

Amenity green space

Definition

- 7.1 This type of open space is most commonly found in housing areas. It includes informal recreation spaces and greenspaces in and around housing, with a primary purpose of providing opportunities for informal activities close to home or work or enhancing the appearance of residential or other areas.

Figure 7.1 – Brigstock amenity greenspace – off High Street, nr Mill Lane



Strategic context and consultation

- 7.2 Consultation undertaken as part of the study highlighted the following key issues:
- residents attending drop in sessions in Rushden indicated that amenity greenspaces are particularly important to them, and stating that in addition to protecting existing green spaces, all new housing developments should contain amenity green space. There were contrasting views from residents in Oundle, where the perception was that small amenity green spaces within new housing estates have little value, encouraging delinquency and anti social behaviour within the estate.
 - 84% of respondents rated amenity green space as important, however only 13% of people use amenity green space on a daily basis and 43% of people indicated that they don't use amenity greenspaces. The aesthetic and landscaping benefits of amenity green space are clearly valued by residents in addition to the informal recreation function. This was echoed further with only 5% of respondents indicating that amenity green space is the type of open space they most frequently use.
 - the importance of ensuring amenity green space sites are appropriately located was also reinforced – they frequently serve as an area for children to

meet and play within housing estates and it is therefore important to ensure that these are not situated adjacent to main roads or other dangerous areas.

Current position

- 7.3 Amenity green space sites are located across East Northamptonshire, within small and large settlements alike, although sizes of amenity green space range significantly. Amenity green spaces are particularly common within the built up areas of East Northamptonshire, breaking up the landscape and urban texture.
- 7.4 It is important to recognise the secondary functions of amenity greenspace, specifically the opportunities for informal recreation and the visual amenities provided by amenity greenspace.

Setting provision standards

- 7.5 In setting local standards for Amenity Greenspace there is a need to take into account any national or local standards, current provision, other Local Authority standards for appropriate comparison, site assessments and consultation on local needs. Full justifications for the local standards are provided within Appendix K, L and M.

Quantity

- 7.6 The audit of existing amenity green space suggests that there is 58.56 hectares in total in East Northamptonshire. This excludes small incidental open spaces and space left over after planning. The current provision of amenity green space per 1,000 population therefore equates to 0.72 ha.
- 7.7 The only national standard for amenity green space provided is by the rethinking Open Space Report – an average of all local authority applicable standards, which is 2 ha per 1,000 population.
- 7.8 Other national standards make reference to amenity green space, including National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) which states 2 acres (0.8 ha) per 1,000 population for ‘playing spaces’, some local authorities in the past have added an extra 1acre (0.41ha) per 1,000 population intended for residential areas.
- 7.9 40% respondents to the household survey suggest that the provision of amenity greenspace was about right, with a further 17% indicating that there is nearly enough. Despite this, 28% of respondents suggested that there was not enough provision.

<p style="text-align: center;">RECOMMENDED LOCAL STANDARD</p> <p style="text-align: center;">0.8 ha per 1,000 population</p>
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- 7.10 The three main concerns raised centred around housing developments, the lack of formal village greens and the lack of space for children to play informally. The opinions of people across East Northamptonshire were generally consistent, although numbers of residents suggesting that provision of amenity green space in the South Urban Area and Thrapston was slightly above average.
- 7.11 There were mixed opinions from residents at the drop in sessions. Residents in Rushden highlighted the importance of providing greenspaces in new housing developments in addition to the need to protect existing greenspaces. This contrasted slightly with opinions expressed by a number of attendees at the drop in session in Oundle, who indicated that small amenity green spaces within new

housing estates have little value and encourage delinquency and anti social behaviour. The majority of reasons relating to the perception of insufficient amenity green spaces are focused on qualitative elements as opposed to quantitative issues.

- 7.12 This may be more of a problem relating to a lack of provision of facilities for young people. A general overview from the drop-in sessions was the importance of preserving a village atmosphere within villages, and ensuring that residents do not expect the same quantity of open space as within more urban areas. There can also be a feeling of deficiency due to the quality of existing provision and the lack of any sizeable open space that provides some casual functional usage.
- 7.13 Although there are varying perspectives on the provision of amenity green space, consultation indicates that overall, levels of provision are about right. In order to take into account the varying levels of provision across the district, a minimum standard of 0.80 has been recommended. This level of provision maintains the current provision in Thrapston and reflects the importance of the existing provision in the rural areas while also recognising the deficiencies highlighted through consultation in the south urban area. The lower standard means that provision is over the minimum standard in Oundle, reflecting local viewpoints that amenity green space was not valued as strongly as other typologies in this area. This may offer the opportunity to address shortfalls in other areas.

Quality

- 7.14 There is no national or local quality standard for amenity green space although there are specifications for amenity green space which ensure that sites are maintained to meet a minimum standard.
- 7.15 Site assessments reflect this focus, with over 60% of amenity green spaces considered to be good or very good in terms of cleanliness and maintenance. Security and safety was primarily considered to be average. On the whole, ancillary facilities were considered to be inappropriate for this type of open space.
- 7.16 Site visits indicate that the quality of amenity green space across East Northamptonshire is varying, with scores from 92% (Navisford Road Amenity Green Space Two, South Urban- Site ID 36) to 20% (Keswick Drive AGS in Thrapston – Site ID 307) achieved.
- 7.17 Although consultations highlight that on the whole the quality of amenity green space sites on the whole was considered to be average, perhaps reflecting the varying quality of sites, a number of site-specific issues were highlighted including antisocial behaviour, particularly on secluded open space sites. The visual impact of open space sites was highlighted and there was recognition that sites improve and soften the landscape of the area in which they are located.
- 7.18 Site visits confirmed that many amenity green space sites within East Northamptonshire offer amenity benefits and a sense of place. Additionally, many were perceived to offer landscape benefits.
- 7.19 Respondents to the household questionnaire indicated that the highest rated aspirations for amenity greenspaces are clean and litter free, dog free, with footpaths and

QUALITY VISION

“A clean and well-maintained dog fouling free amenity greenspace site with well-kept grass, which is easily accessible with clearly marked footpaths. In addition to the provision of flowers, trees and shrubs, sites should contain appropriate ancillary accommodation (litter and dog bins) and strategic landscaping ensuring the site provides not just an amenity benefit, but wider benefits of enhancing the environment around it.”

easy access to the site. There are perceived to be a few problems with litter on existing open spaces of this type.

- 7.20 A suggested Quality Vision standard for amenity greenspace should therefore include elements of these aspirations to meet the needs of the public. It is recommended that amenity greenspace provides an important community function, although some sites are misused at the present time. The standard incorporates public aspirations for a clean space which enhances the landscape, in addition to suggesting sufficient facilities to ensure the functionality of the open space site. Again due to the rural nature of the area, the consultations indicated that management of amenity greenspaces by the local community should be encouraged wherever possible.
- 7.21 This recommended local standard provides the vision for any new provision and also a benchmark for existing amenity greenspace to achieve in terms of enhancement.
- 7.22 Appendix N highlights the links between the quality vision and the site assessments that have been undertaken for amenity greenspace, converting the key factors of the vision into an expected score against the site assessment matrix used and consequently providing a minimum quality benchmark. It is important to set a benchmark indicator against which the comparative quality of natural and semi natural open spaces within East Northamptonshire can be assessed. This standard can also serve to guide improvement programmes by striving to attain the quality threshold rating at each site.
- 7.23 The key points that link the quality vision and site assessments for amenity green spaces are the provision of a clean, well maintained litter free site which enhances the appearance of the local environment, well kept grass with strategic landscaping, flowers trees and shrubs and appropriate ancillary accommodation including litter and dog bins.
- 7.24 The quality site assessments are divided into sub categories and an expected score is assigned against each (shown in brackets). The full methodology is explained in appendix N:
- cleanliness and maintenance (5)
 - safety and security (3)
 - vegetation (4)
 - ancillary accommodation (3)
- 7.25 This provides a quality vision percentage of 76% which is intended as an aspirational benchmark for the amenity green space sites in East Northamptonshire.

Accessibility

- 7.26 With regards to accessibility there are no definitive national or local standards. The amenity greenspaces in East Northamptonshire have been assessed on their accessibility. Some of the factors assessed however will be inappropriate. This will vary according to the size of the site and whether the primary purpose of the site is usage or visual amenity. Where elements of the assessment are not applicable, the site is still able to achieve a 100% score, based on the factors rated.

7.27 A large number of sites were rated highly in terms of access, although the average score was only 54%. The highest scoring site was:

- Main street green space, Great Addington (site ID 919) – 86.7%

7.28 There were six sites in total scoring 80%:

- Oakpits Way AGS in South Rushden
- Washbrook Road AGS in Rushden
- School lane green space in Higham Ferrers
- St James close greenspace in Rushden
- Off Wentworth Drive greenspace in Oundle
- Cherry Walk green space 1 in Raunds

7.29 Of those respondents to the household survey who most frequently use amenity green space, levels of satisfaction were high for accessibility by walking and visibility of site entrance. On the whole, the majority of people felt that access by public transport and cycle-ways, opening time and signage were not applicable to this type of open space.

**RECOMMENDED
LOCAL
STANDARD**

**5 min walk time
(240m)**

7.30 Almost all respondents expect to be within walking distance of amenity green space sites and the 75% threshold level, the mode and analysis of existing behaviour all pointed towards a 5 minute travel time for amenity green space.

7.31 Due to the local nature of this type of open space and the reflections of the current users and consultation, a 5 minute walking distance is considered an appropriate catchment threshold.

7.32 A straight line distance, of 240m has been used rather than the pedestrian distance of 400m. This is based on PMP's average walking distances and uses a factoring reduction of 40% to account for the fact that people do not walk in a straight line to access their open space facilities. This 40% factoring is based on the National Playing Fields Association Six Acre Standard (See Table 3, page 25 of NPFA Six Acre Standard), which has been worked out from a trial of 4 – 14 year olds and the distance they travelled.

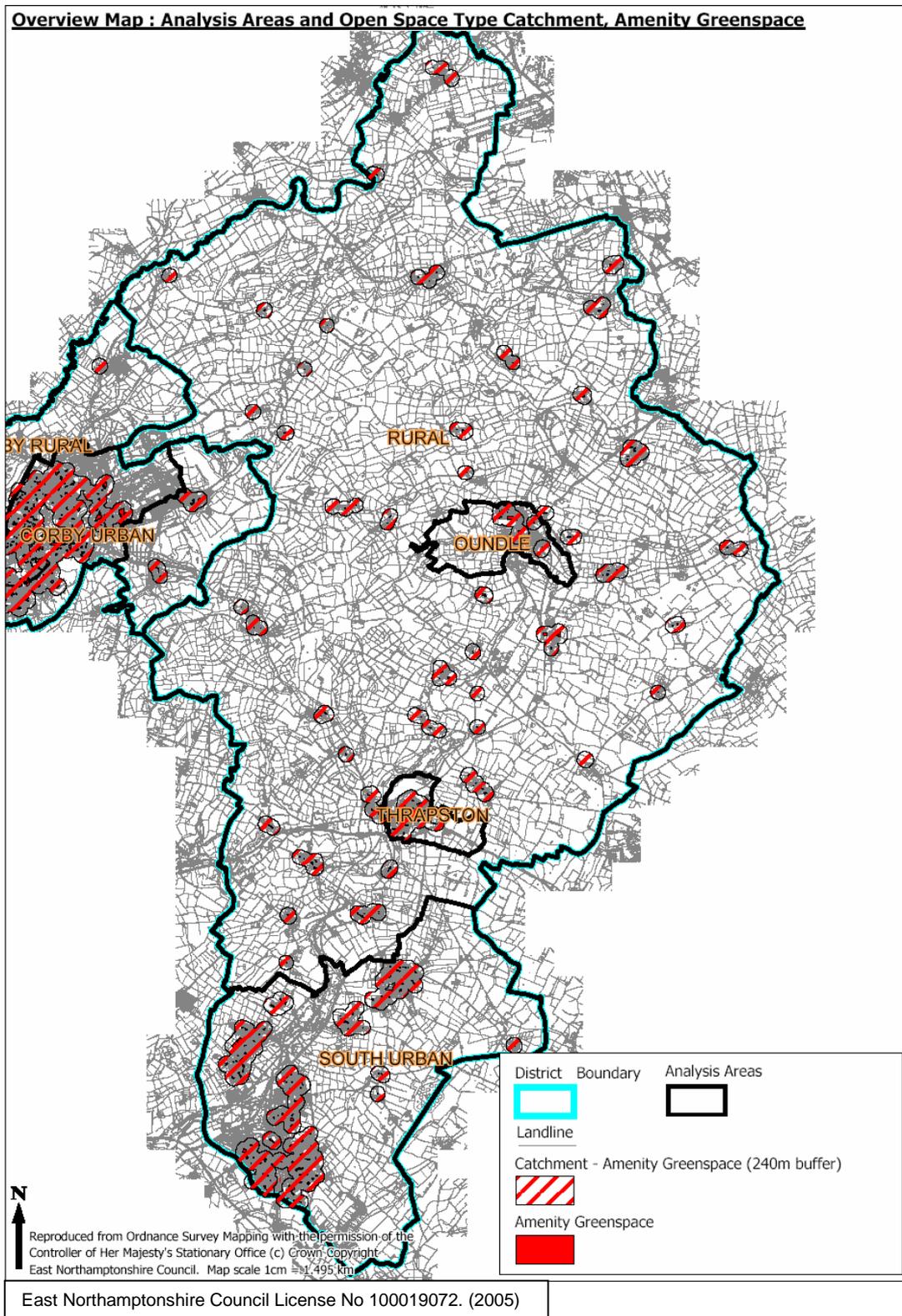
Applying provision standards – identifying geographical areas

7.33 In order to identify geographical areas of importance and those areas with required local needs we apply both the quantity and accessibility standards together. The quantity standards enable the identification of areas that do not meet the minimum provision standards while the accessibility standards will help to determine where those deficiencies are of high importance.

7.34 Map 7.1 overleaf highlights that there is a good spatial distribution of amenity green space with the majority of urban areas and smaller settlements in the rural areas provided for. Despite this, there are several areas currently outside of the recommended catchment area. The application of the quantitative standard in

conjunction with the accessibility standard enables us to understand where these deficiencies are important.

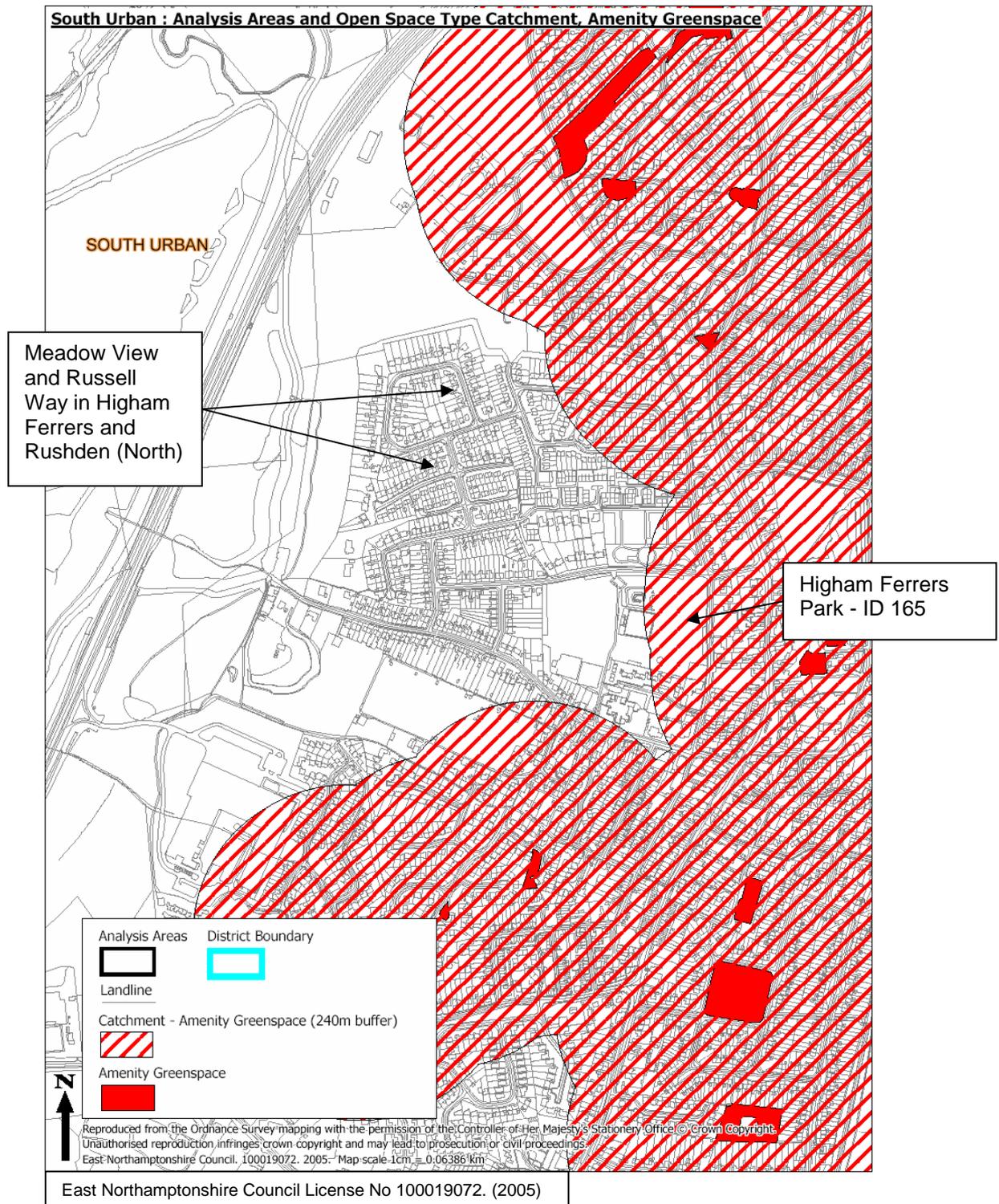
Map 7.1 – Quantity and accessibility standards applied to amenity greenspace



SECTION 7 – AMENITY GREEN SPACE

7.35 Provision in the South Urban area is currently significantly below the minimum standard in quantitative terms. Although the majority of residents are within the recommended accessibility catchment for amenity green space, there are some residents who are not able to access this space at present. These areas are highlighted in maps 7.2 below and 7.3 overleaf.

Maps 7.2 – Area lying outside the catchment in South Urban Analysis Area



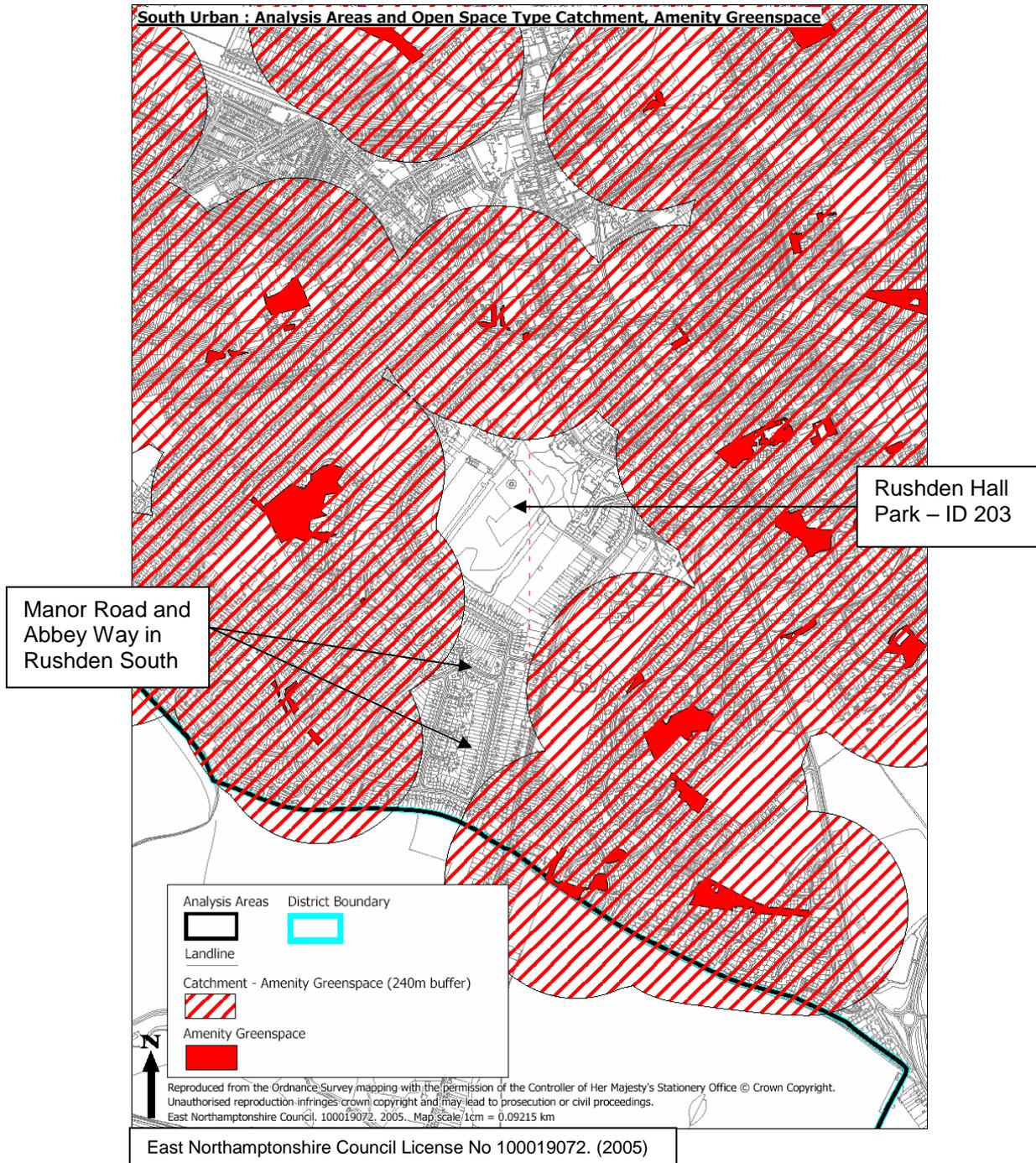
Maps 7.3 – Area lying outside the catchment in South Urban Analysis Area



- 7.36 The Meadow View and Russell Way area in Higham Ferrers and Rushden is a densely populated area, with few opportunities to provide new amenity green space sites. The buffer between the houses and the A45 provides some natural area, although the accessibility of this is limited. Although there is no accessible amenity green space within this area, residents have access to Higham Ferrers Park (Site ID 165), which provides a number of formal facilities including outdoor sports and a children's play area in addition to informal play areas. This therefore compensates for the deficiencies of amenity green space.
- 7.37 The Rushmere Way and Oak Street locality is a less dense area which sits within a triangle of housing and natural areas. There are a number of small pockets of accessibility deficiencies, however similar to above, there are a number of nearby sites performing a dual role and providing amenity areas. These sites include Spencer Park (Site ID 232) (classified as outdoor sports facilities but with a significant amenity value) and a large expanse of natural area off Prospect Avenue (Site ID 242). Although residents are deficient in amenity green space, other sites fulfil this amenity value to an extent.
- 7.38 Similarly, the western fringe of Rushden West (Pytchley Road area.) exhibits areas of deficiency for amenity greenspace. There is little other provision of open spaces within this area, indicating that new provision may be required.

Map 7.4 overleaf illustrates the southern area of Rushden. Although there are deficiencies of amenity green space provision, this area lies within the catchment of Rushden Hall Park, one of the highest quality and most valued parks and gardens within East Northamptonshire. This park therefore provides an amenity function for this area.

Map 7.4 – Area lying outside the recommended accessibility catchment South Rushden



SECTION 7 – AMENITY GREEN SPACE

- 7.40 Amenity green space provision in Oundle exceeds the minimum standard. The application of the accessibility catchment reflects this, with the majority of residents within the suggested catchment. The North Eastern area is the only populated area outside the catchment, specifically Bellamy Road, St. Peters Road and Springfield Road. This area is also outside of the appropriate catchment facility for parks and gardens indicating that there is an overall lack of amenity space, with the nearest site being Glaphorn Green AGS (Site ID 132). There are a number of sports facilities fulfilling this function to an extent (Site ID 116, 118, 119) but there remains a deficiency in this area.
- 7.41 Provision in Thrapston is equal to the minimum standard set. This is reflected by the accessibility catchments, which indicate that all residents are within the required catchment. A similar situation is evident in the rural area, where residents of almost all settlements are able to access amenity green space and provision is significantly above the minimum levels. Not all residents in Kings Cliffe have access to amenity green space sites. This area is also one of the more significant areas deficient in provision of parks and gardens. Despite this, there are two pocket parks within Kings Cliffe which serve residents, providing both a park and garden and amenity green space function.

Quality Benchmarking

- 7.42 The application of the quality benchmarking standard (set at a score of 76% amenity green space) provides an indication of the desired level of quality at each site and enables the comparison of sites across the authority. As described in N, it highlights sites that currently meet the visionary standard, and those sites falling significantly below and consequently suggests where improvement is required. A full list of site scores can be found in appendix N. The highest and lowest scoring sites are highlighted in figure 7.2 below.

Figure 7.2 sites above and below the benchmark quality indicator

V good	90% to 100%		Navisford Close AGS 2 – Thrapston (Site ID 36) – 92%
Good	70% to 90%		Townsend Court Green Area – Upper Benefield (Site ID 572) – 84% Hill House Garden, Stanwick (Site ID 695) – 82% Cherry Walk Greenspace 2, Raunds (Site ID 62) 82% Lochs Green, Yarwell (Site ID 532) 80%
Average	50% to 70%	↑	Shelley Drive Greenspace, Higham Ferrers (Site ID 183)– 60% Alexander Place Greenspace, Irthlingborough (Site ID 334) – 52.5%
Poor	30% to 50%		Village Hall Green Space in Hemington (Site ID 354) – 42%



76%

V poor	Below 30%		Keswick Drive AGS, East of Rushden (Site ID 307) – 20%
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Value assessment – identifying specific sites

- 7.43 As previously highlighted, many amenity green space sites provide visual and landscape benefits in addition to space for informal recreation. Less importance should therefore be placed on the level of use for this typology. Quality is however particularly important if a space is to provide visual benefits.
- 7.44 There are 290 amenity green space sites across East Northamptonshire with the majority located in the rural areas and south urban, the two geographically largest analysis areas. There are three sites that have been highlighted as good practice sites, scoring highly on both quality and accessibility – these sites should be protected:
- Navisford Close Amenity Greenspace (2) in Thrapston (Site ID 36)
 - Townsend Court Green Area in Upper Benefield (Site ID 572)
 - Hill House Garden in Stanwick (Site ID 695)
- 7.45 The quality of amenity green space ranges considerably (from 20% to 92%). Sites where quality requires further investigation include:
- Keswick Drive AGS in East of Rushden (Site ID 307)
 - Green Space in Lowick (Site ID 404)
 - Green Space by Village Hall in Hemington (Site ID 354)
 - Recreation Ground AGS on Trafford Road in Rushden (Site ID 306)
 - Green area between 33-35 Wood Road in Kings Cliffe (Site ID 722)
- 7.46 It is important to consider the appropriateness of the enhancement of the quality of these sites in order to raise their value. Alternatively consideration should be given to the extent to which they are currently fulfilling their primary purpose. These sites may provide the opportunity for redesignation to address other deficiencies.

Summary

- 7.47 Amenity greenspace sites are varied in value, they can be large useful areas of land or they can be small sporadic sites within housing estates that are too small to have any recreational value, however they can also have wider benefits including visual amenity and sometimes help to break up populated areas. This wider benefit was reflected in consultations.
- 7.48 Overall, amenity greenspaces within East Northamptonshire are good quality and have reasonable accessibility. Five sites exceed the quality benchmark, which has been set at 76%. In contrast there are two sites considered to be poor / very poor.

SECTION 7 – AMENITY GREEN SPACE

- 7.49 When applying the recommended accessibility standard (5 minute walk – 240m) there are few significant residential areas outside of the appropriate catchment for amenity green space. The majority of these are located in the South Urban area (southern and western areas), which also has the largest deficiency when applying the quantity standard (0.80ha per 1000 population). All of these areas are however served by open spaces of other typologies offering amenity value.

Recommendations

AGS 1	Protect sites identified as having high value (in terms of quality and accessibility) including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Navisford Close Amenity Greenspace in Thrapston (Site ID 36)• Townsend Court Green Area in Upper Benefield (Site ID 572)• Hill House Garden in Stanwick (Site ID 695)
AGS 2	Enhance the quality of sites currently considered to be poor, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keswick Drive AGS in East Rushden (Site ID 307)• Green Space in Lowick (Site ID 404)• Hemington Village Hall Green Space (Site ID 354)• Trafford Road Recreation Ground (Site ID 306)• Kings Cliffe AGS (Site ID 722)
AGS 3	Improve the quality of amenity green space sites to achieve the quality benchmark of 76%
AGS 4	Address the areas of deficiency as a priority including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pytchley Road Area (Rushden West)• North Eastern Oundle
AGS 5	Ensure that amenity green space provision is considered in relation to new developments. The Council should ensure that the area is large enough to provide informal recreational value as well as aesthetic value within the new development.