green routes linking home, work and play

2.3 Local policy

2.3.1 Southend-on-Sea Borough Local Plan Towards 2001 (Adopted March 1994)

The existing development plan has had a major influence on the planning and management of open space in general. It:

- has allocated additional residential growth (which has led to additional demand for recreational facilities of all kinds).
- sets out policies in relation to the planning for and protection of all kinds of open space.
- identifies specific proposals for new and improved recreation facilities.

The Local Plan (together with other supplementary guidance) indicates to developers the contributions they will be expected to make towards the maintenance and improvement of local facilities (including those for sport and recreation).

Of the five main aims of the Borough Local Plan, the most relevant to this study are:

- to safeguard and enhance areas of urban and nature conservation interest and protect attractive townscape, urban green spaces, open countryside and the surrounding coastline, without stifling that development essential to the future prosperity and well-being of the Town.
- to make specific provision for improved sport, recreation and community facilities to overcome identified deficiencies and meet local needs.

The Recreation and Open Space chapter of the Local Plan puts forward 5 objectives:

1. To provide for and encourage the provision of a range of indoor and outdoor recreation facilities to overcome identified deficiencies in sports provision.
2. To ensure that the provision of new recreation facilities does not adversely affect the surrounding countryside, landscape quality or residential amenities.
3. To identify areas in the Borough deficient in the provision of open space and children's playground facilities, and to make good, where possible, such deficiencies.
4. To encourage greater awareness of and access to the countryside for informal recreation.
5. To identify active and passive recreation opportunities and to make resources available for their implementation as resources permit.

The relevant policies within this chapter are:

R1 Encourage and promote the retention of existing, and the provision of additional outdoor sports facilities, both public and private. Permission will not be given which involves the loss of these facilities except where improved facilities are provided and the Council will seek to optimize the use of its own facilities.

R2 Deficiencies in indoor sports provision will be remedied by:

- i. giving priority in the provision of accessible indoor sports facilities through dual use and joint development.
- ii. encouraging the retention of existing and the provision of additional private indoor sports facilities.
- iii. exploring the opportunities for more intensive use of Council holdings and facilities.
- iv. investigating the needs of residents for indoor sports facilities.

R5 The Council will seek to ensure that no home is more than half a mile from a neighbourhood park and from a children's play area containing fixed play equipment, and no more than one mile from a local park providing active and passive recreation facilities. Permission will not be given for any proposal that involves the loss of existing open space unless alternative equal provision is made.

Specific proposals of relevance are:

- P7a North Shoebury A 5.5 hectare extension to Shoeburyness Park recreation ground and confirmed by this Local Plan.
- P7b Shoebury High School, Delaware Road. The Council will explore joint provision or dual use of a new sports hall to enable public use out of school hours.
- P7f Land adjacent to the Francis Sports Ground, Eastern Avenue Planning permission was given (1992) for public open space use and replacement playing fields, pavilion and parking.
- P7g Land north of Prince Avenue Two areas of land allocated for public open space subject to road realignment.
- P7h Eastwoodbury Lane playing fields Due to road construction a replacement allocation is made of low grade agricultural land.
- P7j Cockethurst Park extension 3.6 hectares allocated as public open space to be used as a playing field extension to Cockethurst Park.
- P7k Eastwood High School, Rayleigh Road. The Council will seek dual use of these school facilities.

Some of these proposals have been implemented, but others remain unrealised.

The existing Plan has played an important role in both directing and encouraging new as well as protecting valued existing open space from loss to alternative development. However, the Plan is now 10 years old; the character and composition of the Borough's population will have changed in that period, and so too will its needs. In addition, the effect of additional large-scale housing development in the Borough (as indicated in RPG 14) must be taken into account. Large-scale growth of this kind will bring about not only increased demand for open space and recreation opportunities, but will also place pressure upon the Borough Council to release existing open space for development in what is already a densely developed and populated area.

2.3.2 Southend 2011 An urban vision for the new millennium. Replacement Southend on Sea Borough Local Plan Issues Report March 2001

The existing Local Plan adopted in 1994 runs to 2001, this replacement Plan should cover the period to 2011. Since the Borough Local Plan was adopted the Borough Council has become a Unitary authority, and there is a need to integrate with other strategies; especially (in terms of this study) the Corporate Strategy, and the Thames Gateway Strategy.

One of the identified issues (number 28) for the new Local Plan to address concerns community and recreational opportunities. It suggests that policies should address the need to:

- help implement a strategy that provides for local facilities which are easily accessible to all residents
- protect existing open space, playing fields, playgrounds and leisure and community centres from development
- allocate land for development of new or replacement recreational opportunities
- identify areas of under-used open space for development for other uses and allocate land for replacement by better facilities for the local community
- require the provision of appropriate, usable open space and community facilities as part of the new development
- to require developers to make a financial contribution towards providing new and improved community facilities including open space and play facilities.¹

The demand for sports and recreation facilities is very much influenced by the size and characteristics of the existing and future population (including the amount of new residential development sanctioned through future planning policies.)

¹ Taking into account as necessary possible changes in planning legislation affecting methods of developer contributions resulting from the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act.

2.3.3 Sports and Leisure Development Strategy (2003)

Within this Strategy three forms of sports and leisure provision are addressed:

- sports development work – which includes specific development programmes and initiatives
- built sports facility provision – focussing on the five main sports facilities within the Borough
- park based sports facility provision - including pitches, courts, rinks etc.

The vision for sports and leisure in Southend, which has emerged from the strategy development process, is for:

‘A Borough where the resources available for sports and leisure are optimised through successful planning and partnership working, resulting in high quality sports and leisure services and facilities which promote healthy lifestyles and lifelong learning and which local people are able to and want to access’.

The Strategy covers many facets of sports and leisure development outside the immediate scope of this report. Equally, some conclusions and recommendations of the Strategy do have relevance, such as an identified need for more skateboard/ BMX facilities similar to those developed in Shoebury Park; issues with drainage and ancillary facilities on pitch sport sites (dealt with in the companion volume to this report); and, the potential for community use of education venues. In addition, the Strategy identifies various revenue initiatives that may help to increase overall participation in sport and active recreation. This is important as facilities alone are only one half of the 'participation equation', the other being well promoted, attractive and managed activities to encourage people to take part.

2.3.4 The Parks Strategy Final Draft 2003

The main purpose of this strategy is to review the current provision and management of parks within Southend, and to assess future needs and requirements.

The role of parks is examined under three sections:

- *“parks and people”*
- *“parks and the sustainable environment”*
- *“landscape development”*

This Parks Strategy has not been adopted by the Council. The Council is currently working with the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) to develop an overarching document dealing with all green space within the Borough. This new document, when ready, will replace the draft Parks Strategy. However, for the time being the Draft Parks Strategy

provides a very useful indication of how the Borough Council would like to see local open spaces managed, improved and developed. The Strategy also incorporates the Borough Council's Best Value Improvement Plan for the Borough's parks and open spaces, as well as the Parks and Open Spaces Environmental Strategy.

There are many themes within the Park's Strategy of particular relevance to this study, and this report refers to these as appropriate.

2.3.5 Southend Biodiversity Action Plan

Over 175 countries have ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity. Its main objective is to halt the worldwide loss of animal and plant species and their genetic resources. All signatory countries are expected to take responsibility for saving and enhancing biodiversity within their own borders. The UK Government's response was to publish a document, published in 1994, called "**Biodiversity: The UK Action Plan**" that set out broad strategies for conserving and enhancing wild species and wildlife habitats. A Biodiversity Steering Group was also created to take forward the objectives of the UK Action Plan and to develop specific 'action plans' for individual species and habitats. The Steering Group identified a need to increase public awareness and involvement. It also encouraged local councils to create Local Biodiversity Action Plans for their areas.

Southend's Local Biodiversity Action Plan is the Borough Council's answer to the challenge of protecting local biodiversity through a partnership with interested groups, organisations and individuals. It contains 18 habitat action plans, 14 species action plans and 1 habitat statement. Perhaps surprisingly whilst Southend-on-Sea is a densely urbanised area it still contains a remarkable number of national and internationally important species.

The Borough Council actively manages several wildlife sites within Southend or works in partnership with other organisations in order to manage sites. Some of these sites include specific habitats that are the subject of individual Action Plans within the Local Biodiversity Action Plan. Sites managed directly include Belfairs Nature Reserve and Belfairs Wood, Edwards Hall Park and Belton Hills Local Nature Reserve. Sites managed on the Borough Council's behalf by partners include Two Tree Island and the Old Ranges, Shoeburyness.

The Borough's Parks and open spaces can therefore be important contributors to both sustaining and improving local biodiversity, and this is recognised by the Parks' Strategy and the previously mentioned Parks and Open Spaces Environmental Strategy.

2.3.6 Local Transport Plan (LTP)

The Local Transport Plan has the Vision to reduce congestion in Southend and its hinterland to stimulate regeneration, economic improvement,

environmental enhancement and community well being in a sustainable manner. Its objectives are to:

- Improve the economy of Southend and support sustainable economic growth in appropriate locations
- Protect and enhance the environment and quality of life
- Improve safety for all travellers
- Promote the integration of all forms of transport and land use planning, leading to a better more efficient transport system
- Promote accessibility to everyday facilities for all, especially those without a car
- Raise community awareness of the effects of continuing traffic growth.

The LTP provides for a five-year implementation programme of schemes within the context of a longer-term strategy.

The Plan emphasises the importance of safe attractive footpaths and cycleways in achieving the above objectives, and outlines a series of schematic improvements to the local cycleway network.

The Local Transport Plan is of relevance to this study because (as will be seen) consultation with local people has emphasised not simply the importance attached to parks, open spaces and other 'recreation venues', but also safe and attractive ways to get to venues. Footpaths and cycleways are more than a utility, as they frequently serve a recreation role in their own right, and their development, improvement and promotion can help achieve national and local objectives of increasing healthy physical activity within the community.

2.3.7 Links to other strategies and corporate planning and external funding

Since becoming a Unitary Authority in 1998, the Council has been engaged in continuous strategic policy development in order to create a framework within which to deliver its vision for the Borough's development. This process has reached a point where departments can work together and demonstrate the cross cutting agendas that are required to meet the needs of the community.

This is evident from the development of departmental service plans, a new Corporate Strategy, Community Plan, Cultural Strategy, Crime and Disorder strategy, Children and Young People Plan, Best Value Performance Plan and other plans and strategies.

The wide-ranging benefits of open space and recreation opportunities of all kinds means that they have the ability to address the 'cross-cutting agenda', and make a positive contribution to a range of local, regional and national organisations aims and objectives. They are also highly relevant to the successful delivery of European Union and UK Regional Development aid packages.

Objective 2 is a programme supported by the European Union's structural funds to help bring about economic structural change in designated areas. Within the East of England, there are seven designated areas. Within the Borough there are seven wards identified within the local Objective 2 area: Milton, Victoria, St Lukes, Kursall, Thorpe and West Shoebury and Shoeburyness.

The programme aim is to create and maintain sustainable economic growth to:

- bring about greater economic and social cohesion
- protect and enhance the environment
- improve prosperity, jobs and quality of life for all that live and work in the programme areas.

The Objective 2 designation within Southend enables projects that have been developed in partnership to come forward to bid for European Funding.

The **Single Regeneration Budget (SRB)** is British Government funding, distributed regionally in England, through the Regional Development Agencies.

Southend on Sea comes within the area covered by the East of England Development Agency (EEDA).

The funding is designed to help local areas of need to develop projects that enable the disadvantaged sectors of the community to have more opportunities, to encourage skills and development of the young and for partnerships drawn from all sectors of the Borough to become established to help the quality of life for local people.

Recreation and open space can benefit from funding from both the above external sources of funding, and some of the themes and issues identified in this report might therefore be addressed in part through these funds.

2.4 Summary

The above policy and strategy deals with different but interlocking issues and provides important context in helping to look 'in the round' at open space and recreation opportunities.

Both national and local policy emphasise the wider importance of open space and recreation facilities. They are seen as integral to building sustainable communities. High quality open space is not only good for recreation but also enhances amenity and biodiversity. It also contributes to a 'sense of place'- it is a defining feature of a community.

High quality recreation opportunities are clearly pivotal to improving overall health and physical well being, and are essential to achieving increased rates of participation in physical activity.

Policy also highlights the need to adopt a very wide interpretation of recreation. Essentially this study is about opportunities within the public realm, but which can cover all manner of open air and 'built' venues. However, opportunities can be 'links' as well as 'nodes'. Where journeys are required to reach recreation venues these should be easy, enjoyable and safe, but they can also be seen as recreation in their own right.

Finally, policy also recognises that significant new residential growth will bring about demand for access to recreation and open space opportunities. However, it will also lead to pressure to redevelop open space. Once lost, open space is rarely if ever recovered.

3. Method statement

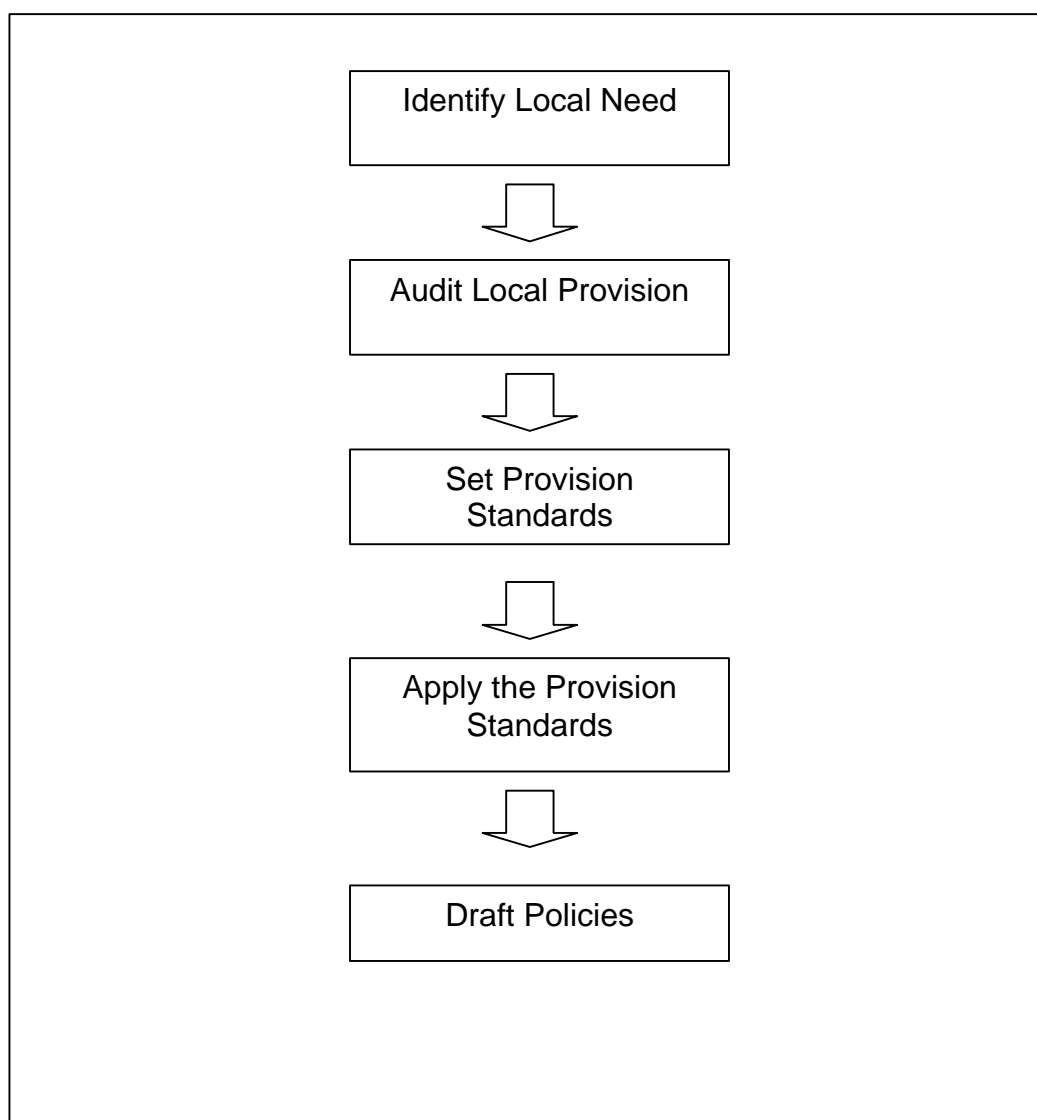
3.1 General

The starting point for this study has been Planning Policy Guidance Note 17, and its companion guide "Assessing Needs and Opportunities". As mentioned in the previous section PPG17 places a requirement on local authorities to undertake assessments and audits of open space/sports/recreational facilities in order to:

- identify the needs of the population;
- identify the potential for increased use; and,
- establish an effective strategy for open space/sports/recreational facilities at the local level.

The companion guide to PPG17 recommends an overall approach to this kind of study as summarised below.

Figure 3.0: Study method



Within this overall approach the companion guide to PPG17 suggests a range of methods and techniques that might be adopted in helping the assessment process, and these have been used where considered appropriate to local circumstances, and permitted by time and resources.

Both the PPG17 and the companion guide place great emphasis on consulting the local community through the assessment process. Due regard has also been paid in this study to the findings of earlier research of relevance (as detailed later in this report).

A considerable amount of research and consultation was involved in the preparation of the Borough's Parks' Strategy, and this report therefore draws heavily on the findings and recommendations of the Strategy.

4. What do local people want?

4.1 General

Views of local people on open space and recreation opportunities can be inferred from national studies of relevance, but also (and more importantly) from direct local consultation.

In preparing the Park's Strategy, the Borough Council reviewed the results of national surveys of relevance. The Council also commissioned its own local surveys, and regularly conducts user satisfaction surveys of parks and open spaces under its management. Additional consultation has been undertaken to help prepare this report. The key findings and issues highlighted by all these studies will now be reviewed.

4.1.1 National Parks Survey

A seminal piece of work, the "Park Life, Urban Parks and Social Renewal" report published in 1995, contained the following key findings (amongst others):

- Most people tend to visit a park as part of a group.
- Most users (about 70% of those interviewed) tend to walk to the park, with majority of trips taking less than 5 minutes.
- Up to 40% of users interviewed claimed to visit every day.
- Bringing children into parks is the main reason given for visits, with general strolling and dog walking being other prominent reasons.
- It is clear that parks are important for people who cannot visit the countryside.

4.1.2 MORI household research in Southend.

In 1999 and 2001 the Borough Council helped to commission MORI to conduct sample household surveys to amongst other things identify ways of improving residents overall quality of life. Although the questions varied between the two surveys, it is possible to compare some of the findings. For example, both surveys clearly suggest a view that parks and open spaces are important to the quality of local life. The 1999 survey suggested that most users are satisfied with the quality of environmental services in parks, open spaces and other leisure facilities (although, there was less satisfaction with the quality of children's playgrounds). It is also worth noting that the 1999 survey indicated a lower level of satisfaction amongst the 16-24 age group in the quality and nature of provision.

The 2001 survey revealed some interesting findings on the reasons for using parks. For example:

- 43% use parks/open space for peace and tranquility, and 42% for exercise.

- 33% use parks 'to pass through', (perhaps on the way to work or the shops.)
- 25% play sport in parks (a point that is addressed in the accompanying volume to this study dealing with 'pitch sports.')
- 22% look at wildlife.
- 21% go to an event held in a park.
- 18% walk a dog.

The results of these two household surveys clearly indicate that Southend's parks and open spaces are valued for a variety of reasons and uses, and this has been confirmed by the findings of visitor surveys for individual parks in recent years. A survey of users was carried out by the Parks' Department in the spring and summer of 2000 concentrating on the following parks:

- Chalkwell
- Belfairs
- Eastwood
- Leigh Library Gardens
- Blenheim Park.

Additional surveys have also been undertaken in developing park management plans at Chalkwell Park, Belfairs Park, and Southchurch Park. Apart from confirming the variety of ways in which parks are both used and valued, the surveys also identified a specific set of priorities for the improvement of facilities in the parks concerned, including improvements to car parks, toilets, catering facilities, landscaping, playgrounds etc. The findings have therefore helped to inform capital and improvement programmes for the Borough's parks.

4.1.3 'Voices'

The results of the previously mentioned MORI survey indicated amongst younger people (16-24 years) as well as those without access to a car a comparatively low satisfaction with parks and open spaces. It is clearly therefore important to ensure that local spaces are not only within easy reach, but also have good quality facilities/environment, and satisfy the needs of those who may be very dependent on local availability. This is especially the case for the elderly, but also for young people.

The (then) Essex County Council Youth Services undertook the 'Voices Peer Research Project' which aimed to research the needs of young people in Shoeburyness. The recommendations arising from this study included a request for better parks, as well as lighting within parks (the latter indicating a concern about safety and security). A subsequent study was prepared in mid 2001 by an after school co-ordinator which highlighted that Shoebury is lacking facilities for teenagers, such as skateboard parks, BMX tracks and meeting places. This survey was instrumental in bringing forward proposals for new facilities within the Shoebury area. It has also helped to highlight a

wider concern about the needs of a particular age group that have often been overlooked.

The desire for open space and accompanying facilities to meet the needs of teenagers has also figured prominently in the results of consultation exercises aimed at young people, and undertaken as part of this study.

4.1.4 'One Voice' survey

Southend Youth and Connexions Service regularly conducts surveys of young people. Last summer (in August) free bowling was offered in return for cooperation in filling in a questionnaire. Although this survey also covered issues beyond the immediate scope of this report, some questions were included to specifically inform this study.

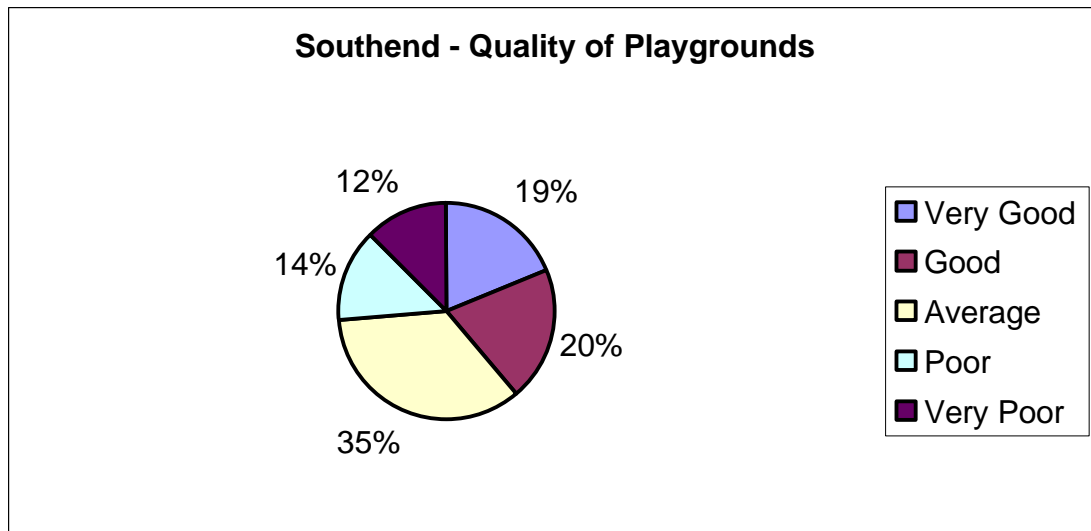
122 young people took part in the survey, 63 females and 59 males, with ages ranging from 10 to 19 years old as follows :

| | | |
|----|---|--------|
| 6 | x | age 10 |
| 7 | x | age 11 |
| 9 | x | age 12 |
| 9 | x | age 13 |
| 15 | x | age 14 |
| 14 | x | age 15 |
| 27 | x | age 16 |
| 17 | x | age 17 |
| 12 | x | age 18 |
| 6 | x | age 19 |

A question was asked about the quality of local playgrounds. Of the 122 young people surveyed :

- 42 considered their local playground to be Average
- 24 thought theirs is Good
- 23 thought theirs is Very Poor
- 17 thought their local playground is Poor
- 15 considered theirs to be Very Good
- 1 said they did not have a local playground

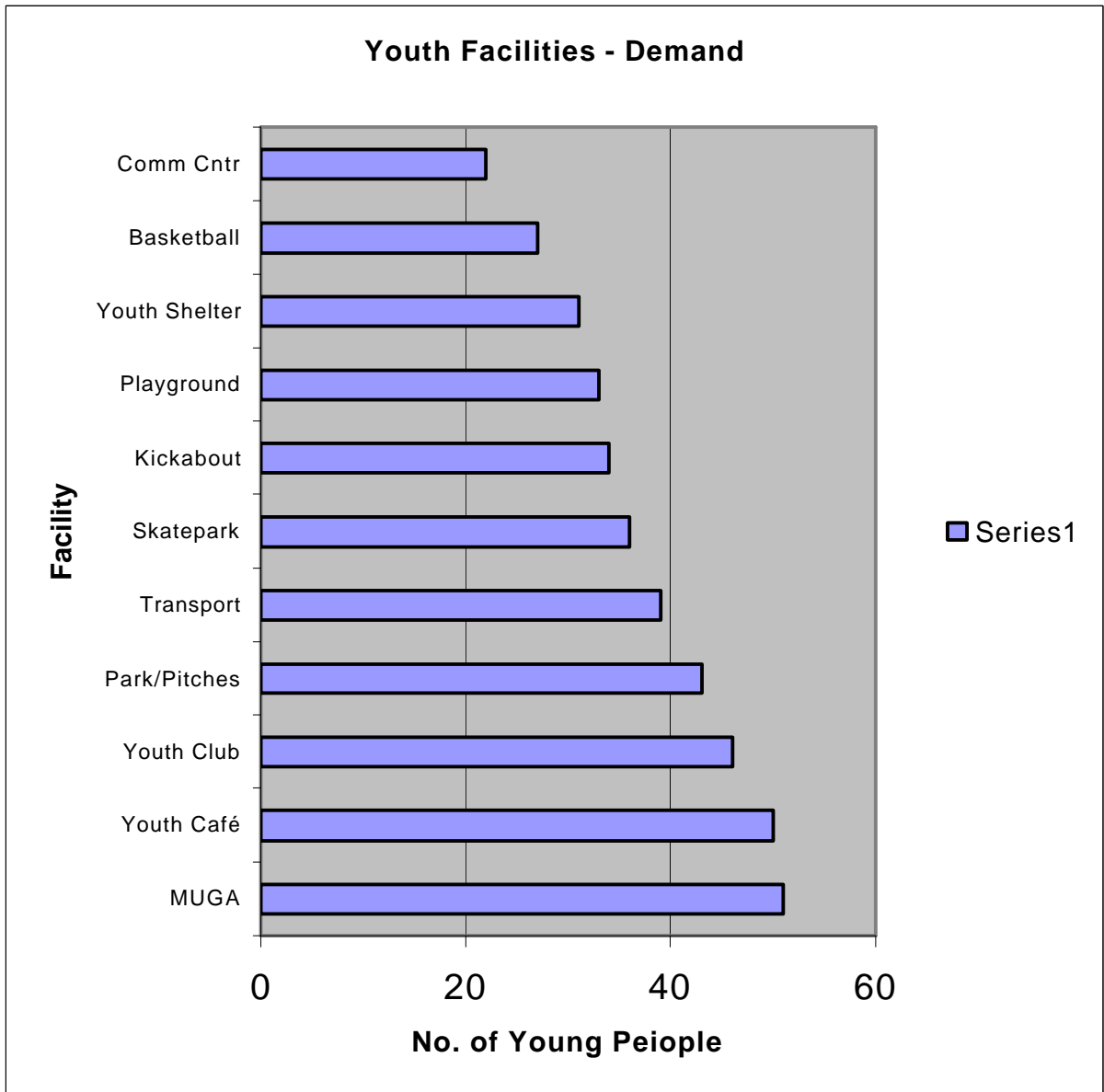
Figure 4.0: Quality of playgrounds



When asked what sort of facilities they felt were most needed by their age group:

- 51 considered that a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) is most needed in their area
- 50 wanted a Youth Café / Drop-In Centre
- 46 wanted a local Youth Club
- 43 wanted a Park or Sports Pitches
- 39 wanted a Bus to get to better facilities
- 36 wanted a Skateboard or BMX facilities
- 34 wanted a Kickabout Area
- 33 wanted a Playground
- 31 wanted a Youth Shelter
- 27 wanted Outdoor Basketball Hoops
- 22 wanted a local Community Centre

Figure 4.1: Demand for youth facilities



What is perhaps most noteworthy about these findings is:

- A strong feeling that there is a need for facilities aimed specifically at teenagers.
- A desire to have places simply to meet (hangout areas, drop in centres, community centres etc)

It is also interesting that many of the respondents stressed the importance of improving the means to get to facilities (in this case availability of a good bus service). The issue of access and 'links' to facilities is considered further later in this section.

Also in August of 2003 a small survey was undertaken of 30 young people (14-18 years) by detached youth workers, and following charts summarise the views received.

Figure 4.2: Use of youth facilities

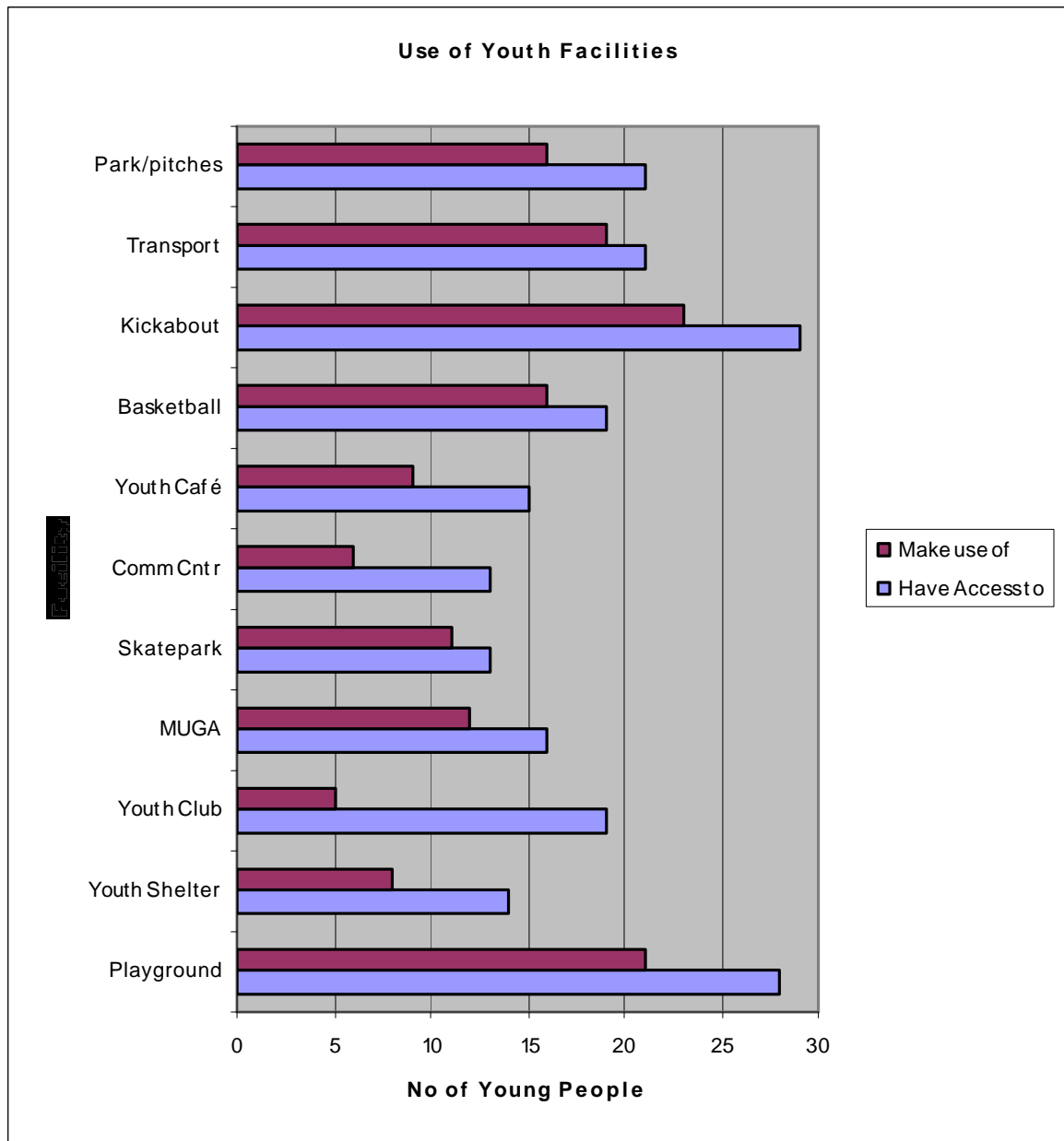


Figure 4.3: Perceived quality of facilities

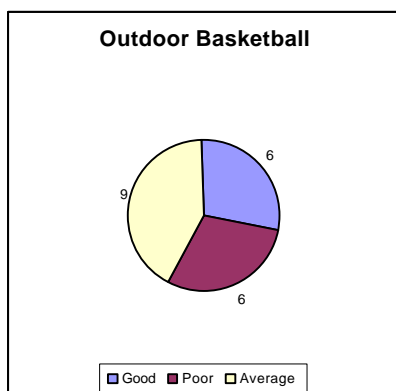
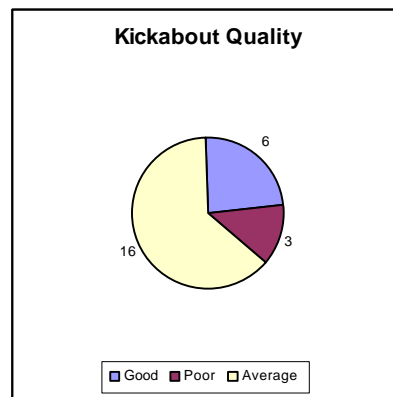
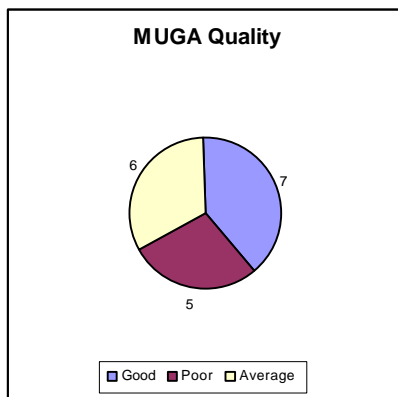
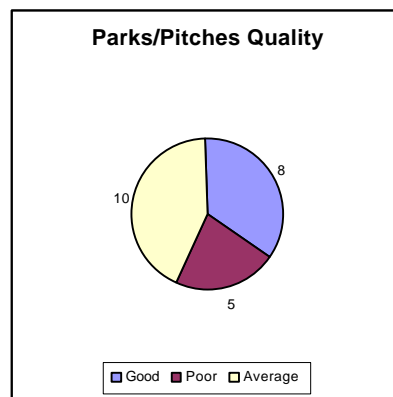
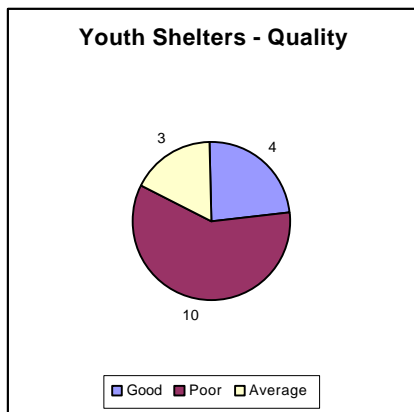
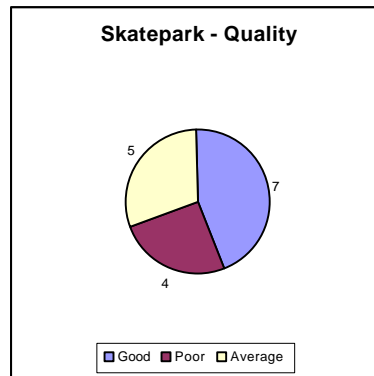
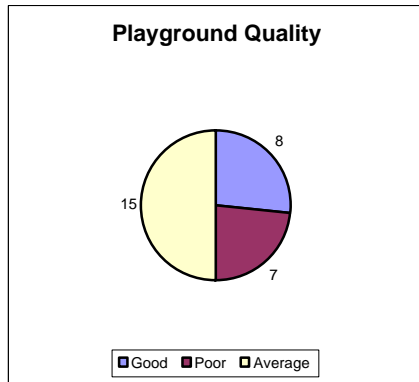


Figure 4.4: Demand for Improvements – simple requests

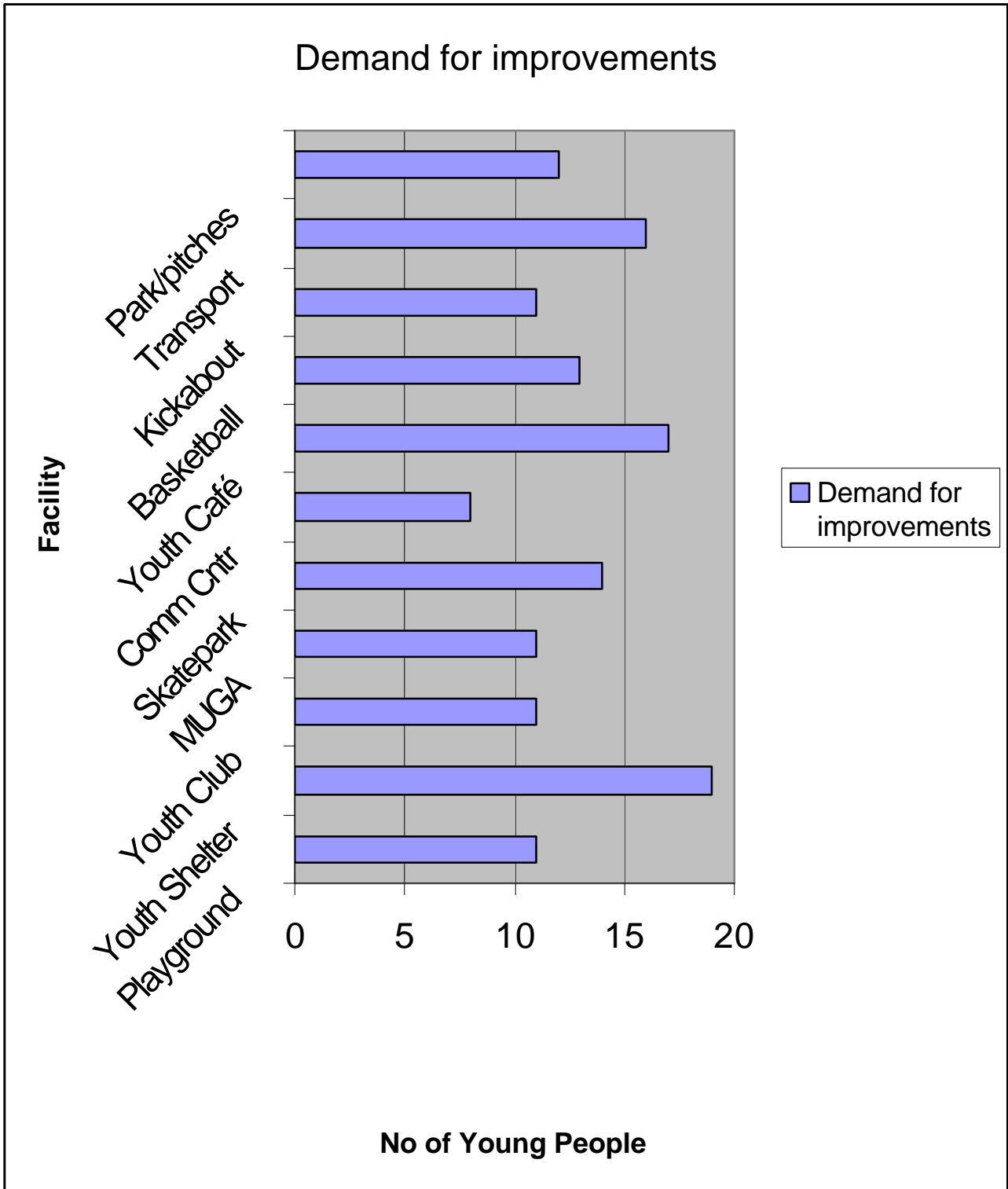
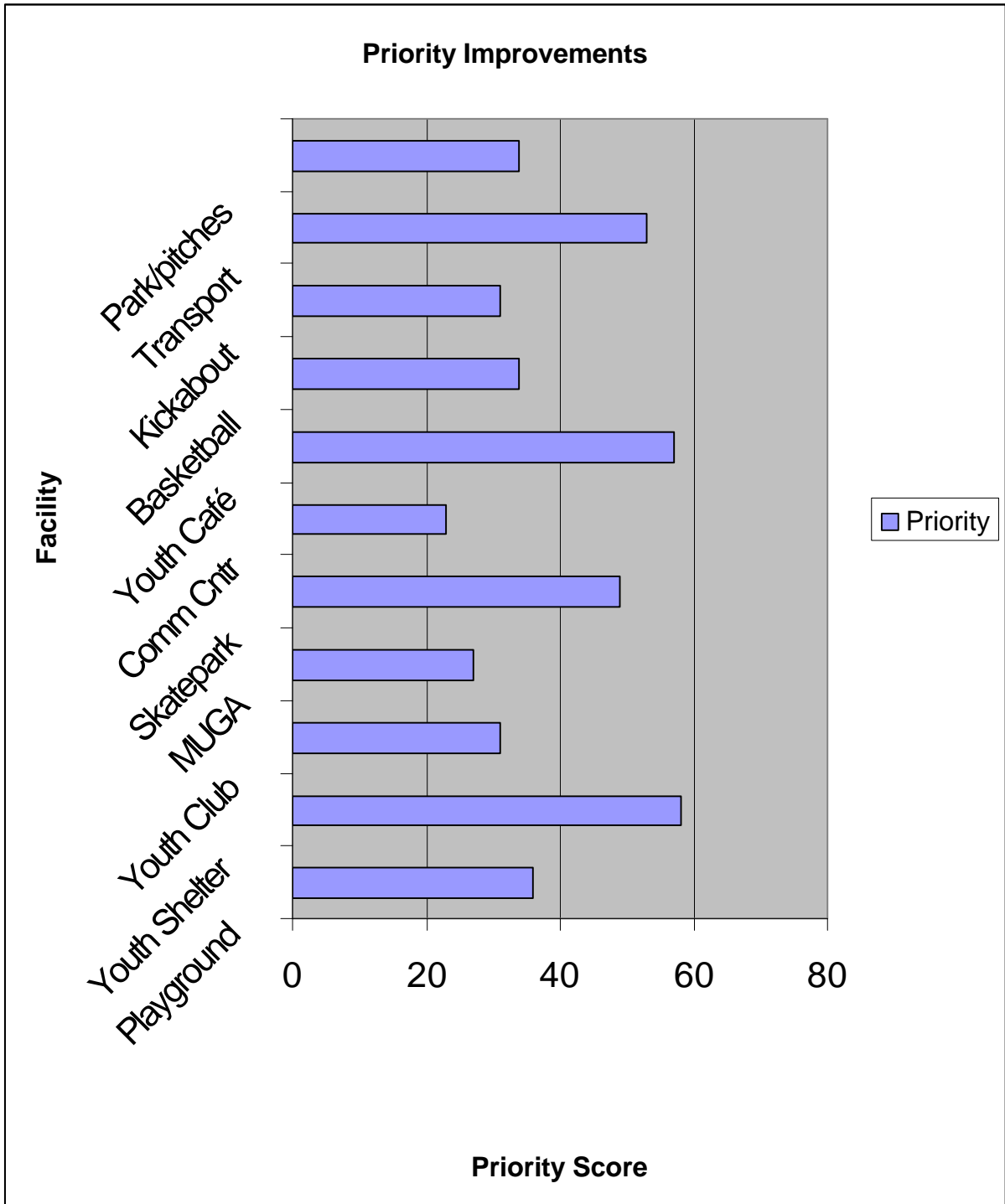


Figure 4.5: Demand for improvements - prioritised

Respondents were asked to prioritise their desire to see improvements with a score of 5 being the highest, and 1 the lowest.



Respondents were also asked for more general comments that (as can be seen) were very wide-ranging!

- Southend is a nice place. The toilets need cleaning around the park and in the High Street.
- (In the park) there is no light and when it rains there is no shelter. Also it would be good if there were some public toilets for us to use.
- I think they should reopen a roller skating rink because it is something else to do.
- Meeting facilities would be good. Give us a youth café or even a McDonald's. A graffiti wall would be good.
- Please provide a McDonald's. I would also like a graffiti wall. Listen to our ideas instead of going ahead and providing things that we have no use for.
- There has been a skate park built in Shoebury that has been used a lot by young people. These facilities are needed and well-used but are only really suitable for the under 15s. We are getting bored and are in desperate need of bigger and better facilities. People from other areas also use facilities provided, as there is a train station nearby. If you decide to develop plans for anything noted I will be happy to help and so will many others.
- It would be good to have a graffiti wall and a McDonald's. We need better/bigger ramps for skateboarding. The toilets need cleaning. It would be good if you listened to our opinions.
- Provide a graffiti wall for us to graffiti on instead of things that we're not supposed to. Also want a Macdonald's. Better and bigger ramps for skateboarding and more hygienic toilets please. Listen to us!
- We need more clubs for younger people. We need places where children can eat and go to be safe and make other friends.
- We need a better nightclub.
- Somewhere to chill out. If people smoke they should do it in a smoking room so we would need to provide one.
- We need somewhere we can sit in when it's raining. Need somewhere where we can smoke and play pool.
- We sit around here because most places cost money so we need more meeting places around here. Somewhere that is safe and warm.
- We need somewhere to park bikes and mopeds.
- How about a swimming pool? We need a place to sit and somewhere to put mopeds and motorbikes.
- We need more facilities for the younger age group.

What does all this tell us? Although it is very difficult and probably unwise to draw precise conclusions out of the above, there are some clear themes to emerge:

- Young people often feel their needs and views are not given proper consideration when planning for and designing facilities.

- What they want by way of recreation facilities often cannot be defined as for 'play' or for 'sport', they embrace a complex mix of needs of which recreation is but one. Facilities are often seen as much as places to meet and socialise as they are to play.
- Although some expressed needs may be difficult to meet, some may be fairly easy to address, and there is no excuse therefore for not so doing.

4.1.5 Survey of community organisations

As part of this study a survey of community groups views was conducted. This involved the distribution of a semi-structured questionnaire survey, where respondents were encouraged to provide detailed comments on a wide range of matters, including:

- Sports pitches and recreation grounds.
- Other local recreation facilities (including facilities for children and teenagers)
- Green open spaces in general
- Community halls and meeting places
- Footpaths and cycleways
- Access to the countryside
- 'Most used places'
- Other matters that people wished to mention

Although the responses level was not high, comments received were both interesting and illuminating. In the main they tended to confirm the findings and conclusions of the Parks Strategy, and other local research in that:

- Generally parks and open spaces in Southend are seen as a very important local resource.
- There are concerns about vandalism in parks and open spaces, and a desire to see greater security measures in place.
- There is a general view that not enough is provided by way of informal facilities for young people. - hang out areas, 'wheels facilities' and the like.
- Parks and open spaces are multifunctional. They not only serve a recreational role, but also an amenity role. They also are capable of being better used to achieve greater local biodiversity.
- The value of the seafront facilities and the beach for local people.

However, another important issue raised in the community organization survey was that of accessibility by foot, bike and public transport to open spaces, recreational facilities and the countryside.

4.2 Summary

The findings of the various consultation exercises reviewed in this section simply confirm the need to adopt a very broad interpretation of 'recreation' when assessing local provision and needs. Whilst the 'flagship' formal parks and leisure centres (for example) are clearly valued, it is also evident that subtle changes in the physical environment can also influence the quality of opportunity and experience for many, whether it be:

- providing a shelter and seats for young people to sit and talk
- providing places to meet and socialise
- offering safe and attractive means of 'getting to places'
- the quality of facilities may be as or more important than the quantity
- engendering a feeling of safety and security in users.

The following section reflects these points in assessing existing provision.

5. What is there?

5.1 General

This section examines the nature, distribution and (wherever possible) the quality of open space and recreation facilities within the Borough. The main focus of this review is upon the Borough's parks and open spaces. However, the requirements of government planning guidance mean that the review also covers other opportunities, including children's and youth outdoor facilities.² Built facilities are also considered; primarily sports halls and swimming pools, as well as small community venues that serve a recreation (as well as social) function. Because of resources available to this study certain facilities have been excluded (such as athletics tracks and other 'specialist' sports facilities). The review recognises that many of the Borough's recreational spaces also serve as important natural and semi-natural habitats.

5.2 Open space

The following classification of open space has been used as a guide for conducting the assessment³

Figure 5.0: Open space categorisation

| Categories of open space |
|---|
| Parks and Gardens |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Urban parks and gardens• Country parks |
| Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace |
| Green Corridors |
| Outdoor Sports Facilities |
| Amenity Greenspaces |
| Provision for Children and Young People |
| Allotments, Community Gardens and Urban Farms |
| Churchyards and Cemeteries |
| Civic Spaces |

However, the above framework could not become a straight-jacket and was interpreted in a flexible way, as:

- Much of the Borough's open space does not fit simply and neatly into any one of the above categories; and,
- Much (probably most) open space has more than one function. An obvious example in the Borough is its major parks; these are recognised as

² Pitch sports are dealt with in the companion volume to this study.

³ Taken from Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 and its companion guide "Assessing Needs and Opportunities"

primarily for informal recreation, but are also used for organised sport. Similarly, the Borough's natural and semi-natural greenspace, also has an informal recreation function.

The Parks' Strategy recognises the multifarious roles served by many parks and open spaces, and this assessment also attempts to reflect these local circumstances. Another reason why the above framework cannot be followed rigidly is that the largest and most popular open space within the Borough is not necessarily included in any of the categories- namely its beaches and seafront promenade.

The Borough's parks don't just meet the needs of locals, as the main parks are very popular in their own right with tourists and other visitors to Southend, and help to define the character of Southend as a leading and popular seaside resort.

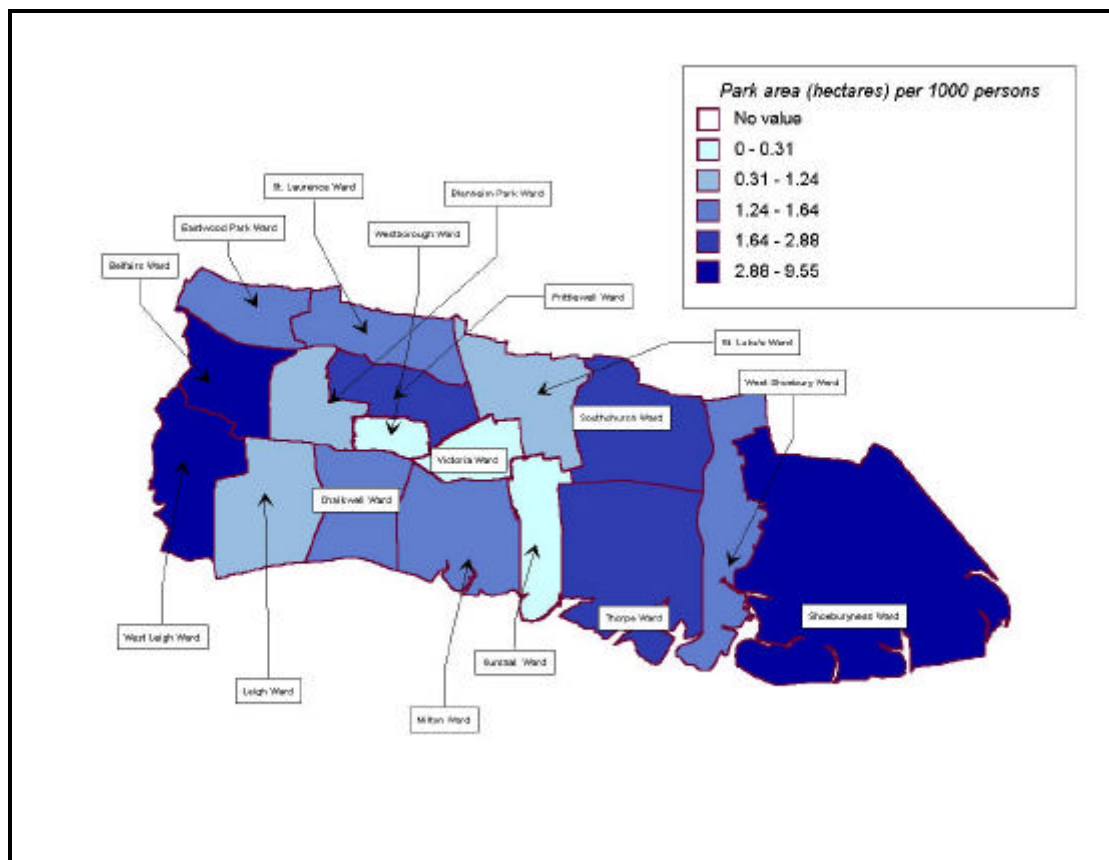
5.2.1 Parks and Gardens (including urban parks and gardens and country parks)

The Borough's parks and greenspaces have been recently examined in developing the Parks' Strategy. An extensive assessment and consultation exercise has resulted in the development of a three tiered approach to planning and managing the Borough's Parks.

- District Parks
- Local Parks
- Neighbourhood Parks

The Parks' Strategy has already examined the distribution of the various parks. The following map shows the amount of 'park space' for each ward, as a ratio of hectares per thousand people.

Figure 5.1: Overall level of park provision⁴ (hectares per thousand people)



From the above it is clear that there is a very strong inverse relationship between the amount of park space available within a ward, and the density of development (i.e. the higher the density the less the amount of space available). Wards in the central part of the Borough therefore tend to be those comparatively lacking in park open space.

Obviously, the Borough's population also make use of open space in neighbouring local authority areas, and there are in fact a small number of sites just outside the Borough which the Council helps to maintain, recognising the contribution they make to meeting the needs of it's residents. However, the amount of park space locally available is just one factor influencing the overall 'availability of opportunities', and of at least equal importance is ease of access and quality- this is recognised within the Parks' Strategy, and is also considered further later in this section.

The following maps and narrative describe parks falling within the above categories.

⁴ The amount of park space was calculated by adding together the known total sizes of District, Local, and Neighbourhood Parks in each of the Borough's wards.

5.2.2 District Parks

District Parks have been identified in the Parks' Strategy as serving a role for weekly and/or occasional visits by foot, cycle, car and bus trip. They are the largest parks in the Borough, generally being bigger than 20 hectares. District Parks tend to have specialist features or facilities that attract visitors for special outings.

Figure 5.2: Location of District Parks

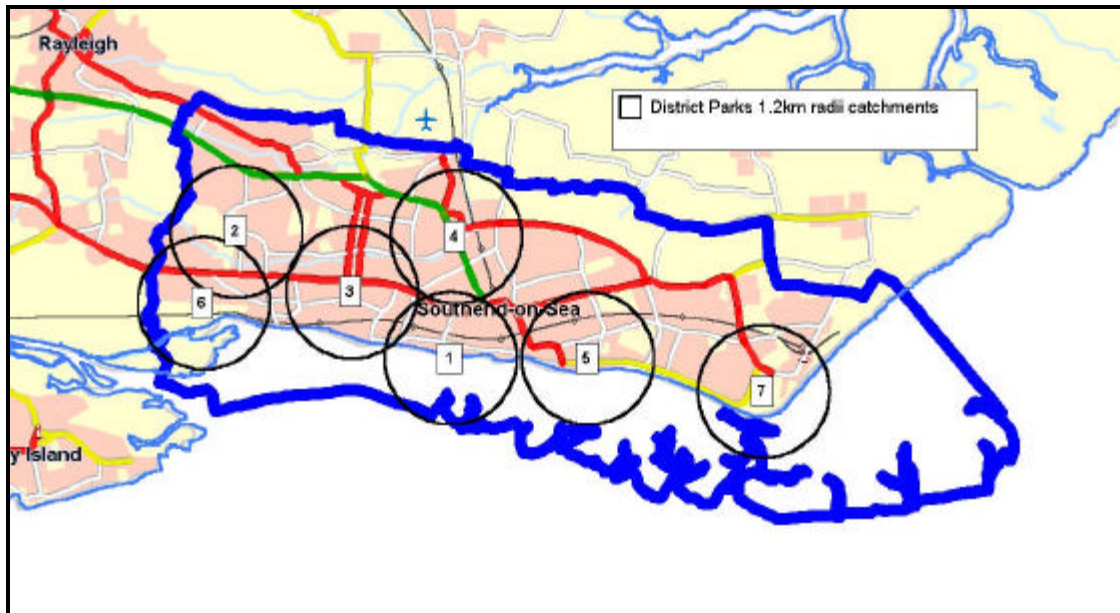


| Site Ref | Name | Primary Function | Secondary |
|----------|------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | Southend Cliffs | Informal recreation | Ornamental |
| 2 | Belfairs Park | Informal recreation | Formal recreation |
| 3 | Chalkwell Park | Informal recreation | Formal recreation |
| 4 | Priory Park | Informal recreation | Formal recreation |
| 5 | Southchurch Park | Informal recreation | Formal recreation |
| 6 | Belton Hills/Marine Parade Gardens | Informal recreation | Ornamental |
| 7 | Gunners Park | Informal recreation | Na |

There is 1 District Park for every 22,893 people.

The Parks' Strategy has adopted a catchment area with a radius of 1.2 km for District Parks, which means that anybody living inside this distance is likely to have to walk no more than 30 minutes to get to such a Park. The following map applies this catchment to existing parks. The above guidance differs from the Local Plan that suggests an 8000m catchment radii for District Parks. This latter size of catchment is not shown on the map; if it were there would be considerable overlap. Clearly the Local Plan catchment assumes use of motorised transport.

Figure 5.3: District Park catchments



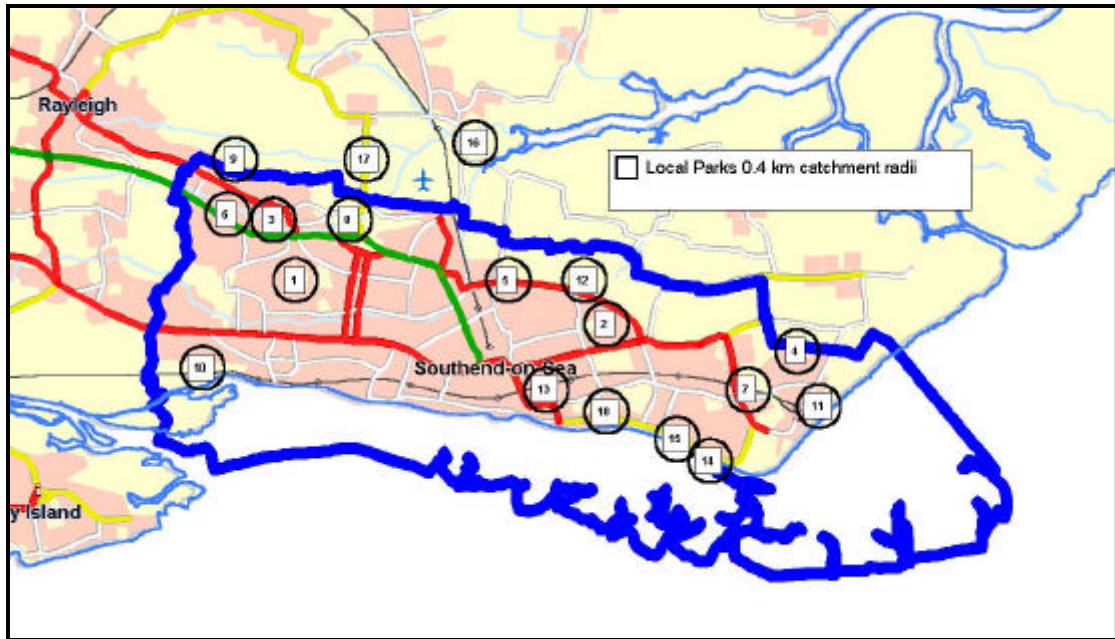
These radii take into account the ease of walking within an urban environment, but not major impediments such as railway embankments and dual carriageways. Such impediments will clearly have a local impact upon accessibility, so the above map can only be used as a very general guide.

As can be seen, although much of the central part of the Borough is within the catchment of at least one District Park there are other areas (the north east and north west in particular) that do not lie within any catchment. It is recognised that some of the areas lacking easy access to a large park within the Borough may be within easy reach of a comparable facility outside the Borough.

5.2.3 Local Parks

Local Parks have been designated as venues available for regular visits by foot. Their role is to provide for active and passive recreation for the community immediately around the park. The potential role of these local facilities in enhancing the environment and quality of life is emphasised by the Parks Strategy. These parks tend to be between 2 and 20 hectares in size. The Parks' Strategy identifies a catchment of 0.4 km for these facilities (probably equating to about 10-15 minutes walktime), and these are superimposed on the following map for each of the designated 18 such parks (listed in the table). Included within the list are three sites that are either wholly or partly outside the Borough, but which are managed and/or maintained in part by the Council.

Figure 5.4: Location and catchments of Local Parks

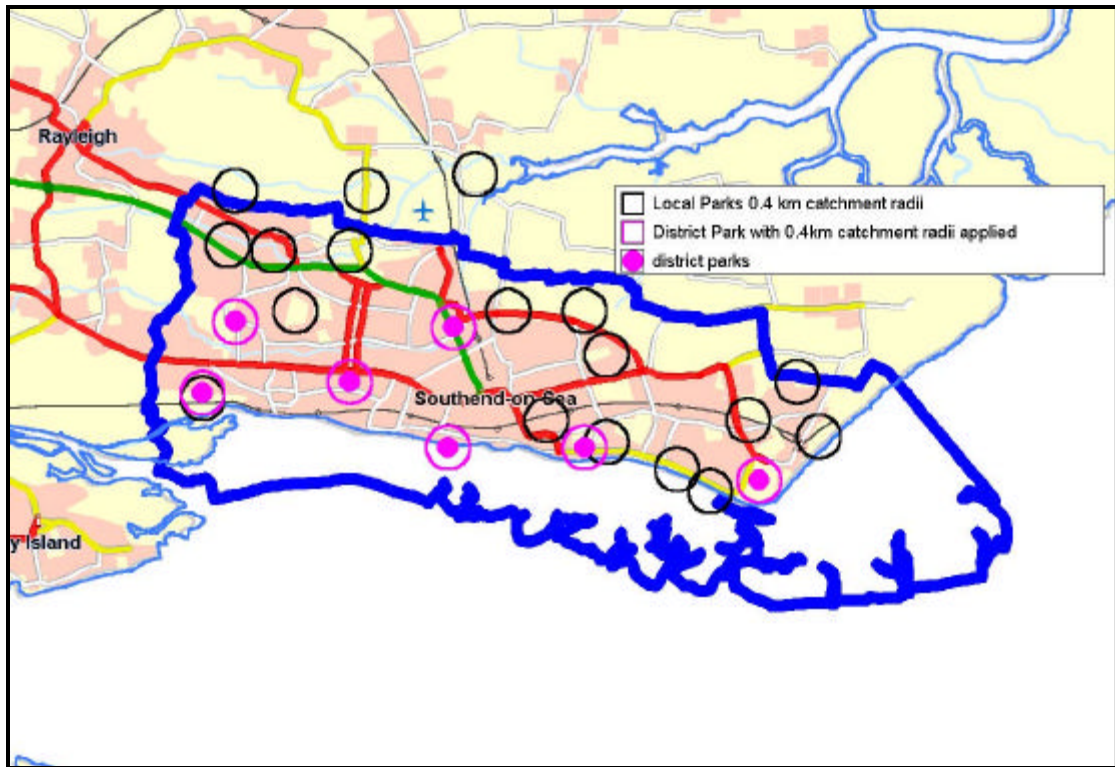


| Site Ref | Name | Primary Function | Secondary Function |
|----------|--------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | Bleinheim Park | Informal recreation | Formal recreation |
| 2 | Bournes Green | Informal recreation | Formal recreation |
| 3 | Eastwood Park | Informal recreation | Formal recreation |
| 4 | Friars Park | Informal recreation | |
| 5 | Jones Memorial | Informal recreation | Formal recreation |
| 6 | Oakwood Park | Informal recreation | Formal recreation |
| 7 | Shoebury Park | Informal recreation | Formal recreation |
| 8 | St Laurence Park | Informal recreation | |
| 9 | Edwards Hall | Informal recreation | |
| 10 | Leigh Cliffs/Gardens | Informal recreation | Ornamental |
| 11 | East Beach | Informal recreation | |
| 12 | Garon Park | Formal recreation | Informal recreation |
| 13 | Southchurch Hall Gardens | Informal recreation | Ornamental |
| 14 | Shoebury Common | Informal recreation | Ornamental |
| 15 | Thorpe Bay Gardens | Informal recreation | |
| 16 | Warners Park | Formal recreation | Informal recreation |
| 17 | West Barrow Hall Park | Formal recreation | Informal recreation |
| 18 | Southchurch Park East | Informal recreation | Formal recreation |

There is one Local Park for every 8,900 people.

As can be seen, there are many parts of the Borough poorly served by this level of park; notably a large part of the central area, but also parts of the east and west of the Borough. Some of these areas will be within easy reach of larger and better-equipped District Parks, which can therefore also 'double up' as Local Parks, as shown on the next map. Nevertheless, even when District Parks are factored in it still leaves significant areas of the Borough lacking a good size park within easy walking distance.

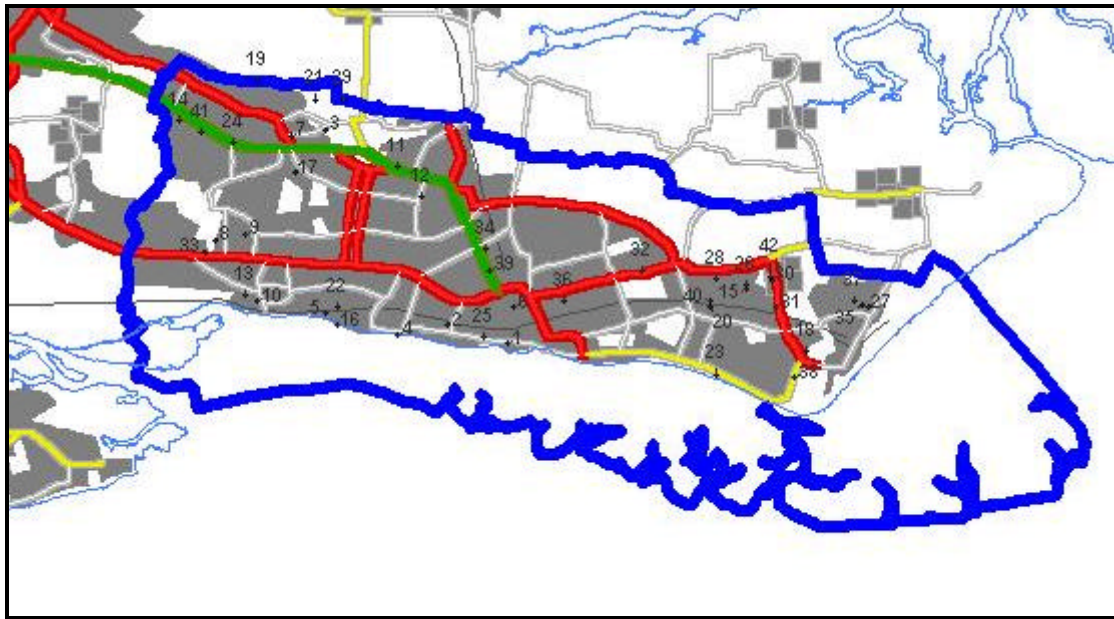
Figure 5.5: Catchments of Local Parks, together with District Parks



5.2.4 Neighbourhood Parks

The Neighbourhood Parks category used within the Parks' Strategy generally applies to parks under 2 hectares in size. They are designed for pedestrian visits, especially by the elderly people and children. They are felt to be especially valuable in areas of high-density development, and include several of the Town's best-loved gardens. All designated Neighbourhood Parks are shown on the following map.

Figure 5.6: Location of Neighbourhood Parks



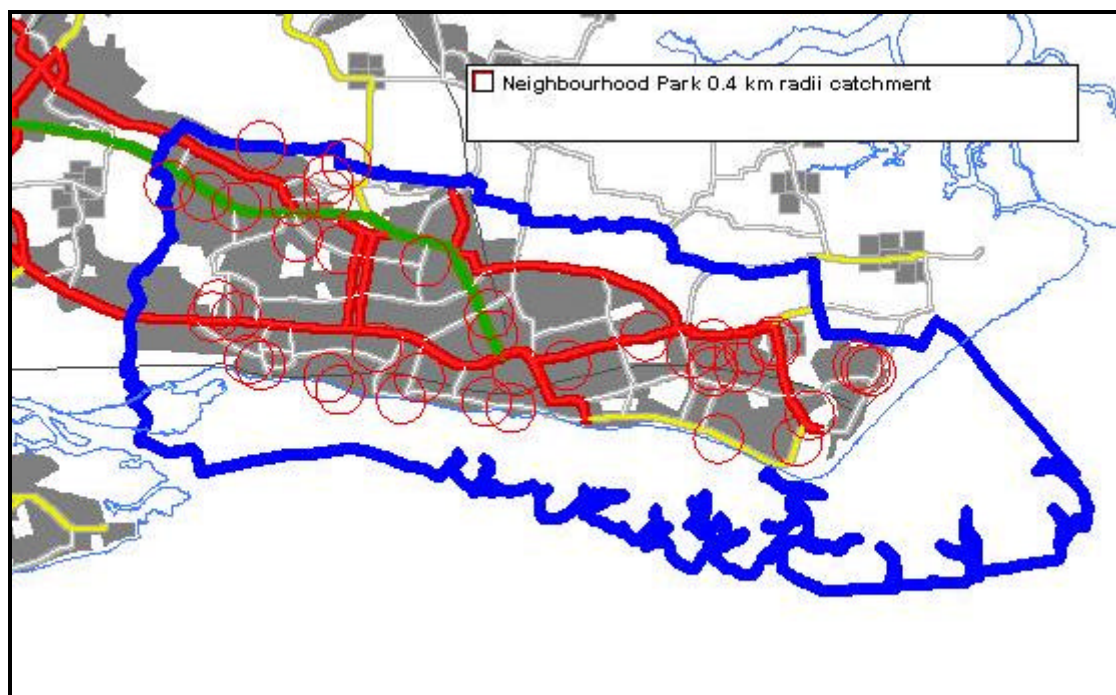
| Site Ref | Name | Primary Function | Secondary Function |
|----------|---------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | The Shrubbery | Informal Recreation | Ornamental |
| 2 | Milton Gardens | | |
| 3 | Cockethurst Park | | |
| 4 | The Leas Open Space | Informal Recreation | Ornamental |
| 5 | Undercliff Gardens | | |
| 6 | Warrior Square | | |
| 7 | Four Sisters Way/Close Open Space | Amenity | Informal recreation |
| 8 | Underwood Square | Amenity | Informal recreation |
| 9 | Bonchurch Recreation Ground | | |
| 10 | Garden at the lower end of Leigh Hill | | |
| 11 | St Laurence Open Space, Prince Avenue | | |
| 12 | Hoblythick Lane Open Space | Amenity | Informal recreation |
| 13 | Leigh Library Gardens | | |
| 14 | Belgrave Road Open Space | Amenity | Informal Recreation |
| 15 | Cheldon Barton Open Space | Amenity | Informal recreation |
| 16 | Chalkwell Esplanade | | |
| 17 | Hurst Way | Amenity | Informal recreation |
| 18 | Campfield Road War Memorial | Amenity | Informal recreation |
| 19 | Green Lane Open Space | Amenity | Informal recreation |
| 20 | Thorpe Bay Station Gardens | Amenity | |
| 21 | Neil Armstrong Way | Amenity | Informal recreation |
| 22 | Ridgeway Gardens | | |
| 23 | Thorpe Esplanade | Amenity | Informal recreation |
| 24 | Brookfields Open Space | Amenity | Informal recreation |
| 25 | Prittlewell Square | | |
| 26 | Maplin Way North Open Space | Amenity | Informal recreation |

| Site Ref | Name | Primary Function | Secondary Function |
|----------|--------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 27 | Hogarth Drive Open Space | Amenity | Informal recreation |
| 28 | Branscome Square | Amenity | Informal recreation |
| 29 | Scott Park | | |
| 30 | North Shoebury Open Space | Informal recreation | Amenity |
| 31 | Aylesbeare Open Space | Amenity | Informal Recreation |
| 32 | Southchurch Boulevard | Amenity | |
| 33 | Fairview Gardens | | |
| 34 | Churchill Gardens | | |
| 35 | Whistler Rise Courtyard Open Space | Amenity | Informal recreation |
| 36 | Windermere Road Courtyard Open Space | Amenity | Informal recreation |
| 37 | Turner Close Courtyard | Amenity | Informal recreation |
| 38 | Shoebury War Memorial | Amenity | Informal recreation |
| 39 | Civic Hall/College | Amenity | Informal recreation |
| 40 | Burleigh Square | Amenity | Informal recreation |
| 41 | Arterial/Fairway Open Space | Amenity | Informal recreation |
| 42 | Sedgemoor Open Space | Amenity | Informal recreation |

There is one Neighbourhood Park for every 3,816 people.

The Parks' Strategy has adopted a catchment radius of up to 0.4km for this kind of facility (equivalent to about 10-15 minutes walktime), and this is applied to each Neighbourhood Park on the following map.

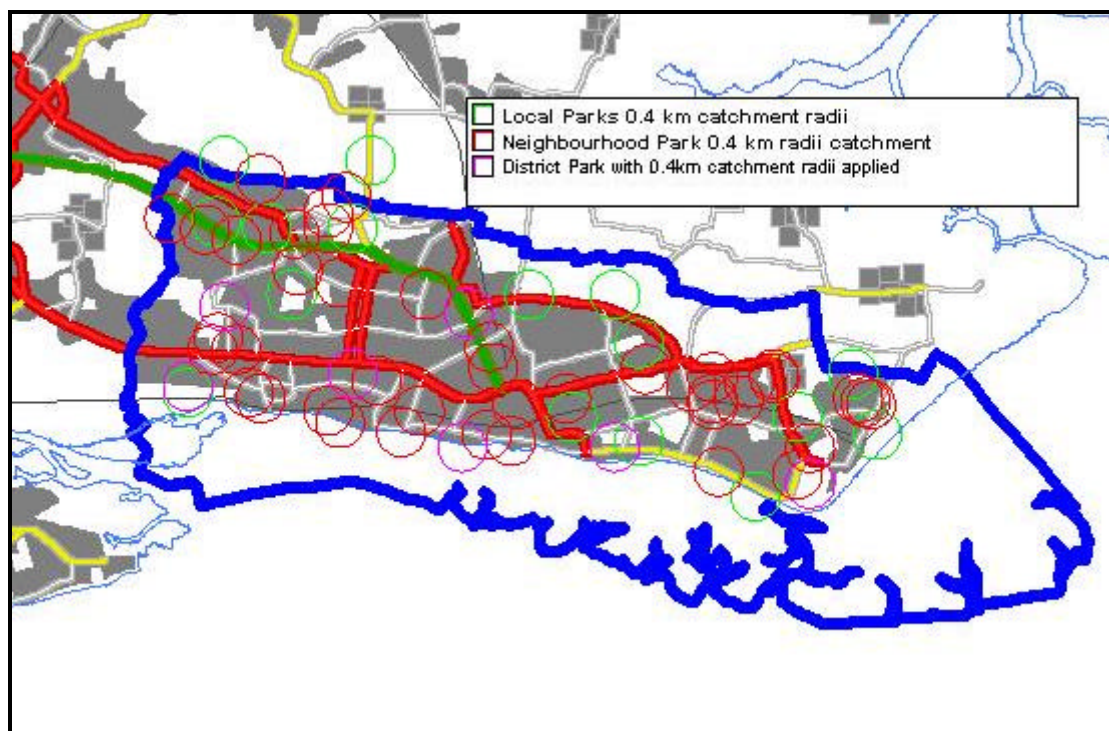
Figure 5.7: Catchments of Neighbourhood Parks



Once again there are areas not within easy reach of a Neighbourhood Park using this catchment (although there is also considerable overlap of

catchments of existing parks where they exist.) However, taking into account the proximity of higher level parks (District and Local) alters the picture significantly, as shown on the following map.

Figure 5.8: Catchments of Neighbourhood Parks together with Local Park and District Parks



Nevertheless, even when access to higher level parks within easy reach are taken into account, this still leaves large areas in the central part of the Borough without easy access by foot to a park of any kind.

5.2.5 Additional comments on accessibility

Relevant public consultation (summarised in the last section) shows that people recognise the importance of good means of access to local facilities (such as parks); by public transport, but also safe and attractive footpaths and cycleways. In this sense it is not only the venues themselves that are valued, but also the links to and between them. Well-conceived and attractive links can be 'utilities', but also important recreation opportunities in their own right. They should be looked upon as essential components in an integrated framework of recreation opportunities, and can be at least as important in improving recreation opportunities, community health, and the overall environment as parks and other conventional recreation facilities.

5.2.6 Quality of provision

The Borough's larger parks in particular are recognised to be of a high standard, demonstrated in the award of the prestigious 'Green Flag' award to Belfairs, Chalkwell, Southchurch, Priory and Shoebury Parks. To achieve this

award independent assessors must see evidence of high quality facilities, as well as good maintenance, marketing and promotion, and active management. However, the Parks' Strategy recognises that the overall quality of the Borough's Parks still leaves scope for improvement; especially within the lower tier District and Neighbourhood Parks; pressures on the Council budget do not help here, as Parks are generally a discretionary element of local authority spending. Relevant public consultation demonstrates the value attached by local people to good quality parks and open spaces, and the need to ensure that high standards of planning, design and maintenance are both achieved and upheld.

The Parks' Strategy already proposes outline standards to guide provision for all three tiers of local park, and it would be helpful if these standards could be expanded to provide additional guidance relating to:

- desirable content/quality
- accessibility
- level of provision per population
- cost of provision (both capital and maintenance)

These modified standards would help in negotiating appropriate development contributions linked to new housebuilding (in particular), but may also assist in developing coherent bids for outside funding (as discussed in the Parks' Strategy.)

Modified standards are therefore suggested later in this report.

5.3 Provision for children and young people

Children are the main users of the outdoor environment. The network of open spaces, paths and back streets provide the main access routes for children exploring their environment. Open spaces are a particularly important play resource used by children. They provide meeting places, sites for sport and games, areas for quiet contemplation and challenging environments for more vigorous activities. Children in fact play wherever and whenever they have the opportunity. Playgrounds should not be seen as islands in an adult oriented environment but rather as one element in a total environment enjoyed by children.

Outdoor provision for children's play is therefore just as much part of the accepted fabric of local recreation provision as the Borough's parks. Provision for children in the form of well-equipped play areas has figured prominently in relevant public consultation. Local people recognise that young people of different ages have varied needs, and these must be considered.

The Local Plan aims for every house to be within 800 metres of a playground, but the Parks' Strategy accepts that this may be difficult to achieve due to the shortage of suitable spaces within the built up areas. This catchment covers all forms of play area, and does not differentiate between the various age groups. It would be reasonable to expect older children (whether or not they

are accompanied) to walk further to reach facilities. However, for the youngest children traveling 800 metres can be a bit of a trek.

The Draft Parks' Strategy has classified known play areas according to the categories suggested by the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA), in its widely adopted 'Six Acre Standard':

- Neighbourhood Equipped Areas of Play (NEAPs)
- Local Equipped Areas of Play (LEAPs)
- Local Areas of Play (LAPs)

These NPFA standards have not been adopted as Council policy, and their use here has not predetermined the development of alternative local standards. The NPFA classification is nationally published guidance, and government policy (PPG17) as well as the NPFA itself stress that local standards should ideally be developed through speaking to local people. The NPFA classification is used here simply as a starting point for analysis, which is acceptable practice.

Each of these tiers of provision suggested by the NPFA is supposed to provide for different needs. LAPs should provide a few items of equipment suitable to very young children (4 to 6 years), and within very easy reach of home by foot with a parent. At the top of the hierarchy are NEAPs that are supposed to be far fewer in number, serve a much bigger catchment, but also provide a much wider range of attractions for older children (8 to 14 years). LEAPs are somewhere in between (supposedly to provide for the 4 to 8 years age range). The NPFA recommendations for walking distances for each of the three tiers reflect the different ages of the intended users.

The supply of play areas according to this classification is considered below.

5.3.1 NEAPs

The NPFA recommends that NEAPs should be provided no more than 600 metres 'Straight-line' distance from any house, as they suggest that this equates to walking for about 1000 metres (or about 15 minutes) in the average urban environment. This catchment is smaller than that proposed in the Local Plan (800 metres).

The following map shows the location of NEAPs within the Borough with the 600-metre/15 minute walktime catchments superimposed.

Figure 5.9: Location of NEAPs and their catchments



| Site Ref | Name |
|----------|-------------------|
| 1 | Chalkwell Park |
| 2 | Christchurch Road |
| 3 | St. Laurence Park |

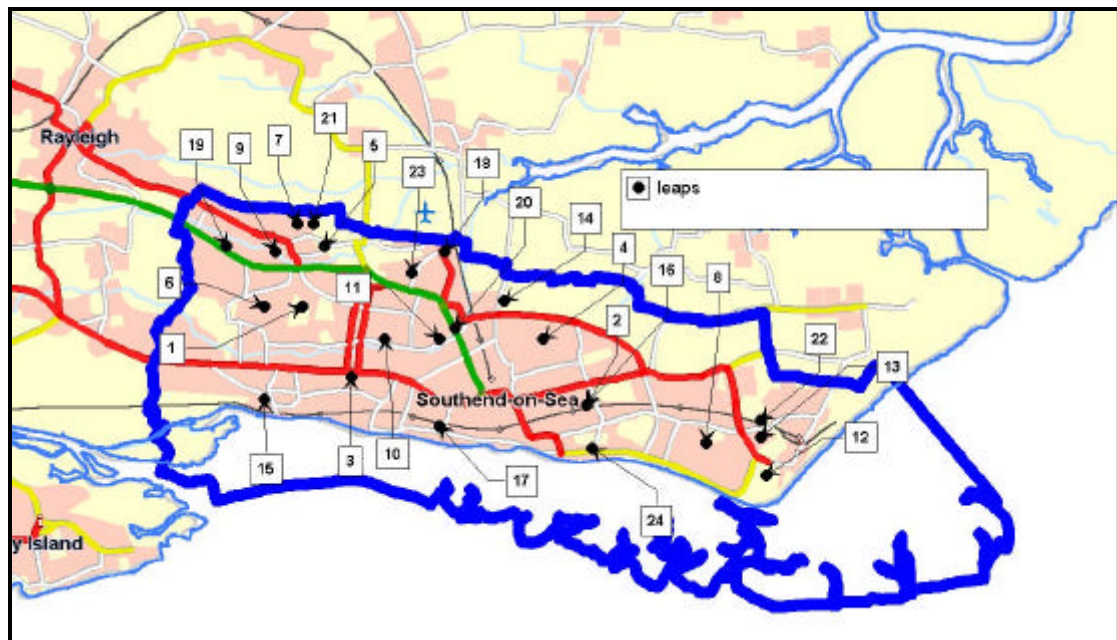
Clearly, the major part of the Borough is lacking easy access to a NEAP standard facility based upon the recommended catchment.

5.3.2 LEAPs

The NPFA recommends that LEAPs should be provided no more than 240 metres 'Straight-line' distance from any house, as they suggest that this equates to walking for about 400 metres (or about 5 minutes) in the average urban environment. This catchment is much smaller than that proposed in the Local Plan (800 metres).

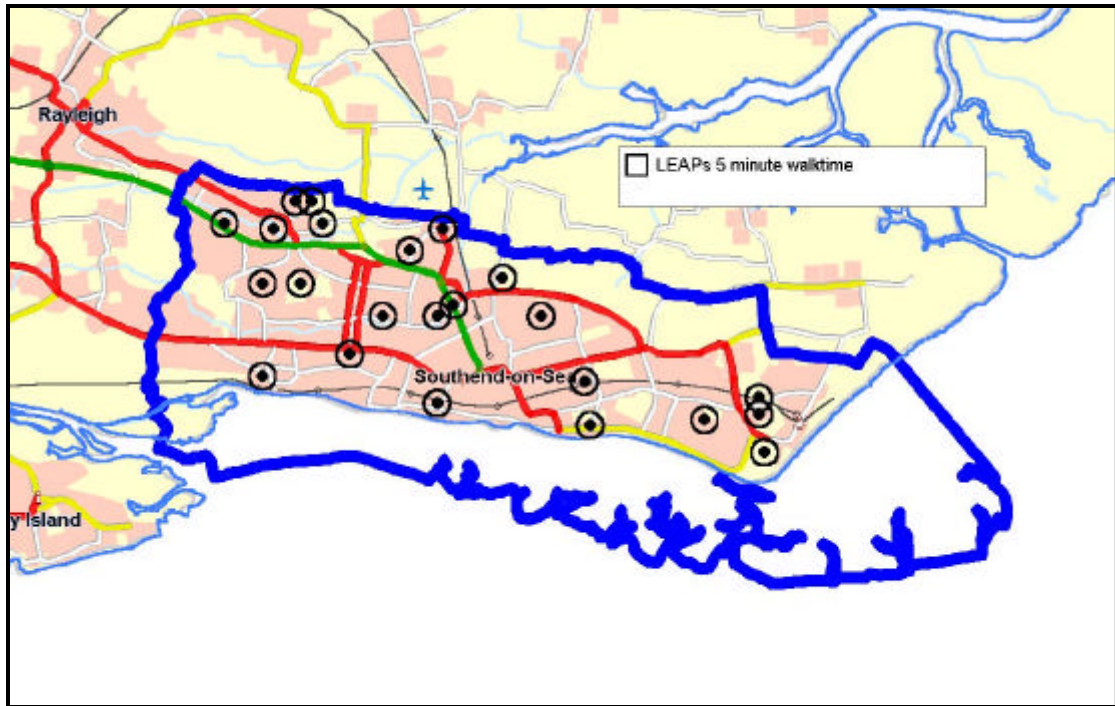
The following two maps shows the location of LEAPs within the Borough with the 240 metre/5 minute walktime catchments superimposed.

Figure 5.10: Location of LEAPs



| Site Ref | Name |
|----------|-----------------------|
| 1 | Blenheim Park |
| 2 | Bournes Green |
| 3 | Chalkwell Park |
| 4 | Cluny Square |
| 5 | Cockethurst |
| 6 | Danescroft |
| 7 | Dandies Farm |
| 8 | Delaware |
| 9 | Eastwood Park |
| 10 | Fairfax Drive |
| 11 | Gainsborough |
| 12 | Gunners Park |
| 13 | Jena Close |
| 14 | Jones Memorial |
| 15 | Leigh Library Gardens |
| 16 | Lifstan Way |
| 17 | Milton Gardens |
| 18 | Manners Way |
| 19 | Oakwood Park |
| 20 | Priory Park |
| 21 | Scott Park |
| 22 | Shoebury Park |
| 23 | Sidmouth |
| 24 | Southchurch Park |

Figure 5.11: LEAP Catchments



5.3.3 LAPs

The NPFA recommends that LAPs should be provided no more than 100 metres 'Straight-line' distance from any house, as they suggest that this equates to 1 minute's walktime. This catchment is very much smaller than that proposed in the Local Plan (800 metres).

The following map shows the location of LAPs and other (small) unclassified play areas within the Borough. The recommended catchments for LAPs are obviously too small to show on the map.

Figure 5.12: Location of LAPs and unclassified play areas

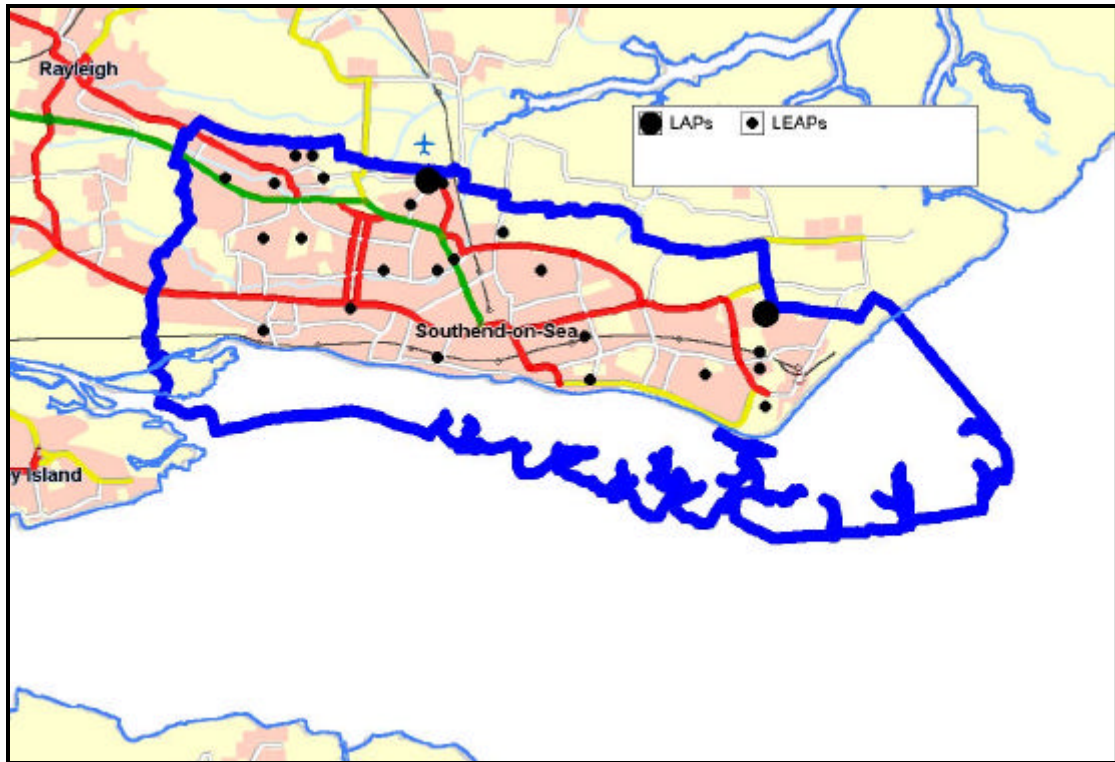


| Site Ref | Name | Status |
|----------|-------------------|--------------|
| 1 | Bonchurch | Unclassified |
| 1 | Colne Drive | Lap |
| 2 | Caulfield Road | Unclassified |
| 2 | Nightingale Close | Lap |
| 3 | Friars Park | Unclassified |
| 4 | Saxon Gardens | Unclassified |
| 5 | Three Shells | Unclassified |

Whilst the hierarchy of provision recommended by the NPFA might be thought of as a pyramid, the Borough's takes on a 'diamond' shape, as there are far more LEAPs than LAPs.

Because LAPs and LEAPs are supposed to be designed to appeal to broadly similar age groups existing LEAPs will also be able to meet the needs of local children in areas where LAPs do not exist. The following map shows LAPs and LEAPs together, and it is clear that in many cases LEAPs do help to fill in the gaps where LAPs do not exist. However, even taking this into account it is clear that only a very small part of the Borough lies within 100 metres of either a LAP or LEAP.

Figure 5.13: LAPs and LEAPs



5.3.4 General comments about catchments

The catchments areas used for the above analysis are more exacting than the 800 metres advocated in the Local Plan, and the Borough Council has already accepted that even the latter may be difficult to achieve. NPFA recommendations for LAPs will clearly be impossible to achieve. A heavily developed area like Southend simply does not have the land available to provide small play areas like LAPs so close to each other. However, the NPFA catchments for NEAPs and LEAPs, although both more demanding than the Local Plan recommendation, are more realistic and might be used as a basis for guiding new provision. In any event it is desirable to have guidance which takes into account the varied needs and abilities of children of all ages.

In those parts of the Borough where it proves difficult to secure provision within a recommended catchment distance, compensation may be in the form of better quality provision, and improved access (via safe paths, cycleways etc); both these should in any event be general aims for all forms of children's play provision. Where suitable venues are in very limited supply, it may be necessary for a single site to cater for the needs of a very wide age range. Where this is the case very close attention will need to be paid to the design/zoning of facilities, to ensure that the activities of different age groups do not come into conflict.

5.3.5 General comments on quality

Within the Parks' Strategy the Borough Council has assessed the quality of individual playgrounds, and play areas are in any event subject to regular safety and maintenance checks. The appendices to the Parks' Strategy highlights where improvements to existing provision are either proposed or desirable.

5.3.6 Provision for older teenagers

NEAPs, LEAPs and LAPs collectively are intended to meet the needs of children between the ages of 4 to 14 years. Teenagers over the age of 14 often use play areas as a meeting place because there are few suitable alternative sites. The needs of this age group will often not be compatible with younger age groups and therefore should be given specific but separate attention at the site design stage. Facilities for older children are generally considered to include:

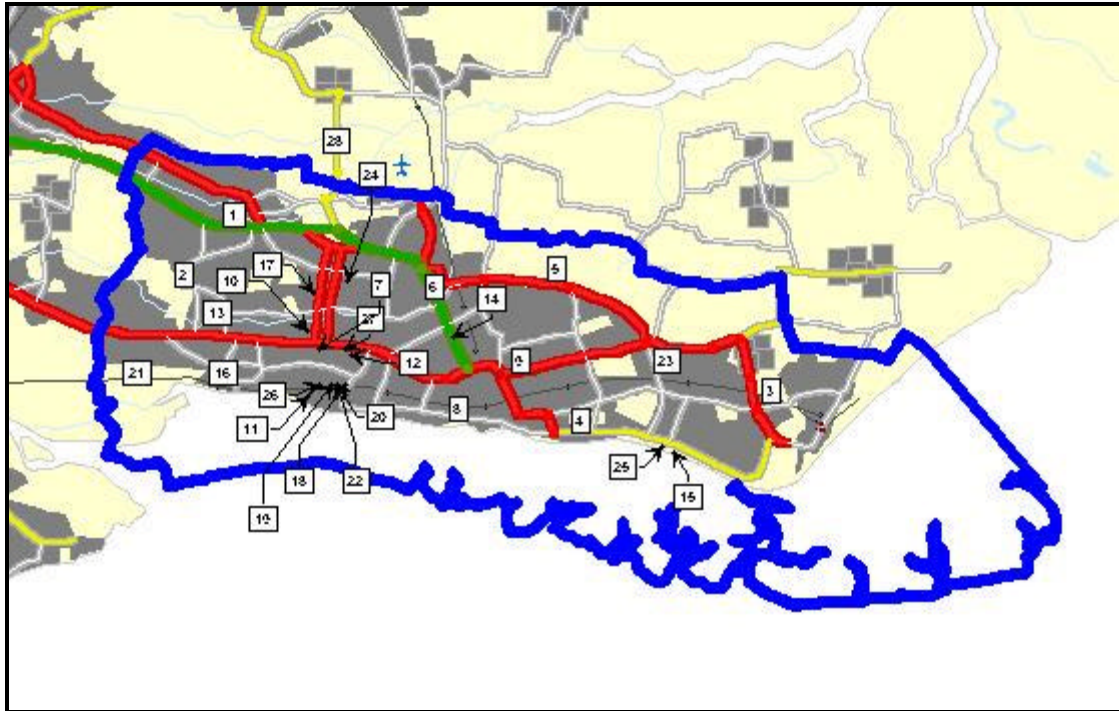
- Skateboarding
- BMX
- Multi Use Play Areas (MUPAs)
- OBBIs (Outdoor Basket Ball Initiative)
- Games (rebound) walls
- Kickabout areas
- Public conveniences
- Youth shelters and meeting areas
- Street basketball
- Graffiti walls
- Climbing Walls(outdoor)
- Teenage play facilities (e.g. trim trails).
- Adventure playgrounds.

Provision for older teenagers is dealt with in much more detail in the companion volume to this report, which also suggests the possible components of a draft standard.

5.4 Other outdoor sports (excluding golf)

The following map lists other outdoor sports facilities within the Borough (other than pitches and youth provision, both of which are covered in the companion report).

Figure 5.14: Other sports facilities



| Site Ref | Name | Sector | Tennis (syn grass) | Tennis (hard) | Bowls | Athletics |
|----------|--|--------|--------------------|---------------|-------|-----------|
| 1 | Eastwood Park | LA | | 2 | 1 | |
| 2 | Belfairs Park (Central) Eastwood Road | LA | | 2 | 2 | |
| 3 | Shoebury Park | LA | | 2 | 1 | |
| 4 | Southchurch Park, Lifstan Way | LA | | 2 | 1 | |
| 5 | Garons Park Eastern Ave | LA | | 4 | | 1 |
| 6 | Priory Park Victoria Ave | LA | | 4 | 4 | |
| 7 | Chalkwell Park | LA | | 4 | | |
| 8 | Alexandra BC Alexandra Rd | Club | | | 1 | |
| 9 | Bournemouth Park BC Larman Grn Wimborne Road | Club | | | 1 | |
| 10 | Cavendish Sports Club Clatterfield Gdns | LA | | | 1 | |
| 11 | Chalkwell Esplanade | Club | | | 4 | |
| 12 | Essex BC Imperial Ave | Club | | | 2 | |
| 13 | Leigh on Sea BC Rectory Grove | Club | | | 1 | |
| 14 | Southend on Sea BC Tunbridge Rd | Club | | | 1 | |
| 15 | Thorpe Bay BC Thorpe Bay Gardens | Club | | | 1 | |
| 16 | Bonchurch Road | LA | | 4 | | |
| 17 | Clatterfield Gardens | LA | | 3 | | |
| 18 | Conifer LTC The Ridgeway | Club | | 1 | | |
| 19 | Crowstone & St Saviours LTC Victory Path | Club | | 3 | | |
| 20 | Invicta LTC The Ridgeway | Club | | 3 | | |

| Site Ref | Name | Sector | Tennis (syn grass) | Tennis (hard) | Bowls | Athletics |
|----------|--|--------|--------------------|---------------|-------|-----------|
| 21 | Leigh on Sea LTC Adalia Cresc | Club | | 3 | | |
| 22 | Leigh Road Baptists LTC The Ridgeway | Club | | 3 | | |
| 23 | Southend LTC Broadclyst Gdns | Club | 5 | | | |
| 24 | St Peters LTC Eastbourne Grove | Club | | 1 | | |
| 25 | Thorpe Bay LTC Thorpe Bay Gdns | Club | 12 | 4 | | |
| 26 | Westcliff Hard Courts LTC The Ridgeway | Club | 4 | 3 | | |
| 27 | Westcliff on Sea LTC London Rd | Club | 8 | 2 | | |
| 28 | Westbarrow Hall, Aviation Way | Club | | 2 | | |

Note: courts on school sites have not been included on this list. It also excludes indoor provision such as at the Garons Park Tennis Centre.

Much of the above provision is owned and/or managed by the Borough Council. However, clubs are also important providers of bowling greens and tennis courts.

5.4.1 Bowls

There are comparatively few outdoor bowling greens in the Borough compared with tennis courts (for example). Either the Borough Council or easy-to-join voluntary clubs manages all local facilities, and in this sense all are available for use by the community. Most venues are located in public parks. Outdoor bowls is a seasonal activity.

The study has identified 21 greens in the Borough, and this equates to 1 green for every 7,631 people. There is extremely little in the way of guidance on levels of provision specifically for outdoor bowls. A (then) Sports Council document 'Planning for Sport'⁵, assumed a level of 10 greens for 60,000 population, which if applied to the Borough would suggest a requirement for 27 greens (6 more than currently provided). There is little evidence to suggest that demand in the Borough could sustain such a level of provision. However, new housing development will undoubtedly increase demand for access to and use of such facilities, and is felt that the existing level of provision within the area should act as a basis for a local standard.

5.4.2 Tennis/Multi Use Games Areas

There are 81 hard or synthetic surface outdoor courts available to the community within the Borough, and this equates to 1 court per 1,978 people. These are located in local parks, but also on school campuses and at club venues.

Outside school activity, formal tennis (normally organized on a club or commercial basis) is a minority sport compared, for example, to football.

⁵ 'Planning for Sport'. Sports Council (1970)

Away from the schools organised tennis activity in the Borough is focused on the Indoor Tennis Centre at Garons Park, and at the local clubs who generally manage their own facilities.

'Public' courts in the Borough are often in Parks. As with such courts elsewhere in the country they are often characterized by a lack of use for tennis over much of the year. In the absence of a club there is little incentive for many to use public courts except for casual play. Although the Borough Council is keen to increase public interest and participation in tennis, it must also ensure that new courts for which it assumes ownership and/or management do not suffer from the chronic under-use affecting much of the existing public provision, and that they are therefore planned and designed to cater for a wide range of sports.

The provision of outdoor community tennis courts should wherever possible be provided on a multi use games area (MUGA) basis. The rationale is that:

- Multi court provision helps facilitate the development of clubs; and,
- It also enables alternative uses to be made of facilities, especially in the winter months when use for tennis may not be significant. Apart from tennis multi courts with an appropriate surface can be used for netball, basketball, five-a-side football, amongst others.

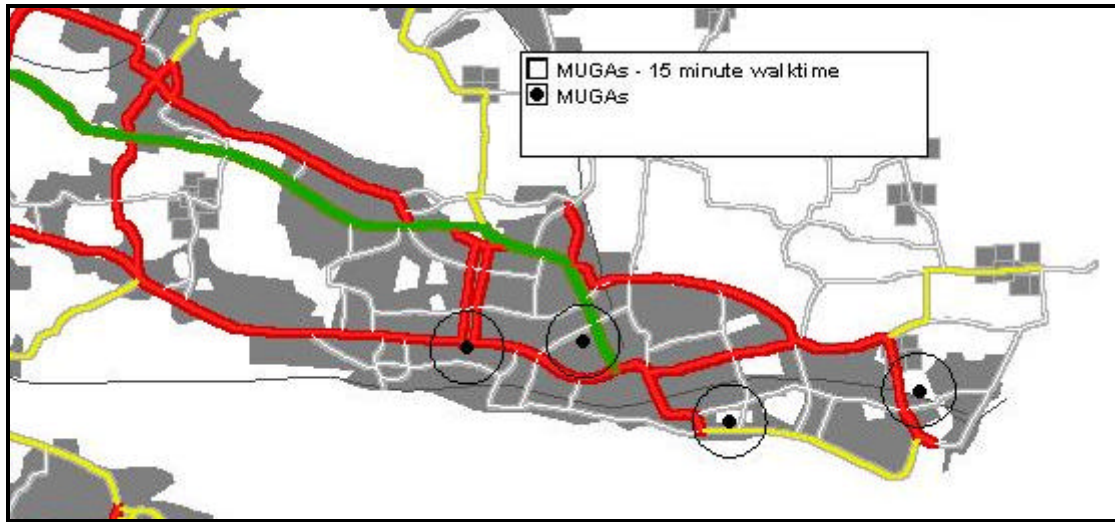
They should also ideally be floodlit to enable evening use, which will be popular for all sports that could potentially use such facilities.

These MUGAs are distinct from other facilities like:

- Synthetic Turf Pitches (being designed to meet the needs of hockey and football (in particular); and,
- 'Multi Use Play Areas' - informal hard surface play areas that will tend to be less formal in nature, and cater for casual 'free' access'.

The role of MUGAs in providing basic sports and recreational opportunities is considered more fully in the companion volume to this report dealing with pitch sports. However, the general location of local MUGAs available for community use is shown on the following map together with the 600 metre/15 minute walk time catchments superimposed.

Figure 5.15: MUGAs - catchments

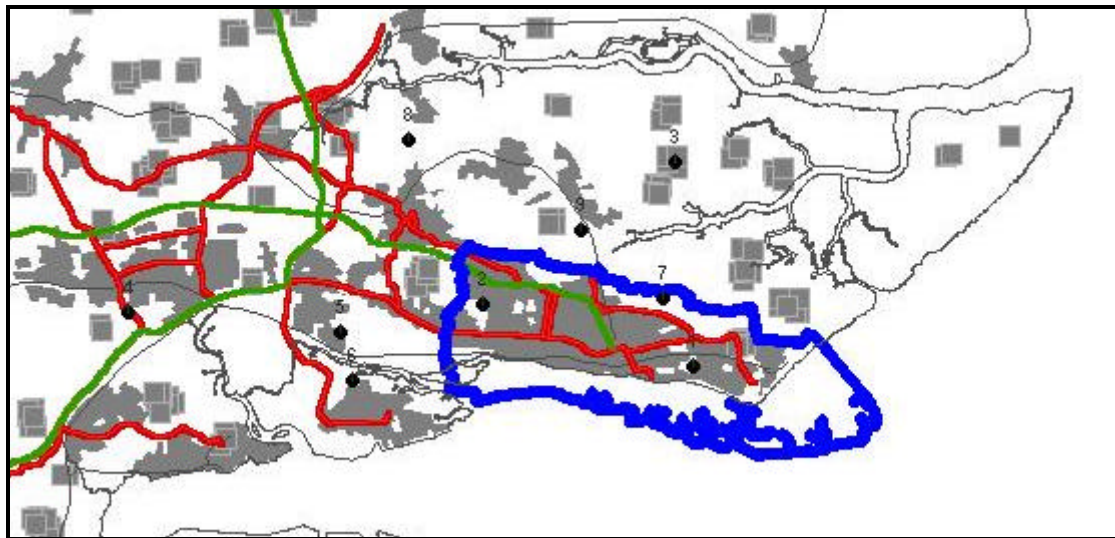


As can be seen, there are few parts of the Borough within easy reach of an existing MUGA.

5.4.3 Golf

The following golf courses are located in or in the vicinity of the Borough

Figure 5.16: Golf courses in and around Southend



| Ref | Name | Facilities | Membership | Management |
|-----|--------------------------|--|------------|--------------|
| 1 | Thorpe Hall Golf Club | 1 x 18 hole | 1000 | club |
| 2 | Belfairs Golf Club | 1 x 18 hole, 1 x 9 hole (pitch and putt) | 350 | pay and play |
| 3 | Ballards Grove Golf Club | 1 x 18 hole | 600 | club |
| 4 | Basildon Golf Club | 1 x 18 hole | 300 | club |
| 5 | Boyce Hill Golf Club | 1 x 18 hole | 700 | club |
| 6 | Castlepoint Golf Club | 1 x 18 hole | 240 | club |
| 7 | The Essex Golf Complex | 1 x 18 hole, 1 x 9 hole, 1 x 9 | 700 | pay and play |

| Ref | Name | Facilities | Membership | Management |
|-----|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------|------------|
| | | hole (par 3) | | |
| 8 | Hanover Golf and Country Club | 1 x 18 hole, 1 x 18 hole (par 3) | 700 | club |
| 9 | Rochford Hundred Golf Club | 1 x 18 hole | 375 | club |

The majority of clubs are 'traditional' members clubs. However, there are two 'pay and play' facilities within the Borough itself, located at Belfairs Park and the Essex Golf Complex. The former is owned by the Borough Council, whilst the latter is owned by the Garon Trust.

Discussions with the management of these two pay-and-play facilities do not suggest a shortage of facilities, although it is accepted that substantial new population increase may result in increased demand. However, even with the proposed major residential development within the Borough, it is unlikely that sufficient population will be generated to justify an additional course. Several standards have been promoted both nationally and within the region to guide the development of new golf courses. For example, the Golf Development Council has previously advocated 1 x 9-hole course per 15,000 people and within no more than 10 miles. On the other hand the (former) Eastern Council for Sport and Recreation (1991) stated a minimum requirement for Essex and Hertfordshire of 1 x 18-hole course per 20,000 population. New housing development within the Borough will certainly not generate sufficient additional residents to breach either of these thresholds.

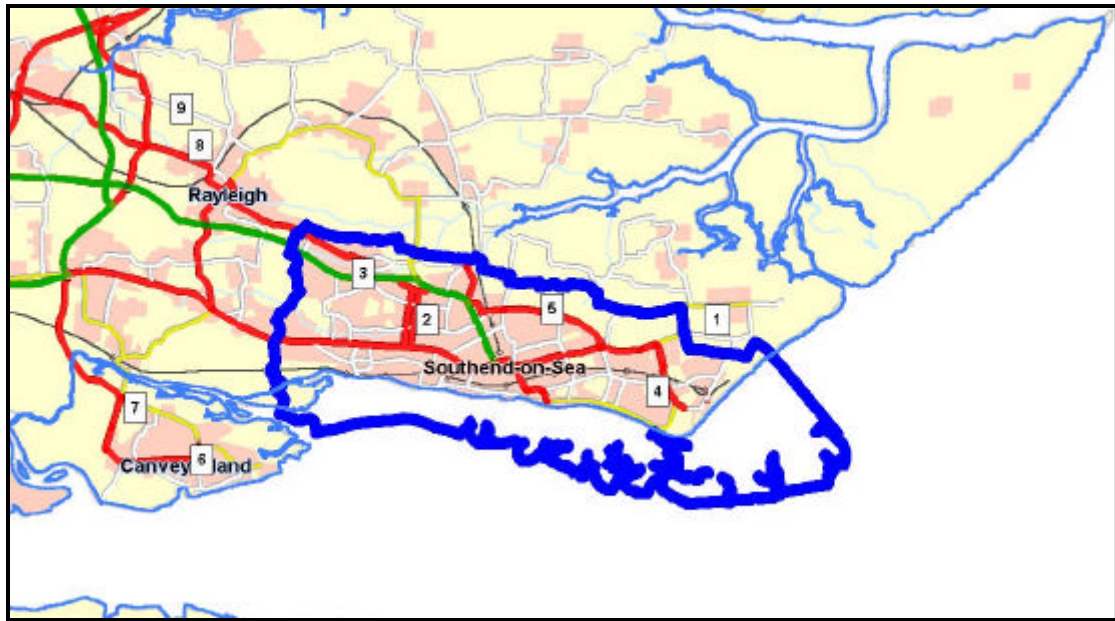
Although the number of courses within the Borough is comparatively low relative to its existing population, they are within easy reach and there are also nearby courses in adjacent local authority areas.

5.5 Sports halls and swimming pools

Sports halls and swimming pools are generally viewed as the 'flagship' sports/recreation facilities provided by local authorities, and the Borough Council has helped develop and manages a number of such venues, most being provided on a dual use basis on school sites. Swimming pools, in particular can prove important 'wet weather' attractions for tourists and other visitors to the area.

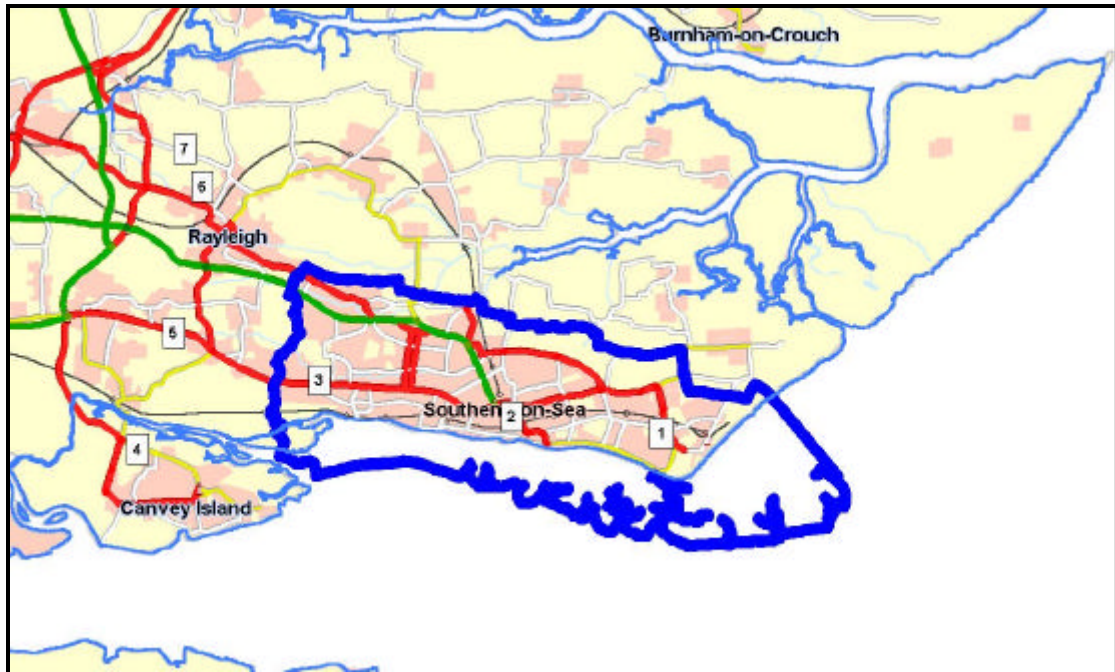
The following two maps show sports halls and covered swimming pools (of at least 25 metres) available to the public both within and just outside the Borough boundaries. Certain sports halls are not shown simply because they are not subject to formal community use agreements. (For example, Cecil Jones and Thomas More High Schools).

Figure 5.17: Sports halls in and around Southend



| Ref | Name |
|-----|------------------------------------|
| 1 | Great Waking Sports Centre |
| 2 | Chase Sports and Fitness Centre |
| 3 | The Eastwood School |
| 4 | Shoebury Leisure Centre |
| 5 | Southend Leisure and Tennis Centre |
| 6 | Furtherwick School |
| 7 | Waterside Farm Sports Centre |
| 8 | Sweyne Parks Sports Hall |
| 9 | The Park Sports Centre |

Figure 5.18: Swimming pools (covered) in and around Southend



| Ref | Name |
|-----|------------------------------|
| 1 | Shoebury Leisure Centre |
| 2 | Warriors Swimming Centre |
| 3 | Belfairs Swimming Centre |
| 4 | Waterside Farm Sports Centre |
| 5 | Runnymede Swimming Pool |
| 6 | Sweyne Park Swimming Pool |
| 7 | The Park Sports Centre |

The ratio of provision of sports halls within the Borough is therefore 1 per 40,064 people, and the corresponding ratio for covered public swimming pools is 1 per 53,419 people.

The local consultation process to date has not identified any significant concerns regarding the overall lack of such facilities. The most widely recognized and accepted method of assessing the demand for such facilities is the Sport England's Facility Planning Model (FPM). Discussions with Sport England do not suggest the FPM has highlighted any under-provision in the Borough. However, the FPM focuses on the provision of larger sports halls and swimming pools, and some would argue that this underestimates the actual level of demand in certain local circumstances⁶.

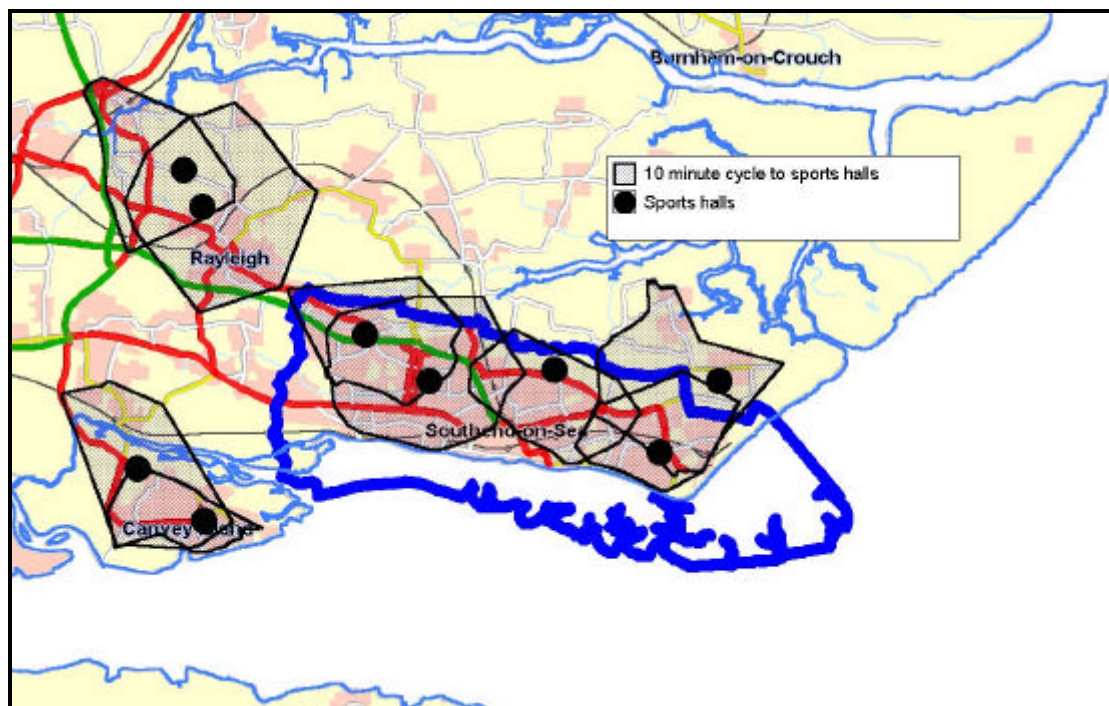
⁶ For example, George Torkildsen (in his standard text 'Leisure and Recreation Management') suggests that a "Small Country Town" of between 2,500 and 6,000 could support a sports hall and 25m swimming pool. Similarly the Rural Areas White Paper (2000) suggests that a "Small Market Town" of only 2,000 could support a sports hall. These are obviously not directly relevant to the Borough, although it might be used to argue that the Borough is underprovided with sports halls and swimming pools.

The conclusions of a national survey commissioned by Sport England suggest that 87% of visits to sports halls and 86.7% of visits to swimming pools involved a journey time (largely by car) of 20 minutes or less.

No part of the Borough lies more than 20 minutes drive from the nearest sports halls or swimming pool. However, the Sport England study identified that around 60% of all trips to either sports halls or swimming pools took 10 minutes or less, and that there is a considerable 'falling off' in terms of the overall percentage of trips taking longer. Even with this reduced trip it would still probably leave no part of the Borough more than 10 minutes by car from a sports hall or swimming pool.

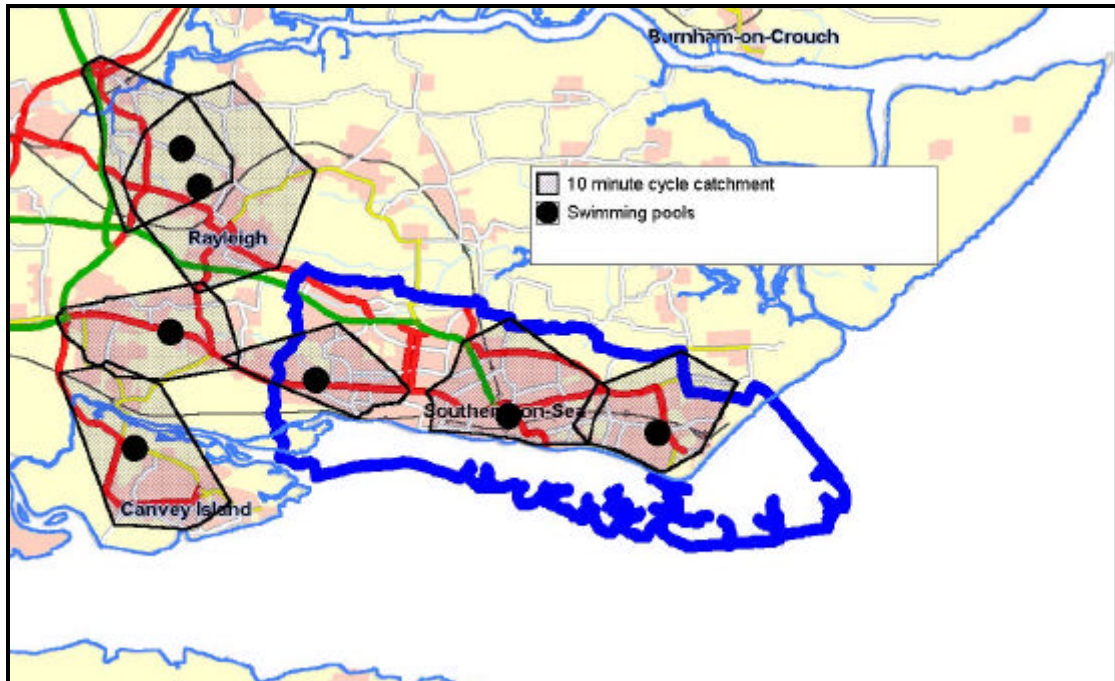
Clearly access will not be so easy for those who do not have a car, and have to rely on trips by foot or bike, as shown by the following two maps; although even here it is only for swimming pools that major gaps in 'coverage' exist.

Figure 5.19: 10 minute cycle time to sports halls



On the other hand guidance provided by the former regional Sports Councils (i.e. prior to the FPM) suggested that a "District Sports Centre" could be supported by a population of between 40-90,000 people; whilst a 25m pool with learner facility could be supported by a population of 40-45,000. By these standards, the Borough does not fare badly.

Figure 5.20: 10 minute cycle time to swimming pools



5.6 Community halls and meeting places

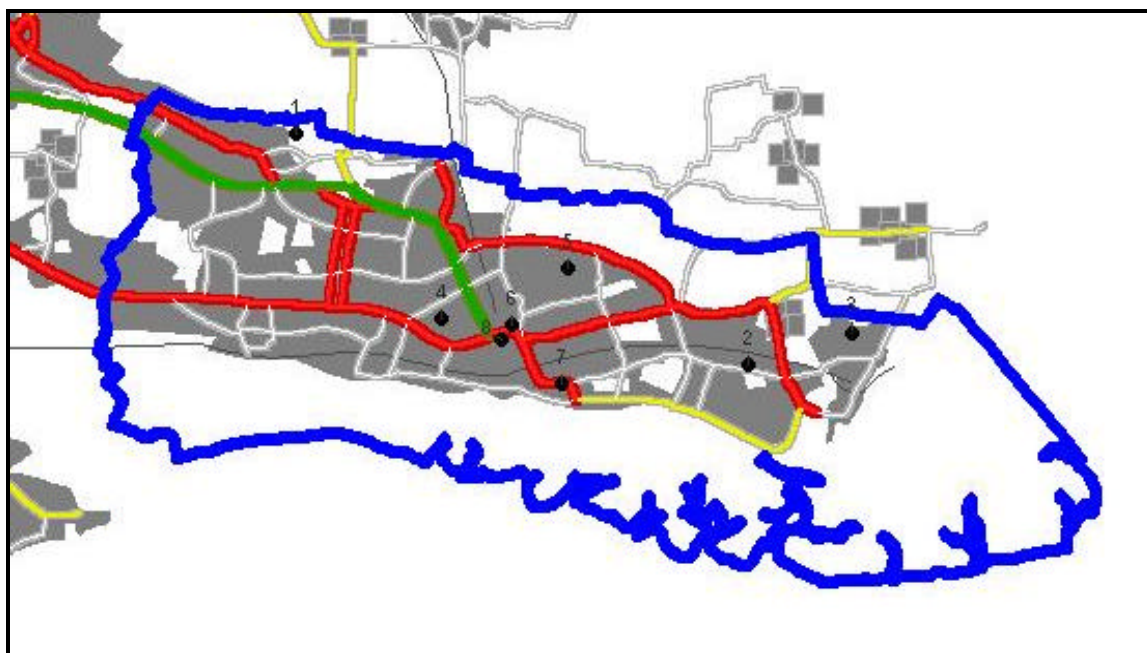
The community consultation exercise has highlighted the importance attached to this type of facility and, perhaps surprisingly, young people have also expressed a wish to see them provided. Not only do community centres provide a focal point for club activities and social interaction, but they can also host a range of recreation activities outside formal sporting venues (such as carpet bowls, table tennis, dances, keep fit, yoga etc) if well conceived and designed. Provision of this type of hall within the Borough is made by the public, private and voluntary sectors. The voluntary sector in particular is a very important provider through church halls, scout and guide huts etc. The private/commercial sector makes available function rooms (such as those attached to hotels or pubs). However, it is the Borough Council that is the major provider; this can often be through school halls that are hired out (usually at the discretion of the local school management, unless the facilities are subject to a formal community use agreement); or else through provision of dedicated community hall venues.

There are eight Community Centres managed by Leisure Service:

- Eastwood Community Centre, Western Approaches, Eastwood
- Thorpedene Community Centre, Delaware Road, Shoeburyness
- Friars Community Centre, The Renown, Shoeburyness
- Balmoral Community Centre, Salisbury Avenue, Westcliff
- St. Edmund's Community Centre, Pantile Avenue, Southend
- Coleman Street Community Centre, Coleman Street, Southend
- Centre Place Community Centre, Prospect Close, Southend

- Club 60, Queensway House, Essex Street, Southend (this venue caters for older people).

Figure 5.21: Community halls (managed by the Borough Council)



| Ref | Name |
|-----|---------------------------------|
| 1 | Eastwood Community Centre |
| 2 | Thorpedene Community Centre |
| 3 | Friars Community Centre |
| 4 | Balmoral Community Centre |
| 5 | St Edmunds Community Centre |
| 6 | Coleman Street Community Centre |
| 7 | Centre Place Community Centre |
| 8 | Club 60 (Queensway House) |

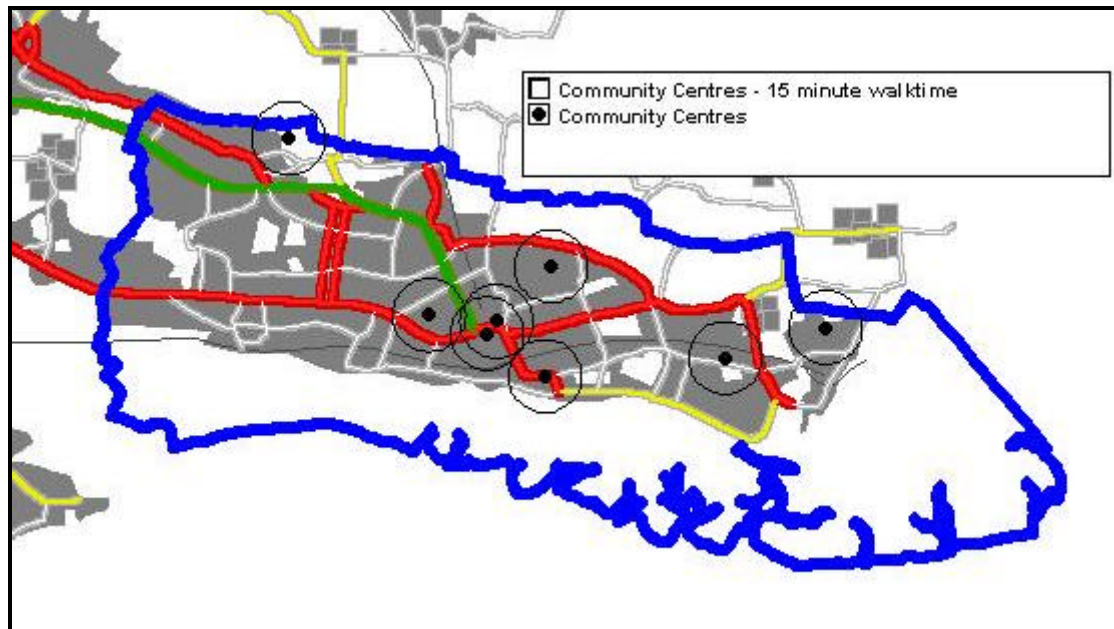
Excluding Club 60 (because of its specialist status) the Borough Council currently manages 7 community centres, **which works out at 1 community centre per 22,894 people.**

This appears to be a relatively poor level of provision, given the size of the Borough's population, and upon comparison with provision in many other urban areas both large and small. Whilst accepting the fact that the Borough's geographical compactness probably makes existing community halls accessible to more people than would otherwise be the case, it should be an aspiration to try and achieve a much better level of provision at least to meet the needs of new residential development.

Ideally community centres should be within easy reach by foot as individuals may use them and age groups that do not necessarily have easy access to other forms of transport (for example elderly people wishing to attend senior citizens clubs, or young accompanied children attending playgroups).

The following map shows the location of community centres managed by the Borough Council with the 600-metre/15 minute walktime catchments superimposed.

Figure 5.22: Community halls - 15 minute walktime



As can be seen large parts of the Borough in the west (in particular) lie outside any catchment; this is also the case for much of the Southchurch and Thorpe Wards.

Venues such as church and school halls, and private functions rooms have not been recorded, but these will clearly also perform a very useful role in meeting the needs of local people and groups for general indoor space. There is also the Leigh Community Centre which is run by the Education Department of the Borough Council as part of the Adult Education service, but does make some contribution to meeting the need for a community venue in the area, particularly in the evenings.

5.7 The beaches/seafront promenade

By far and away the biggest and most popular recreation resource as well as open space within the Borough is the seafront including the foreshore and the seafront promenade, both of which also form the backdrop to a wide variety of other attractions. These include various parks and gardens (freely available to the public), and other attractions such as the fairground and world famous pier. There are 7 miles of foreshore within the Borough, and considerable areas of this are of environmental significance. There is also a nature reserve and a site of special scientific interest.

It is perhaps natural to think of the beach and the promenade as tourist attractions. However, the foreshore and its setting is largely a natural feature

with a highly significant role as a habitat and in maintaining local biodiversity; both features are also extremely popular with and well used by local people. The role of the promenade in particular must be recognised in this way. Seafront footpaths and cycleways are flat, and run through a varied and interesting setting. They are a very direct east-west connection, and (combined with existing and proposed cycle routes running north to south) offer good overall connections within the Borough. The Seafront cycle route will also form part of the Sustrans Regional and National Cycle Network.

5.8 Walking and Cycling

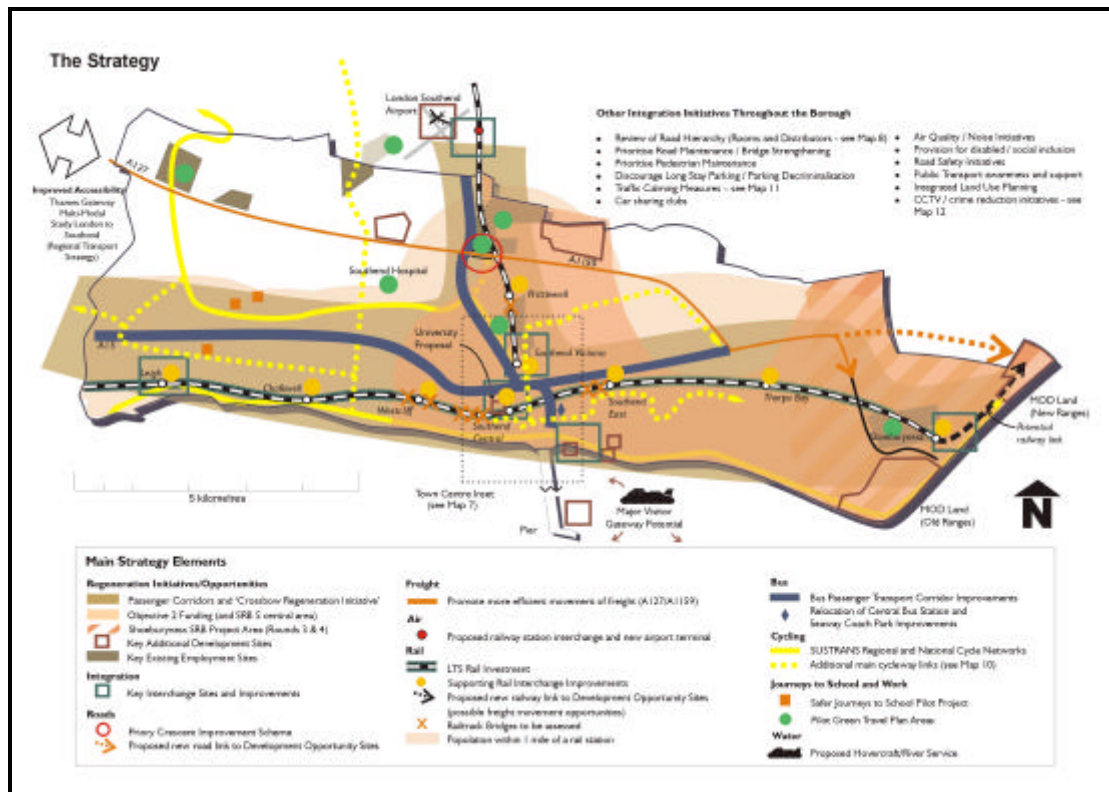
Consultations have highlighted the importance attached by local people to good quality links by footpath and bike to parks, open spaces and other recreation facilities. Such routes if well-conceived and incorporated sensitively within attractive settings can also provide important opportunities for recreation in their own right. They help to improve access to facilities for those lacking a car. They can also encourage more walking and cycling, so reducing harmful engine emissions whilst improving overall levels of health within the community.

The densely populated nature of the Borough allied to its compact geographical size offers great potential for encouraging much more cycling and walking, both as a means of getting from "A to B", as well as enjoyable recreation in its own right.

The Local Transport Plan (referred to in Section 2) identifies that improvements to walking and cycling facilities in recent years have mainly been as part of the development of integrated schemes (allied to road improvements). The notable exceptions have been extensive pedestrian improvements in the High Street as part of Sshape (Southend Seafront, High Street and Pier Enhancement) project, utilising European Objective 2 monies, and 'Phase 3' of the segregated seafront cycle route.

The Local Transport Plan envisages further expansion of the network, shown on the following map.

Figure 5.23: Extract from Local Transport Plan



As can be seen, many of the existing and proposed cycle routes run close to some of the Borough's most significant parks and open spaces. The most obvious example is the Prittlebrook route that will form an east-west green route through much of the western half of the Borough, and will link Belfairs and Priory District Parks. It will also run close to a number of schools, demonstrating the potential for developing a safe cycle route to these schools. It is important that the potential for running local spurs off the main network into parks and other recreation facilities is considered fully in any future review and refinement of the Local Transport Plan. The contribution that initiatives such as these can make in strengthening and adding coherency to the local Green Grid network (the focus of much local and regional policy) cannot be overestimated.

5.9 Allotments

It is important to be clear about what is meant by an 'allotment'. The law relating to the provision of allotments is complex, not being neatly packaged in one piece of legislation.

- The Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 obliged local authorities to provide sufficient allotments and to let them to persons living in their areas where they considered there was a demand.

- The Allotment Act of 1922 defines the term 'allotment garden' as: "an allotment not exceeding 40 poles⁷ in extent which is wholly or mainly cultivated by the occupier for the production of vegetable or fruit crops for consumption by himself or his family"
- The Allotments Act of 1925 gives protection to land acquired specifically for use as allotments, so called Statutory Allotment Sites, by the requirement for the need for the approval of Secretary of State in event of sale or disposal. Some allotment sites may *not* specifically have been acquired for this purpose. Such allotment sites are known as "temporary" (even if they have been in use for decades) and are not protected by the 1925 legislation.

The original aim of allotments was to provide a means for poorer households to achieve a level of subsistence and self-sufficiency. However, over the years they have become an important recreation resource.

The profile of local allotment gardeners is likely to reflect the national picture, insofar as the majority are elderly (normally retired) men. Younger people, and women in general, are therefore heavily under-represented amongst existing local plot holders.

Worryingly, as existing allotment holders become older and eventually have to relinquish their plots, there may be insufficient numbers of new recruits coming into the pastime to maintain plot take-up even at the existing level.

Studies elsewhere indicate a variety of reasons to account for the current lack of participation in allotment gardening amongst many sections of the population⁸. These range from issues concerning the "image" of allotment gardening, through to a lack of awareness about the pastime in general, and the availability of allotment plots in particular. Other possible reasons for lack of participation are thought to include inadequate facilities and amenities on allotment sites (such as the absence of toilets), and the perceived overly large size of individual plots. They also included the notion that the hectic pace of modern daily life, the increasing reliance on food superstores and fast, ready processed food have made the concept of allotment gardening, and "nurturing your own food" alien to many people.

However, there are encouraging signs that allotment gardening may, with the right sort of support, be on the cusp of a very substantial revival in popularity. The roots of this revival, stem from recent national debate (including a parliamentary select committee), suggesting that allotment gardening could potentially play a very valuable role where there is an increasing awareness of and concern with the links between health, leisure and social behavior; and

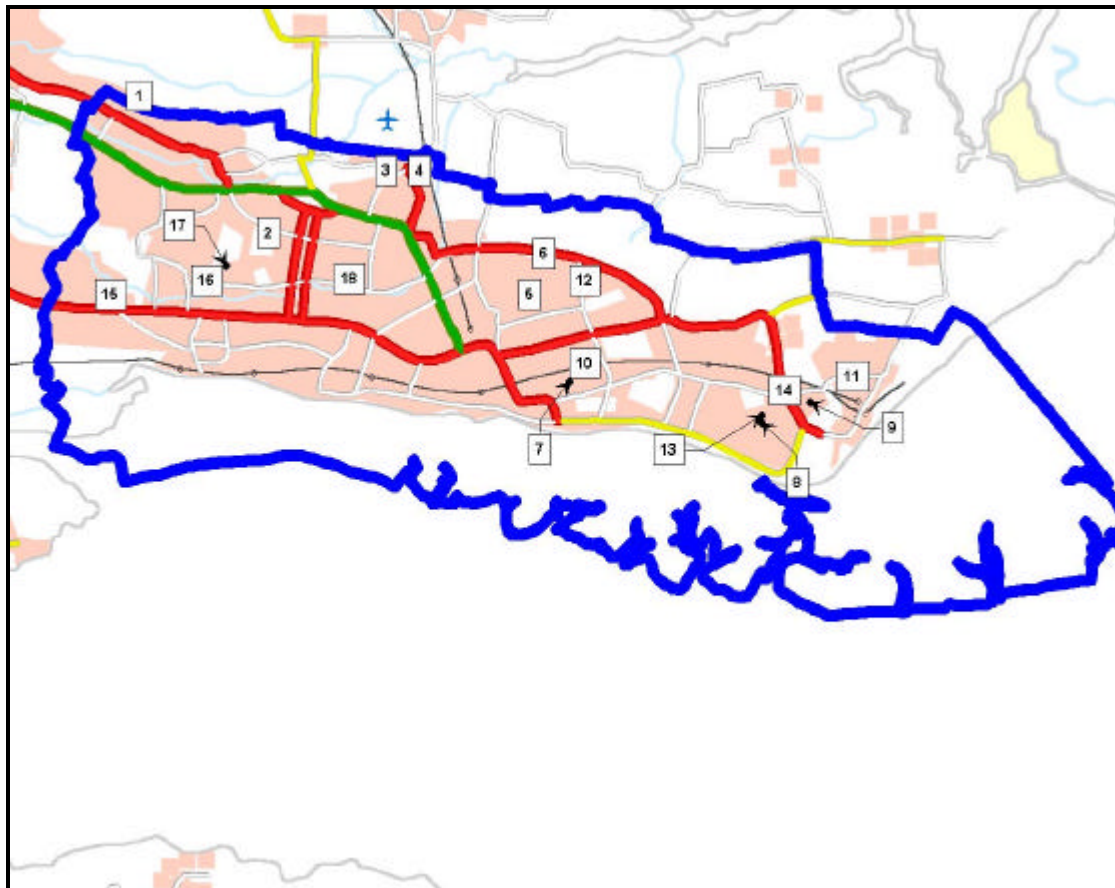
⁷ 40 poles are equivalent to 1,210 square yards or 1,012 square metre. A 'pole' can also be know as a 'rod' or 'perch'

⁸ See for example a study of allotments undertaken for Stevenage Borough Council in 2001.

where there is growing acceptance of the value of healthy "home grown" food at a time when conventional food sources are viewed with suspicion.

Allotments within the Borough tend to be provided either by the Borough Council (some managed by allotment societies), or else Leigh Town Council. The following map and accompanying schedule identifies existing sites.

Figure 5.24: Allotment sites



| Site Ref | Name | Manager |
|----------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | Edwards Hall | SBC |
| 2 | Bridgwater Drive | SBC |
| 3 | Rochford Road | SBC (Society site) |
| 4 | Manners Way | SBC (Society site) |
| 5 | Norwich Avenue | SBC |
| 6 | Eastern Avenue | SBC (Society site) |
| 7 | Sandringham Road | SBC |
| 8 | St Andrews Road | SBC |
| 9 | Vincent Crescent | SBC |
| 10 | Lifstan Way | SBC |
| 11 | Elm Road | SBC |
| 12 | Hamstel Road | SBC (Society site) |
| 13 | Herbert Road | SBC |
| 14 | Delaware Crescent | SBC |

| Site Ref | Name | Manager |
|----------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 15 | Marshall Close | Leigh Town Council |
| 16 | Manchester Drive | Leigh Town Council (Society site) |
| 17 | Leigh Allotment | Leigh Allotment |
| 18 | Springfield Drive | SBC (Society site) |

Combined, these sites provide for a range of different plot sizes. Some sites are well occupied with few vacant plots; but others are less well used, and the average occupancy rate is around 50%. The sites are distributed fairly evenly throughout the Borough with the exception of the central area, where dense development offers few opportunities to provide recreation space.

The existing Borough Local Plan currently does not have a standard for the provision of allotments. 'The Thorpe Committee' of 1968 recommended a standard of 0.2 hectares/000 people. An alternative standard is provided by the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (N.S.A.L.G) recommending 15 plots per 1 thousand households. (Where a plot is defined as 10 Rods (or about 250 square metres).

Although both these standards have been used in many areas to establish the adequacy of allotment provision, they are deficient in a number of ways, including:-

- That they are not derived from a local assessment, but instead are national guides that may not be sensitive to local circumstances;
- That they do not by themselves take into account factors related to the "quality" and distribution of allotments land; and,
- That the Thorpe Committee standard also includes "marginal land" within allotment sites, as well as the plots themselves. (This may be problematic as there may be considerable variation between sites in terms of the amount of land that cannot be effectively cultivated.)

In light of the above there may be value in developing a local standard to cover the provision of allotments, but this should only happen following a more detailed review of local 'supply and demand'.

5.10 Green Corridors and natural/semi natural greenspace

Parts of many of the Borough's parks and open spaces contribute to overall semi-natural greenspace within the Borough. The Borough also hosts other natural habitats of local and wider importance, including Leigh Marsh National Nature Reserve, and much of the foreshore. As with the promenade, foreshore and various seafront attractions, the natural(ised) spaces are appreciated by both local people and visitors/tourists alike.

More generally open space and natural habitats of all kinds fit into a wider 'Green Grid' within the southern part of Essex promoted by the Thames

Gateway South Essex and all relevant partners, the importance of which is emphasised in the section of this report dealing with policy.

Natural and semi-natural greenspace clearly play an important role in maintaining and enhancing local biodiversity, so helping to achieve the aims of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (mentioned in Section 2). They therefore contribute to building sustainable communities and help to define local sense of place. Apart from this, they can also provide a very attractive setting for recreation in appropriate circumstances. Prittlewell Brook (for example) is being promoted as an important linear footpath/cycle link within the abovementioned Green Grid.

It is important that new open space and recreation provision within the Borough should wherever appropriate help to improve the natural environment, as all contributions no matter how small can help sustain overall ecological richness and biodiversity. Such measures will also contribute to the general quality of the recreation experience for all. The most obvious potential for achieving is through ensuring that natural environments and habitats form an integral component of plans to develop new or improve existing parks. Clearly, the larger the park/open space, the greater the scope for such measures. However, even with the smallest local 'pocket park' there will be scope to cater for nature, and this is addressed further in the section of this report that considers draft standards.

6. General conclusions

6.1 General

As this review has demonstrated, recreation is a 'very broad church' and no matter how much time or money is committed to examining local needs and provision it will never provide an absolute and complete picture. However the above assessment of provision, allied to the review of known local needs and aspirations provides a sufficient basis to draft standards of provision as appropriate for various kinds of open space and recreation opportunity. Some recreation by its nature is not suited to treatment through the application of standards, such as footpaths, cyclepaths and the natural environment. However, their contribution to providing high quality opportunities is emphasised in this report, and the standards suggested in the next section make reference to these features as appropriate. In addition, other relevant plans and strategies should have regard to the importance of providing for such features and ensure that comments within this report are reflected in subsequent reviews.

6.2 Parks

6.2.1 Quantity

There are many parts of the Borough poorly served by District and Local Parks in terms of having a good-sized park within easy walking distance, particularly on either side of the A13. In fact there are several parts of the Borough that are not within easy walking distance of any kind of park, such as in St. Lukes, Prittlewell, St. Laurence, and Blenheim wards.

Local people have also stressed the importance of good access to local facilities (including open spaces), including by means of public transport and safe and attractive footpaths and cyclist routes.

6.2.2 Quality

Although the Borough has several fine parks the overall quality of existing facilities is also variable, especially in the lower tier Local and Neighbourhood Parks.

Local consultation has highlighted the value attached by residents to good quality parks and open spaces. Parks and open spaces serve different functions depending on the age and characteristics of the potential users. Children and young people will look at them primarily as a place to play and meet friends. Older people may simply enjoy them as an opportunity to rest in attractive surroundings

6.3 Provision for Children and Young People

6.3.1 Quantity

The study report indicates clearly that there is generally a lack of good accessibility to equipped play areas for younger children throughout the Borough. Neither are many parts of the Borough within easy reach of existing facilities specifically designed for young people.

Parts of Victoria, Prittlewell, Leigh, Belfairs, Eastwood, Southchurch, Thorpe, and Shoeburyness are all poorly served with outdoor equipped children's play facilities.

6.3.2 Quality

Local consultation highlights that residents recognise young people of different ages have varied needs, and these need to be reflected in different kinds of provision.

In those parts of the Borough where it proves difficult to secure adequate provision, compensation may be in the form of better quality existing provision, and improved access (via safe paths, cycleways etc); both these should in any event be general aims for all forms of children's play provision. Where suitable venues are in very limited supply, it may be necessary for a single site to cater for the needs of a diverse age range.

The existing Park's Strategy has highlighted individual sites where improvements to facilities are desirable.

6.3.3 Bowls

There is little evidence to suggest unmet demand for bowls at the present time, or that current demand in the Borough for bowls could sustain a higher level of green provision. New housing development will undoubtedly increase demand for access to and use of such facilities. New provision should be well related in geographical terms to the population it is intended to serve, and might be provided in conjunction with other sports facilities intended to serve a similar catchment population. Provision should be well related to public transport routes, footpaths and cycleways.

6.3.4 Tennis/MUGA's

Existing public tennis courts are characterised by a lack of use over much of the year, and the provision of outdoor community tennis courts should wherever possible be provided on a 'Multi-Use Games Area' (MUGA) basis, to foster their use also for alternative activities especially in the winter months. Whilst there is not felt to be a need for additional dedicated outdoor tennis facilities an increase in the number of MUGAs would be desirable which could be achieved partly through the conversion of some existing courts to enable them to be used for a variety of activities.

New housing will, however, probably generate demand for additional facilities.

New provision should be well related in geographical terms to the population it is intended to serve, and might be provided in conjunction with other sports facilities intended to serve a similar catchment population. Wherever possible, new provision should be designed and laid out so as to provide the potential for shared use, and it should be well related to public transport routes, footpaths and cycleways.

The most suitable locations are likely to be areas that are also the focus for other sports and recreational activity.

6.4 Community Halls

6.4.1 Quantity

Community Halls and meeting places are seen as important facilities, by young people as well as adults, able to provide a focal point for club activities and social interaction, and to host a range of recreational activities if well conceived and designed.

Much of the western part of the Borough is not within easy reach of a dedicated community hall managed by the Borough Council. Much of the east of the Borough including large parts of Southchurch and Thorpe wards are also poorly served.

6.4.2 Quality

Venues such as church and school halls, and private functions rooms have not been recorded, but these will clearly also perform a very useful role in meeting the needs of local people and groups for general indoor space. As a consequence the quality of facilities meeting this basic community need will vary greatly in terms of size, age, and specification.

6.5 Sports Halls and Swimming Pools

6.5.1 Quantity

The local consultation process to date has not identified any significant concerns regarding the overall lack of such facilities. No part of the Borough lies more than 20 minutes drive from the nearest sports halls or swimming pool. Even a reduced drive time would still probably leave no part of the Borough more than 10 minutes by car from a sports hall or swimming pool. Clearly access will not be so easy for those who do not have a car, and have to rely on trips by foot or bike; although even here it is only for swimming pools that major gaps in 'coverage' exist in terms of large parts of Eastwood, St. Laurence, Prittlewell and West Leigh wards.

6.6 Walking and Cycling

Consultations have highlighted the importance attached by local people to good quality links by footpath and bike to parks, open spaces and other recreation facilities. Such routes if well-conceived and incorporated sensitively within attractive settings can also provide important opportunities for recreation in their own right. The densely populated nature of the Borough allied to its compact geographical size offers great potential for encouraging much more cycling and walking, both as a means of getting from "A to B", as well as enjoyable recreation in its own right. Footpaths and cyclepaths along the seafront and promenade are good examples in this regard.

Many of the existing and proposed cycle routes run close to some of the Borough's most significant parks and open spaces. It is important that the potential for running local spurs off the main network into parks and other recreation facilities is considered fully in any future review and refinement of the Local Transport Plan.

6.7 Allotments

Allotments are well distributed throughout the Borough, with the exception of the central area where there is a shortage of opportunities for public space in general. Occupancy rates vary from site to site, but on average only half of the available plots are used. The Borough Council does not have a standard to guide the provision of allotments and it would be appropriate to develop one, but only after a detailed supply and demand study.

6.8 Green Corridors and Natural Greenspace

It is important that new open space and recreation provision within the Borough should wherever appropriate help to improve the natural environment, as all contributions no matter how small can help sustain overall ecological richness and biodiversity.

6.9 Standards

All new residents will place additional demands on facilities, and the collective impact in this respect of major housing allocations (as proposed in Draft RPG14 – 6,000 additional dwellings between 2001 and 2021) will be very significant. Further provision to meet the needs of this additional population should therefore be made, and a number of standards are proposed for a range of sports and recreation facilities to be applied to new housing development, as well as to guide the improvement of the facility base for the existing population.

7. Some draft standards

7.1 Standards

The development of local standards and other appropriate guidance is essential to providing and maintaining good quality recreational facilities to meet the needs of both existing and new residents. With regard to the latter, the Borough will experience major housing development generating substantial additional demand for recreational opportunities of all kinds.

Regional Planning Guidance currently allocates an additional 6000 dwellings to the Borough to be built between 2001-2021. This will have major implications for open space and recreational facilities within the Borough in two general ways:

- Extra residents within the Borough will place additional demands upon all types of recreation opportunity and open space.
- It will place additional pressure on the Borough Council to ensure that valued open space is not sacrificed unnecessarily in order to meet the demand for new housing.

The additional 6,000 dwellings required in Southend by the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy between 2001 and 2021, together with an average household size of 2.2 persons as per the 2001 Census, will generate up to an additional 13,200 people living in the Borough over this period. Of the total number of houses 1650 are envisaged to be provided in the Town centre, and 1400 in Shoeburyness.

7.1.1 The main considerations

Before defining the standards themselves it is important to emphasise the key factors and issues influencing their content.

At the national level government planning policy makes clear that local authority standards covering the provision of all forms of sports and recreation facility should as a minimum be able to satisfy or to help answer these questions:

- How much is needed?
- What quality should it be?
- How easy should provision be to reach and use for those for whom it is designed?

It is also clearly essential for adopted standards to embrace:

- '*Best Value*' criteria including the requirement to consult with local communities

- the legal responsibilities placed on outdoor playing space providers for the safety of those using their playing spaces
- specific mandatory standards
- relevant local and national policies, strategies and advice
- robustness in terms of standing up to interrogation at a planning inquiry.

In addition it is felt that standards and accompanying supplementary planning guidance should be:

- **Comprehensive, but also flexible and simple-to-understand.** If it is to be effective, guidance should be clear and unambiguous and provide practical solutions to meet most circumstances. Equally, it should cater for circumstances where alternative solutions are desirable or necessary as a result of testing local opinion; or else when unforeseen opportunities arise.
- **Clear about costs, including those for planning and design, installation, and longer-term maintenance.** Developers should be clear about what is expected of them. The Council and other agencies should be clear on how they can apply the guidance. Local people should understand at what level to set their expectations. Providing unambiguous guidance on cost will allow developers to make sufficient financial provision at an early stage, and means that through quick payment of the appropriate contribution they need not become entangled in detailed issues of consultation and design.
- **Applicable to all sizes of housing development.** Although only larger housing developments are likely to justify new facilities in their own right, most new housing will increase demand for open space and recreation opportunities and therefore all house developers should contribute financially to such provision from the single infill plot, to large estates – exceptions will be few and far between.
- **Sensitive to the needs of different age groups.** Some parts of Southend will have more or less young people than the average, and guidance must be sensitive to this local demographic diversity.
- **Sensitive to safety and nuisance concerns.** Some facilities such as playgrounds can be ‘noisy neighbours’ and guidance should take into account potential concern of local residents. It should also reflect the need to ensure reasonable security and safety for users and protection from misuse and vandalism.

As mentioned, not all housing development will justify additional recreation facilities in their own right. However, all new residents will place additional

demands on facilities, and the collective impact in this respect of major housing allocations will be very significant. Because, each of the following standards have a 'per capita' element it will be possible for individual contributions for each new dwelling to be calculated, assuming a reasonable estimate of occupancy rates is available. The Borough Council will need to determine whether or not certain types of dwelling should be exempt from contributions towards particular forms of provision. On the one hand it might be argued (for example) that housing development designed for elderly people should be exempt from contributions paying towards children's and youth provision. On the other hand, good quality children's provision might help to reduce the potential of nuisance caused by children playing/congregating in inappropriate venues, such as near to elderly accommodation. Further guidance in this regard should be provided by supplementary planning guidance developed by the Borough Council.

7.1.2 Parks

The following suggested standard is based on the existing framework that has been adopted in the Parks' Strategy, but it has been expanded to provide further guidance on the population threshold of provision, as well as expected content and quality.

The existing Local Plan uses the NPFA Six Acre standard as a basis for identifying 'space per capita' requirements for parks (amongst other recreation features) within the Borough. However, previous sections in this report demonstrate that 'accessibility' and 'quality' are probably more important than the overall amount of open space.

The spatial component of the standard is based on the recommendations of the Parks' Strategy, which has itself been the subject of consultation. The ratio of provision per population reflects and seeks to extend the existing pro rata level of provision within the Borough (as described in the previous section).

Unlike open space for formal sports there is no widely accepted way of quantifying both existing and future requirements for informal recreation space. However, consultation has shown that the Borough's parks and gardens are well used and loved, and ideally at least the same amount of additional space pro rata should always be offered through developer provision/contributions associated with new development. However, this will not be possible in a densely developed area like Southend, and the expectation should therefore be on developers to make adequate off-site provision or contributions in lieu consistent with the following standard.

Parks within the Borough should be provided on the following basis:

District Parks: 1 per 22,900 people and wherever possible within 1.2 km of its intended catchment population. The overall size should be no less than 20 hectares.

Local Parks: 1 per 8,900 people and wherever possible within 0.4 km of its

intended catchment population. The overall size should be of at least 10 hectares.

Neighbourhood Parks: 1 per 3,800 people and wherever possible within 0.4 km of its intended catchment population. The overall size should be of at least 2 hectares.

The following is the expected content of each kind of park.

District Parks: Landscaping with a variety of natural and semi natural features, including natural habitats and planted beds. Space for outdoor pitch and other sports provision as appropriate (see separate standards). Space for children's and youth play facilities (see separate standards). Car parking. Footpaths. Cycleways. Buildings for secured storage and for catering outlets. Due regard to external links by foot and bicycle, in particular. Events venue. A notable and defining architectural feature. Seating. Litter disposal points. Consideration of zoning between active and passive zones.

Local Parks: Landscaping with a variety of natural features, including natural habitats. Space for outdoor pitch and other sports provision as appropriate (see separate standards). Space for children's and youth play facilities (see separate standards). Car parking. Footpaths. Cycleways. Buildings for secured storage and/or catering outlets (if appropriate). Due regard to external links by foot and bicycle, in particular. Seating. Litter disposal points.

Neighbourhood Parks: Small scale planting and natural habitats. Local Provision for low key play facilities (for young, accompanied children). Due regard to external links by foot and bicycle, in particular. Seating. Litter disposal points.

The detailed specification will need to be agreed between the developer, local community and the Borough Council. However, it is expected that it will take into account the following:

- All appropriate UK and EU safety standards
- Appropriate guidance on design (such as from CABESpace, Institute of Leisure and Amenity Managers etc)
- Disabled access
- Quality of materials used
- Energy efficiency and conservation
- Good practice on landscaping, biodiversity and nature conservation

Cost: a) capital b) revenue, to be provided in Supplementary Planning Guidance.

New provision should be made within the catchment of the population it is intended to serve. For example, a new Neighbourhood Park justified by the population generated by new housing development should be developed within 0.4 km of any part of the new housing area, if possible. Clearly, the very densely developed nature of the Borough means that it will be difficult

to find space to provide for new parks of any significant size. In addition, many small developments will not justify the provision of new parks in their own right. However, their residents will make a demand on such facilities.

To meet the above circumstances one of two options might be pursued:

- It may be possible to procure provision of new park space outside the Borough boundary where it can be demonstrated that this is within convenient reach of the potential user catchment.
- Where it can be demonstrated that new provision would be impossible or inappropriate to achieve, developers of new housing should instead contribute to the improvement of existing or proposed parks elsewhere in the Borough. The level of this contribution should be based on the estimated population generated by each development. Under this arrangement developers of even small scale housing schemes would be able to contribute, as a contribution per household or person could easily be calculated.

In either of the above cases provision should wherever possible be within the catchment areas identified within the standards. Where this is not possible new provision or improvements to existing facilities should be made in locations and in a manner agreed with the Borough Council.

All sections and age groups within the community benefit from parks, if not through direct use than from the general amenity and environmental benefit. Accordingly only in exceptional circumstances should housing developers be exempted from making appropriate contributions.

7.1.3 Tennis courts/Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs)

The provision of outdoor community tennis courts should wherever possible be provided on a multi-court basis.

These MUGAs are distinct from other facilities such as:

- Synthetic Turf Pitches (being designed to meet the needs of hockey and football (in particular); and,
- 'Multi Use Play Areas' - informal hard surface play areas that will tend to be less formal in nature, and cater for casual 'free' access.

Given that these facilities can be used for a wide variety of activities, the size of the catchment population to support them can be surprisingly small. A population of 3,000 is suggested, which is likely to generate regular tennis activity, but also 5-a-side football as well as football training; there are many practical examples of even smaller catchments than this sustaining such facilities. A major contribution to the achievement of this level of provision could be through the conversion of facilities in parks and on school campuses as appropriate.

MUGAs of 1 tennis court size should be provided on the basis of 1 per 3,000 people. These could be provided in multiple units (of 3 or 4 courts) where the facilities may also be used for structured tennis and or significant football activity.

- New provision should be well related in geographical terms to the population it is intended to serve, and might be provided in conjunction with other sports facilities intended to serve a similar catchment population (see additional notes below).
- Wherever possible new provision should be designed and laid out so as to provide the potential for shared use.
- Provision should be well related to public transport routes, footpaths and cycleways.
- Provision should be made for floodlighting of an appropriate standard.

The detailed specification will need to be agreed between the developer, local community and the Borough Council. However, it is expected that it will take into account the following:

- All appropriate UK and EU safety standards
- Appropriate governing body standards for design
- Disabled access
- Quality of materials used
- Energy efficiency and conservation

The most suitable locations are likely to be areas that are also the focus for other sports and recreational activity, and these might include:

- Leisure centres.
- District or Local Parks
- Community hall complexes (such as of the type recommended in this document).
- School campuses that are subject to community use arrangements.
- Other sports complexes (such as sports grounds that cater for large numbers of teams where hard surface training areas would be advantageous).

Cost: a) capital b) revenue, to be provided in Supplementary Planning Guidance.

7.1. 4 Outdoor bowls

The existing level of provision within the Borough is about 1 green per 7,600. Although existing greens are well used within the bowling season, there is no evidence to suggest unmet demand. Accordingly, at least the same pro rata level of provision should always be offered through developer provision/contributions associated with new development.

Outdoor Bowling greens (6-rink size – 38.4 x 38.4 m) should be provided on the basis of 1 per 7,600 people.

- New provision should be well related in geographical terms to the population it is intended to serve, and might be provided in conjunction with other sports facilities intended to serve a similar catchment population.
- Provision should be well related to public transport routes, footpaths and cycleways.

The detailed specification should be agreed between the developer, local community and the Borough Council. However, it is expected that it will take into account the following:

- All appropriate UK and EU safety standards
- Appropriate governing body standards for design
- Disabled access
- Quality of materials used
- Energy efficiency and conservation

Cost: a) capital b) revenue, to be provided in Supplementary Planning Guidance.

7.1.5 Outdoor youth provision

This provision is dealt with in the companion volume dealing with pitch sports.

7.1.6 Outdoor children's play

Perhaps more than any of the other standards recommended, the application of the following needs to be made on a flexible basis. Individual circumstances may dictate that it will be necessary or desirable for new provision to be at variance with this guidance. For example, in respect of new residential development where it may often be appropriate to seek associated provision for off-site facilities, or else a contribution in lieu to be used in improving existing facilities.

In those parts of the Borough where it proves difficult to secure provision within a recommended catchment distance, compensation may be in the form of improving existing facilities, and improved access (via safe paths, cycleways etc); both these should in any event be general aims for all forms of children's play provision. Where suitable venues are in very limited supply, it may be necessary for a single site to cater for the needs of a very wide age range. Where this is the case very close attention will need to be paid to the design/zoning of facilities, to ensure that the activities of different age groups do not come into conflict.

Casual Play Area (for young, accompanied children)

1 per 1000 people

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Location | Five minutes walking time from home – straight line distance 240m |
| Target age group | Accompanied four to six-year-olds. |
| Purpose | Low-key games, imaginative/social play, French cricket or play with small toys. |
| Equipment/Landscaping | Equipment not necessary but if included small-scale and appropriate for younger children; seating and dog fencing. Landscaping to maximise play value. |
| Area | Activity zone minimum 100sq m and (to avoid disturbance to neighbours) buffer zone of at least 5 m from the nearest residential property. Buffer zone landscaping to include child-friendly planting (eg natural scent, colour and texture). |
| Cost | a) capital b) revenue, to be provided in Supplementary Planning Guidance. |

Junior Equipped Play Area (for accompanied and unaccompanied older children)

1 per 3000 people

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Location | 7 minutes walking time from home – straight line distance 300m. |
| Target age group | Accompanied five to eight year-olds and unaccompanied eight to eleven-year-olds. Consideration should also be given to accompanied younger children (segregated area). |
| Purpose | A Junior Play Area should cater for a large range of play activity, including an area for informal ball games. |
| Equipment/Landscaping | In the 5-8 years area at least five types of play equipment to include challenges in balancing, rocking, climbing or agility, sliding and social play. In the Under 8s area equipment included should be small-scale and appropriate for younger children. Should also have seating for accompanying adults and be fenced to exclude dogs. Landscaping to maximise play value. |
| Area | Activity zone minimum of 500 sq m. Buffer zone 25 m between the edge of the activity zone and residential property. The buffer zone should include footpaths and planted areas. Buffer zone landscaping to include child-friendly planting (eg natural scent, colour and texture). |
| Cost | a) capital b) revenue, to be provided in Supplementary Planning Guidance. |
| Consultation | Refurbishment or new provision to be designed through consultation with local children, parents, and residents. |

The detailed specification will need to be agreed between the developer, local

community and the Borough Council. However, it is expected that it will take into account the following:

- Provision to be well related to footpaths and cycleways
- All appropriate UK and EU safety standards
- Appropriate and recognised guidance on design
- Disabled access (including the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act)
- Quality of materials used

7.1.7 Allotments

The existing Borough Local Plan does not currently include a standard specifically dealing with the supply of allotment space. This report has highlighted the potential health, social and recreational benefits (amongst others) in promoting the supply and use of allotments.

In the absence of a more detailed study of local supply and demand for allotments, it would be wrong to suggest here what should be the appropriate level of local provision.

Before committing to a new standard the extent to which improvements to existing allotments might help to increase uptake should be assessed. An interim 'benchmark design' standard (allied to better marketing and publicity) might seek to ensure that all existing allotments benefit from:

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

7.1.8 Community halls/meeting places.

The following reflects the importance of good quality local community halls

serving as a focal point for a variety of recreation and other activities. This report identified the current ratio of provision of dedicated community halls as being 1:22,894 people, but argued that this is a relatively poor ratio compared with other areas. It should be an aspiration to achieve a much better level of provision when meeting the needs of new residential development in the future.

At least 1 Neighbourhood Community Centre to be provided for every 11,000 people, and within 15 minutes walking of any part of the catchment population. The planning and design of these facilities should take into account the following considerations.

Quality Specification: The detailed specification will need to be agreed between the developer, local community and the Borough Council. However, it is expected that it will embrace:

- Facilities to include at least 1 hall suited to a range of activities including meetings, functions, dances, and appropriate indoor sports such as table tennis and carpet bowls; a smaller meeting room; a kitchen; and, storage space; dedicated provision for young people (perhaps in the form of a youth club venue/coffee bar/drop in centre)
- Local residents views on design
- Energy efficiency and conservation
- Disabled access
- Quality of materials used
- Parking and access by foot, bike and car
- All relevant legislation affecting public buildings of this kind

Cost: a) capital b) revenue, to be provided in Supplementary Planning Guidance.

In some circumstances facilities could be provided on a shared use basis. It may sometimes also be possible to improve existing facilities and their management to satisfy the standard rather than starting from scratch. For example it may be more cost effective to co-operate with an existing club or organization to bring an existing voluntary facility up to the suggested standard (and enter into a formal agreement providing for community use) rather than build an entirely new facility.

There is much 'good practice' guidance on the planning and design of such facilities (such as that provided by ACRE, Sport England, the Arts Council etc) and this should be drawn upon as appropriate.

7.1.9 Sports halls and swimming pools

The analysis in this report suggests that the Borough is already well served with community sports halls and swimming pools.

The scale of possible new development within the Borough whilst not in itself

justifying any additional provision in its own right, will undoubtedly generate significant additional demand for such facilities. The following is suggested as an appropriate standard for the provision of sports halls and swimming pools individually. The per capita component is based on existing levels of provision. The distance catchment is based on a 10 cycle time given that the majority of trips to sports halls and swimming pools taking less than 10 minutes (above this time there is a significant falling off in demand); and the desire to encourage more sustainable trips.

At least 1 x 4-court sports hall for every 40,000 persons, and at least 1 x 25 metre indoor pool for every 53,400 persons within 10 minutes cycling of any part of the catchment population. The planning and design of these facilities should take into account the following considerations.

Quality Specification: The detailed specification will need to be agreed between the developer, local community and the Borough Council. However, it is expected that it will embrace:

- Facilities: a) swimming pools (25 metre x 6 lane plus toddler pool) – changing, parent and toddler zone, storage, refreshment area/café/social space. b) sports halls – 4-court main hall, at least one smaller activity room, changing, storage, refreshment areas/café/social space
- Energy efficiency and conservation
- Disabled access
- Quality of materials used
- Parking and access by foot, bike and car
- All relevant legislation affecting public buildings of this kind
- Provision should be well related to public transport routes, footpaths and cycleways.

In some circumstances facilities could best be provided on a shared use basis (such as on school sites). It may sometimes also be appropriate to improve and/or enlarge existing facilities and their management to satisfy the suggested standards rather than starting from scratch. For example, there may be existing sports hall facilities on school sites that could be improved in return for formal community use agreements.

There is much 'good practice' guidance on the planning and design of such facilities (such as that provided by Sport England) and this should be drawn upon as appropriate.

If properly designed, sports halls might also serve as a community hall venue recommended earlier, where catchments overlap significantly.

Cost: a) capital b) revenue, to be provided in Supplementary Planning Guidance.

7.2 Application of draft standards

The required additional provision to meet the needs of planned new development has been calculated simply by applying an occupancy rate (2.2) to the number of planned new houses (6000), and by then dividing the resultant additional population (13,200) by the per capita component of each of the recommended standards. Rarely will this result in neat 'integers' in terms of units required, and the developer should be expected to contribute to the residue on a pro rata basis.

The application of standards to the existing population may also highlight the importance of improving the facility base to meet the needs of current residents.

7.2.1 Parks

For new development/residents

- 6.94 ha of additional Neighbourhood Parks
- 14.83 ha of additional Local Parks
- 11.52 ha of additional District Parks.

Wherever possible new provision should be situated close to the catchment development. However, wherever this is not possible 'off site' new provision, or else improvements to existing facilities should be made in agreement with the Borough Council. Within the densely developed central part of the Borough it is very unlikely that enough land will be available to achieve very close proximity of park space to the catchment population (the projected additional housing for the Town Centre could generate around 3,600 people.)

The projected population resulting from new development will not justify an additional District Park. Instead developers should be expected to make a pro rata contribution in lieu towards the improvement of existing District Parks in agreement with the Borough Council

For existing development/residents

There are several parts of the Borough not within easy walking distance of any kind of park, such as in St. Lukes, Prittlewell, St. Laurence, and Blenheim wards. Equally, although several of the larger parks within the Borough are fine examples of their kind, there is room for improvement in terms of general quality of the environment of smaller parks especially when compared against the recommended standards. For many parks, what is provided is often little more than the general infrastructure. Supporting equipment, buildings and other facilities (as identified in the standards) may not exist, or may be of low quality. Equally, safe links by foot and bike to parks require improvement.

A programme of improvements consistent with recommended standards could form part of the emerging Open Space Strategy, and linkages to and between

green spaces should be given greater attention in future reviews of the Local Transport Plan.

7.2.2 MUGAs

For new development/residents

- 4.4 additional MUGAs. The limited space required for these facilities should allow them to be provided in close proximity to the intended catchment population, perhaps in association with existing leisure centres, parks or other community facilities where space can be provided.

For existing development/residents

Based on the recommended standard there is a need for an additional 49 (1 court) MUGAs to service the existing local population (beyond the existing 4 MUGAs.) Progress towards this goal could be achieved at least in part by the conversion of existing hard surface tennis courts in parks and school sites (subject to community use), so that they can be used for a variety of sports other than tennis.

The relatively small space recommended by the standards means that it should be possible to achieve provision even in densely developed areas.

7.2.3 Bowls

For new development/residents

- 1.73 additional bowling greens (outdoor)

The limited space required for these facilities should allow them to be provided in close proximity to the intended catchment population, perhaps in association with existing leisure centres, parks or other community facilities where space can be provided.

7.2.4 Outdoor youth provision

- See companion volume

7.2.5 Outdoor children's play

For new development/residents

- 13.2 Casual Play Areas
- 4.4 Junior Equipped Play Areas

Perhaps more than any other recreation facility it is very important to provide play facilities within easy walking distance. The relatively small space recommended by the standards means that it should be possible to achieve

provision even in densely developed areas. It is recognised that the standards may need to be applied in a flexible way to allow this to happen. Although there is a requirement for 'buffer space' around the activity areas, there is no reason why this cannot serve also as general recreational space and local or neighbourhood parks may therefore often be the best location for new facilities.

For existing development/residents

The application of the standards suggests that there is generally a lack of good accessibility to equipped play areas for younger children throughout the Borough. Parts of Victoria, Prittlewell, Leigh, Belfairs, Eastwood, Southchurch, Thorpe, and Shoeburyness are all poorly served with outdoor, equipped children's play facilities. In those parts of the Borough where it proves difficult to secure adequate provision, compensation may be in the form of better quality and provision, and improved access (via safe paths, cycleways etc); both these should in any event be general aims for all forms of children's play provision. Where suitable venues are in very limited supply, it may be necessary for a single site to cater for the needs of a diverse age range.

The existing Park's Strategy has highlighted individual sites where improvements to facilities are desirable.

7.2.6 Community halls/meeting places

For new development/residents

- 1.2 community centres

The estimated additional population resulting from new housing would (based on the recommended standard) justify only 1 complete unit. Given that new housing will be distributed throughout the Borough care will be required in ensuring that the location for a new community hall is convenient for as many new residents as possible, and ideally within 15 minutes walking time.

An alternative to new provision might be the improvement/enlargement of existing halls (such as those of voluntary organisations) to allow them to serve a wider community function.

For existing development/residents

Based on the recommended standard, there is a need for an additional 6 community halls to meet the needs of existing residents. The greatest deficiencies are in much of the western half of the Borough, as well as large parts of the Southchurch and Thorpe wards in the east. It will only prove possible to rectify these deficiencies over a long period. However, there may be scope for the improvement/enlargement of existing halls such as those of voluntary organisations to allow them to serve a wider community function.

7.2.7 Sports halls and (covered swimming pools)

For new development/residents

- 0.33 sports halls
- 0.24 swimming pools

The projected population resulting from new development will not justify either an additional sports hall or swimming pool. Instead developers should be expected to contribute towards the improvement of existing facilities as agreed with the Borough Council

For existing development/residents

The existing population is already well served with good quality and accessible sports halls and swimming pools.