

aberdeen local development plan

Open Space Supplementary Guidance

Planning and Sustainable Development
Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure
Aberdeen City Council
St Nicholas House
Broad Street
Aberdeen
AB10 1BW

www.aberdeencity.gov.uk



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1. Introduction

Access to good quality open or green spaces is important in contributing to a greener, healthier, smarter, safer, stronger, wealthier and fairer city.

This Supplementary Guidance relates to, and expands on the following policies in Aberdeen's Local Development Plan and will be a material consideration within the planning process.

- Policy NE1 Green Space Network
- Policy NE3 Urban Green Space
- Policy NE4 Open Space Provision in New Development
- Policy NE9 Access and Informal Recreation

The City Council completed its first full Open Space Audit in 2010, in accordance with Scottish Planning Policy and Planning Advice Note 65. The results of this have been used to prepare an Open Space Strategy, which provides a strategic framework for protecting, creating, connecting, and improving open spaces.

In parallel with the development of the Open Space Strategy and using the Open Space Audit and other information, a Green Space Network has been identified for Aberdeen.

This guidance explains why and how Green Space Network has been selected and puts forward suggestions for changes that could be taken forward to enhance it. This information has been developed in response to the Open Space Audit's findings, and takes into consideration a range of strategic and policy directions as explained further in the Open Space Strategy.

This guidance aims to inspire those involved in developing open space to create useful, sustainable and well used places, which will benefit the wider community, the environment and support a healthy economy.

2. Why is Open Space Important?

Open spaces are people's places. They act as green lungs for the city and make neighbourhoods attractive places where people want to live and work.

Open spaces are places for informal recreation, important for our physical and mental health. They can play a big part in building community cohesion, can stimulate the economy and attract enterprise. Open spaces are vital for encouraging biodiversity, supporting a resilient environment and providing important opportunities for learning.

Aberdeen's Open Space Strategy's vision is for:

A network of attractive, appealing, well connected community places. Places for everyone to enjoy for health, learning, recreation and nature.

FIGURE 1: OPEN / GREEN SPACE NETWORK BENEFITS	
Biodiversity	Green space provides vital habitats for wildlife.
Economic growth, Investment and Tourism	Businesses attract and retain more motivated staff in greener settings. Green spaces to explore and quality natural environments attract people and give tourists reasons to extend their length of stay.
Labour Productivity	Green spaces near workplaces reduce sickness absence, increasing productivity.
Land and Property Values	Views of natural landscapes can add up to 18% to property values.
Climate change adaptation and mitigation	Networks of green space can counter, or help us deal with the effects of climate change by creating "green lungs" for urban areas, protecting soil and slopes from erosion, carbon capture and storage in the form of biomass, improved opportunities for active travel and species migration.
Flood Alleviation and Management	Well designed and well located green spaces reduce pressure on drainage and flood defences, delaying or reducing flood events.
Quality of Place	Quality green spaces instill local pride and create distinctive places. They can help integrate rural and urban landscapes, and provide context for the built environment.
Producing Resources	Bio/woodfuel products provide fuel for heat and power plants or for domestic firewood, as well as sustainable building materials. Green networks can also include food growing facilities or opportunities.
Health and Wellbeing	Vegetation, particularly tree canopies absorbs pollution which can lead to asthma and heart disease. People recover from illness quicker when they have views of trees. Places that facilitate active, healthy lifestyles.
Recreation and Leisure	Open spaces and paths enable healthy, low cost recreation.
Strengthening Communities	Open spaces provide places for social activity and cohesion, getting to know your neighbours, especially when local people are involved in their planning and management.

3. Legislative and Policy Context

3.1 Legislation

The public's access to open space and other land is outlined within the **Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003**. The Act gives people a right of responsible access to most land and inland water in Scotland. Further information on access rights can be found in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (see Useful References section at the back of this document). The Act also gives powers and duties to the Council to protect and manage access rights. The Council's duties include:

- Upholding access rights, which entails asserting, protecting, keeping open and free from obstruction any route, waterway or other means by which access rights may reasonably be exercised
- Drawing up, publicising and reviewing a plan for a system of core paths sufficient to provide reasonable public access throughout the area
- Establishing a Local Access Forum to provide advice on access rights and responsibilities.

Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 is also relevant to this guidance as it places a legal duty on the Council to further the conservation of biodiversity, enhance natural features and protect wildlife. To comply with this duty, the Council must consider nature conservation in everything that it does. (ACC Nature Conservation Strategy 2010-2015)

3.2 Planning Policy

Scottish Planning Policy states that:

'The planning system has a role in helping to create an environment where physical wellbeing is improved and activity made easier... In settlements, networks of linked, good quality open space are important for their contribution to amenity and their role in nature conservation, biodiversity, recreation and physical activity.'

'Planning authorities should take a strategic and long term approach to managing the open space in their area, assessing both current and future needs and protecting all spaces which can help to meet them.'

Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan states that accessible greenspace within and around Aberdeen is important for achieving a high quality environment. The Structure Plan also says that both Councils will take account of biodiversity, wildlife habitats, landscape, greenspace and other sensitive areas in identifying land for development, preparing masterplans and assessing development proposals.

4. Open Space in Aberdeen

The findings from Aberdeen's **Open Space Audit**, which was approved by the Council in April 2010, are taken into account in this guidance. The audit assessed all open spaces, as defined by PAN 65: Planning and Open Space, over the size of 0.2 hectares, within 500 metres of existing settlements. Importantly, the audit considered the quality and accessibility of Aberdeen's open space, not just quantity.

The highest **quality** open spaces were found to be Public Parks and Gardens, which mainly include the city's Victorian parks. Green Access Routes, Natural Greenspace and Green Corridors also scored well in terms of quality. Amenity space scored poorly both in terms of the quality assessment by officers, and community engagement feedback.

The **quantity** was found to be lowest in central wards – the city centre, Hilton and Stockethill and George Street and Harbour wards – and higher in the newer parts of the city, such as Dyce, Bucksburn and Danestone and Bridge of Don. Another conclusion from the audit was that community demand and efficient use of resources for maintenance could be addressed by more of the city's open spaces taking the form of natural greenspace or green corridors, rather than amenity space, which often has limited use and can be expensive to maintain.

Accessibility criteria were included in the quality assessment of open space sites. Accessibility is also considered in terms of the distribution of open space. The audit used community engagement and benchmarking with other areas to identify an appropriate distance within which residents should be able to access each type of open space. Key findings from this assessment were that new major open spaces and neighbourhood-level open spaces are required around the outskirts of the city, particularly in the Bridge of Don, Dyce, Kingswells, Milltimber and Cove areas.

The findings from the Open Space Audit have been used to develop revised **standards for the provision of new open space**. These are designed to encourage more useful, relevant and efficiently managed open spaces, of the right type and in the right place.

Scottish Planning Policy encourages the identification and promotion of green networks where this will add value to the provision, protection, enhancement and connectivity of open space and habitats around cities. Community engagement on the Open Space Audit showed a demand for green networks.

5. Green Space Network

Connecting our urban open spaces and surrounding, more rural green spaces to each other, and to the communities around them, offers a wide range of social, health, economic and environmental benefits. Green networks can provide an enhanced setting for development and other land uses and opportunities for outdoor recreation, nature conservation, landscape enhancement and providing a sense of place or local distinctiveness.

5.1 Rationale

Aberdeen's Green Space Network protects, promotes and enhances designated natural heritage sites, connectivity between habitats, open spaces and opportunities for physical activity and access to the outdoors. It also takes into account climate change adaptation opportunities and flood risk or alleviation, the distribution of existing open spaces and their relationship with communities, development opportunities, health and deprivation information and transport issues.

The overlaying of spatial data on these elements provides the rationale behind the selection of Green Space Network. The datasets taken into consideration include:

- Open Space Audit 2010
- Watercourses / Water bodies
- Core / Other Paths and Aspirational Routes
- Prime Landscape
- Integrated Habitat Network
- Ancient Woodland and Semi-Natural Woodland
- Tree Preservation Orders
- District Wildlife Sites, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Sites of Interest to Natural Science, Local Nature Reserves, Special Areas of Conservation
- SEPA 1:200 Year Flood Risk
- Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation
- Local Development Plan Proposed Sites
- Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route – Road Alignment

Green Space Network can serve the following functions:

- **Cores** - large or key areas of existing green space, to be protected and enhanced and linked to other green spaces.
- **Links** - existing or desirable corridors of green space linking other green spaces together (following paths, waterbodies or other elements from the datasets listed above where possible).
- **Stepping Stones** - isolated green spaces which may be difficult or inappropriate to link to the rest of the network using a continuous green corridor, but which may still offer opportunities to deliver the benefits of Green Space Network (see Figure 1).

The Local Development Plan's Policy NE1 Green Space Network, explains how the green space network will be protected through the planning process. However, the policy also includes the need to promote and enhance the network.

5.2 Delivery of Green Space Network Enhancements

Key stakeholders, including SEPA, SNH, Forestry Commission Scotland, and various Aberdeen City Council services have contributed towards the development of a GIS resource, highlighting the rationale for the selection of each area of Green Space Network, as well as opportunities for its enhancement. This rationale and opportunities should be taken into account in the planning of greenspace projects or other developments. An example of the GIS resource that has been developed is provided in appendix B. It is intended that this resource will be made available publicly through the Council's website.

The delivery mechanisms for taking forward enhancements to Green Space Network include the following:

- New Greenfield and Brownfield Development – Green networks are recognised as valued and desirable forms of open space. This is explained further throughout this guidance.
- Community-led projects – As supported by Aberdeen's Open Space Strategy, various potential funding sources are available, see www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/openspace.
- Scottish Rural Development Programme - a programme of economic, environmental and social measures, worth some £1.5 billion, running from 2007 to 2013. Individuals and groups may seek support to help deliver the Government's strategic objectives in rural Scotland. www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/farmingrural/SRDP
- Aberdeen Greenspace- works with individuals, communities, businesses and organisations in and around Aberdeen to develop access, increase biodiversity, carry out landscape improvements, and to provide information and interpretation. www.aberdeengreenspace.org.uk.
- Projects led by Aberdeen City Council, in consultation with communities, normally involving external grant funding.

6. Open Space in New Developments

This section relates to the Local Development Plan's Policy NE4 – Open Space Provision in New Development.

Aberdeen's Open Space Audit identified a need for higher quality and more accessible open space, rather than simply quantitative provision. For this reason, the quality and accessibility, as well as quantity of open space are included in Aberdeen's minimum standards for open space in new developments. In some situations the information contained in the Open Space Audit may suggest that improvements to the quality of existing open spaces could be more useful to the existing and future community in an area than purely the provision of new open space.

6.1 Assessing Needs and Appropriate Provision

The residents, employees or users of different types of development will have different needs in terms of open space provision. The level of necessary provision will be applied pro rata. Off site contributions may be appropriate for small developments where the existing provision in the area is adequate or where the size of the provision, in line with the scale and type of development, is likely to be below the minimum sizes outlined in the standards, and therefore better added to other provision off-site.

Figure 2 - Types of residential development to which open space provision standards apply

Type of development	Natural Greenspace and Green Corridors	Allotments	Play Space	Outdoor Sports Areas
Open market housing	✓	✓	✓	✓
Affordable housing	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sheltered housing	✓	✓	x	x
Hostels and special needs housing	✓	✓	✓	✓
One for one replacement dwellings	x	x	x	x
Extensions to dwellings	x	x	x	x

6.2 Standards for Open Space in Greenfield, Residential Development

A hierarchy of open space sites is explained in Figure 4. Indicative sizes for sites, accessibility standards and quality standards are provided, the aim being to ensure appropriate levels of provision of good quality and accessible open space. In order to deliver larger open space sites, it is important that these guidelines are taken into account during the masterplanning of development allocations. Where areas of open space serve more than one function, for example natural greenspace and play space, the primary function will be counted as the open space provision.

Figure 3 – Open Space Types, Hierarchies and Land Use Zoning



The diagram above shows the types of open space required and that they form part of the open space hierarchy; major, neighbourhood or local. Each of these types and categories will also be covered by a land use zoning in the Local Development Plan.

A minimum of 2.8 hectares of open space which meets the accessibility and quality standards explained below must be available per 1000 people in residential, Greenfield development. This should comprise the categories of open space listed in Figure 5, although a degree of flexibility will be required in terms of the nature of the development. For example there may be a greater demand for allotments within high density developments than in developments of family houses with large private gardens.

The development of new open space should take into account the Open Space Audit’s findings regarding the provision of each type of open space. Extracts from the audit mapping are included in appendix A and this information should be used to identify the current level of provision of each type of open space in the surrounding area, so that new open space provision relates to the needs of the surrounding area.

All open spaces within residential areas should be considered as possible play spaces, and consideration given to the ‘ad-hoc’ play opportunities that could be afforded to children by the sympathetic and imaginative use of natural features within the landscape.

6.2.1 Quantity

The Council will use the quantity standards laid out in figure 5 to assess the amount of open space likely to be needed by the residents of new housing developments.

6.2.2 Accessibility

Accessibility standards set out the distance thresholds the Council regards as acceptable for the potential users of open spaces to travel to those spaces. The accessibility maps extracted from the Open Space Audit mapping (see appendix A) indicate the provision of existing open space and, when considered alongside quantity and quality assessments, will help to identify where existing off site provision, including enhancements to quality may be appropriate instead of

necessarily increasing the quantity of open space through new, on-site provision.

The Open Space Hierarchy shown in Figure 4 will need to be addressed through the masterplanning process, and major open space provision in particular, may require joint-working between developers. The accessibility standards for Open Space types or categories (Figure 5) are fixed for all residential Greenfield developments, although will take into account existing provision.

6.2.3 Quality

The quality of existing open spaces has been assessed in the Open Space Audit 2010. Criteria used to assess the quality of existing spaces are explained in the Audit – the same criteria were used for all types of open space. Figures 4 and 5 indicate the quality standards expected of particular types of new open spaces. Section 8 of this document provides design and quality standards for play zones. Section 9 provides design and quality standards for natural green space and green space network and Section 10 explains standards required for allotments. Quality standards for Outdoor Sports Areas are provided by [Fields in Trust](#). These quality standards set out the level of provision developers are expected to provide or to fund through developer contributions. Where existing open spaces do not meet these qualitative standards, but quantitative and accessibility standards are met, enhancements to existing spaces' quality may be more appropriate than increasing the quantity of open space.

FIGURE 4: HIERARCHY OF OPEN SPACE SITES

Open Space Type	Description	Indicative Site Size	Accessibility Standard	Quality Standard
Major Open Spaces	Large areas of open space attracting visitors from Aberdeen City and Shire, often offering a wide range of uses, including informal recreational, sport, large scale equipped Play Zone, walking routes, seating, lighting, toilets, car parks etc. There may be a diversity of habitat/ landscapes. Receives regular maintenance. Will usually form Green Space Network cores.	>5 hectares	All residents within 1500 metres (around 20 minute walk) of a Major Open Space.	Green Flag 'good' standard Standards for large scale Play Zone in Figure 5.
Neighbourhood Open Spaces	Open spaces that provide a range of recreational uses, attracting users from more than one neighbourhood. These spaces could include equipped Play Zones, natural areas, green corridors, seating, paths/ access, community event space, some formal landscape features, car park, dog waste / litter bins etc. Receives regular maintenance. May include Green Space Network cores, stepping stones or links.	2-5 hectares	All residents within 600 metres (around 10 minutes walk) of a Neighbourhood Open Space.	Green Flag 'good' standard
Local Open Space	Smaller spaces that provide a more limited range of local recreation uses, and are spread throughout a local area. As most users will reach them on foot, they are well connected by paths to community facilities and surrounding areas. Receives regular maintenance.	0.4-2 hectares	All residents within 400 metres (around 5 minutes walk) of a Local Open Space.	Green Flag 'good' standard

FIGURE 5: CATEGORIES OF OPEN SPACE

Open Space Type	Description	Indicative Quantity	Accessibility	Quality
Play Zone/Other Play Areas	Unsupervised areas dedicated to use by, and equipped for children and young people. Other Play Areas may include ball courts, outdoor basketball hoop areas, skateboard areas, teenage shelters.	0.3ha per 1000 Minimum size 1500m ²	All residents should be within 400m of a Play Zone Suitable for ages 3 – 13 Suitable for ages 3 – 18	See Section 7 of this SPG
Large Scale Play Zone	Larger play zones likely to attract children from a larger area. These sites should include a larger range of play functions.	Minimum size 2500m ²		
Outdoor Sports Areas	Natural or artificial surfaces used for sport and recreation. E.g. playing fields, pitches, tennis courts, bowling greens, athletics tracks, water sports facilities.	1.6ha per 1000	All residents within 1200 metres of Outdoor Sports facilities.	NPFA / Fields In Trust
Natural Greenspace and Green Corridors	Includes woodland, heathland, scrub, grassland, wetland, coastal areas, riverbanks, disused railway lines, green access routes and open water. Also includes designated areas such as Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCS), Local Nature Reserves (LNR), Sites of Special Scientific Interests (SSSI) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). The primary purposes include nature conservation, walking, cycling, horse riding, leisure, non-motorised travel, environmental education.	1ha minimum Natural Greenspace per 1000	All residents within 400 metres of a natural greenspace >2ha and 2000 metres of a natural greenspace >5ha	See Section 8 of this SPG
Allotments or Community Gardens	Areas or plots which are mainly cultivated by the occupier or community group for the purpose of producing fruit or vegetables for personal consumption.	0.3 hectares per 1000 properties with less than 60m ² private green spaces, cultivatable according to the health quality standards set out below.	Allotments should be no more than 800m from peoples' homes, and that the (minimum) size/number of plots at a site will be determined through a mix of the quality standards below and the number of people within the allotment catchment area.	See Section 9 of this SPG

6.3 Open Space Provision in Brownfield Development

Redevelopment in the existing urban area is usually seen as more sustainable than greenfield development, often contributing to regeneration, removing local eyesores and bringing existing buildings back into use. However it can involve additional costs, such as site preparation, contaminated land remediation and demolition. Therefore it may not always be financially viable or appropriate to apply the minimum standards for open space to such developments. The Council may instead seek a contribution towards off-site open space enhancements. The necessary contribution will reflect the scale and type of development.

6.4 Open Space Provision in Non-Residential Development

This supplementary guidance does not include formal minimum standards for open space in non-residential developments. This is to be considered on a site by site basis. However open space, over and above site landscaping, can make an important positive contribution to

non-residential development. For example, places for staff to get fresh air and unwind, or to go for a walk or run at lunch time.

Connecting non-residential developments, such as offices, to existing paths and open spaces supports healthy lifestyles and sustainable travel opportunities, and can be an attractive facility for employees, clients or visitors to the site.

Aberdeen City Council may seek contributions from non-residential developments towards enhancing the accessibility or quality of off-site existing open space or paths in the vicinity of the development, in order to facilitate the extra demand created by the development.

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7. Planning and Designing Open Space

This section provides principles for planning and designing open space, which will help achieve the Open Space Strategy's vision of *"a network of attractive, appealing, well connected community places, places for everyone to enjoy for health, learning, recreation and nature"*.

General Requirements
Open space should be seen as an important community facility and an asset to developments .
Development should contribute positively to the Green Space Network , through provision of new open space, linked together where possible, and protection of existing greenspace features. Where any negative impacts are unavoidable, these must be mitigated using contributions towards open space or Green Space Network improvements in the vicinity of the development.
Planning and development of open space should take into account the Open Space Audit and Strategy . Local circumstances should be considered, such as existing provision and needs, along with the positive and negative impacts that developments can have on habitats, recreation, landscape, flooding and drainage and climate change adaptation.
Quality and function are as important as quantity. This is an important factor in helping to avoid the creation of unnecessary maintenance burdens.
Open spaces must have a clearly defined purpose , which must be taken into account when considering their location and design.
Open space must not simply be located on the parts of a site that are less attractive to build on. The indicative minimum sizes of open space types provided in figure 5 are designed to ensure that Space Left Over After Planning (SLOAP) does not form part of a development's open space provision . Larger open spaces, with a bigger range of functions also help to make them more interesting and reduce maintenance costs.
Open spaces should be multi-functional where appropriate. They can offer multiple benefits, such as opportunities for outdoor recreation, sustainable travel, conserving and promoting natural and cultural heritage, enhancing the landscape and providing a sense of place and local distinctiveness. With early and careful consideration it is possible to achieve cost savings through combining uses and benefits.
Open spaces should be designed to be flexible , so they can be easily altered to adapt to changing future circumstances.
Communities should be involved in the planning, design and development of their open spaces; open spaces should support social inclusion, community development and lifelong learning.
Long term management and maintenance should be considered from the outset, for example regarding the materials, design and species selected. See section 10 of this guidance.
The Open Space Strategy for Aberdeen identifies a desire for open spaces to be more natural, respecting natural processes and integrating with them. For example less short grass, which can be expensive to maintain, and more meadow areas with native wild flowers, or woodland.
Open space should incorporate as many existing site features as possible, such as waterways (see Buffer Strips Supplementary Guidance), trees and woodland (see Trees and Woodland Supplementary Guidance), wetland, cultural heritage features and paths or desire lines.
Open space design should take into account security minimising crime as detailed in Secured By Design .
Public art should be provided where appropriate as a way of reflecting local heritage, promoting distinctiveness and adding interest to open spaces.
Dog litter bins should be provided where appropriate.

Locally and sustainably sourced and recycled materials should be used wherever possible, where this reduces environmental impact.

Care should be taken not to damage or disturb **locally or nationally important habitats or species**.

Paths and Access

Paths for recreation and active, sustainable travel should be provided throughout developments and are an important facility within the open space and Green Space Network. They can help to provide a strong landscape structure and should utilize existing or likely desire lines.

Paths must link the development with likely **destinations**, such as community facilities, shops, bus stops, core paths, other communities, developments sites, or the wider countryside. Where these routes are likely to be used for travel purposes, they should be as **direct** as possible and more convenient than vehicle routes.

Paths should take account of "**the 5 Cs**": they should be connected, comfortable, convenient, convivial and conspicuous.

Nodes and junctions on path networks should be close to landmarks such as public art or community facilities or other destinations.

Paths must be designed and constructed in accordance with the **Disability Discrimination Act**, Lowland Path Construction – A Guide to Good Practice, Cycling By Design and/or the British Horse Society's Equestrian Access Factsheets, depending on their likely use as recreational or travel-type routes.

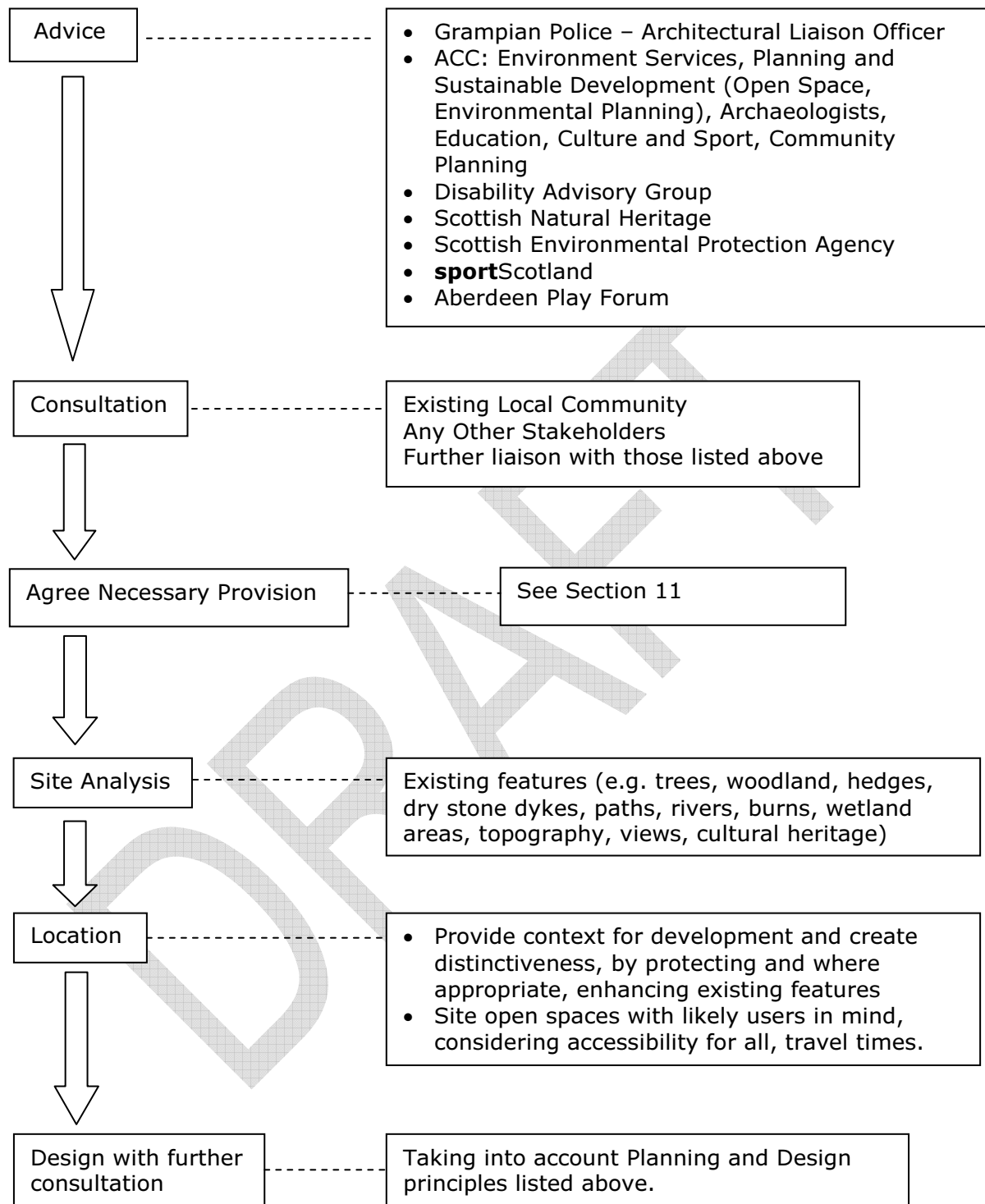
Paths should be promoted using directional signage, including **waymarkers and fingerposts**, see Aberdeen City Council's Directional Signage Guidance for Paths.

Open Spaces should include **site interpretation** where appropriate.

Cycle parking should be conveniently located within open spaces.

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Figure 6: Flowchart guiding process for planning and designing open space



8. Play Spaces and Play Zones

8.1 Introduction

All children have the right to play as enshrined in the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**. Article 31 of the Convention states: *"Every child has the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts."* Aberdeen City Council upholds children's rights to play in the [Play Policy](#).

8.2 Design Guidance and Quality Standards

The needs of those to be catered for, with consideration to age groups and the size of Play Zone to be accommodated will influence the design of the play space.

Location – Influenced by size, shape and contours of the development site and its relationship to surrounding developments and communities.
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Accessibility – Adults should feel confident about where their children are playing, if they are not, children will simply not have the opportunity to play. Play Zones should be situated close to housing and located in a way that encourages informal supervision e.g. overlooked by housing. Guidance on inclusive design is available in Developing Accessible Play Space: A Good Practice Guide and Inclusive Mobility. Play Zones should be accessed from paths and streets, not roads. The distinction between roads and streets is explained in the Scottish Government policy Designing Streets.
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General site features - Sympathetic landscaping enhances play potential and can be vital to the site as equipment.

Non-equipped grass surfaces for ball games and other uses - within the Play Zone, with some areas given over to biodiversity to support mini-beasts and other wildlife.

Variations of levels within the Play Zone, with gradients compliant to DDA.
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The use of a range of materials of different kinds, textures and colours , such as timber, sand (for digging, building and sifting), rocks, tyres (e.g. for swings or short tunnels), reinforced rope ladders/swings, and other natural or recycled materials. Materials used should stimulate the senses of sight, sound (e.g. built in drums, bells or chimes – taking into consideration proximity to nearby houses), touch and smell, and there should be opportunities for children to manipulate materials.

A range of surfaces including: grass, sand, safety surfacing where required beneath equipment, hard surfacing such as decking, slabbed areas and tarmac can also be important to provide wheel chairs and buggies access and turning space.
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Planting including trees (this could include fruit trees), and a variety of shrubs and other plants that have different textures, form and scents to add interest to open space users.

Grassy mounds, fallen but secure trees, logs, and boulders (as these will also be used for climbing and balancing) can all help to improve the visual setting for play and add to the range of play opportunities in addition to fixed equipment.

Sheltered seating and/or picnic tables should be provided for the carers of younger children or young people who may also wish to use the Play Zone to meet socially.
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Path or other lighting to provide an illumination of at least 25 lux 1m above ground level where appropriate.
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Surfaces within play areas, and the access to them from nearby path systems, must be free draining so they do not become waterlogged or boggy after heavy rain.
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Play Zones should be defined and protected by natural boundaries such as shrubs, plants and trees, which add play value and complement the look of the Play Zone.
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However, where fencing is required, for example because of busy roads, as large an area as possible should be enclosed to give a sense of freedom, rather than corralling within the Play Zone.

Play Zones should have a clear **signage** stating the name of the Play Zone, with a telephone number to contact in case of any maintenance issue. There should be clear signage to make people aware that dogs are not allowed in Play Zones, with reference to the law and fines. Signs should be fitted to other structures such as gates and fences where possible.

Play Equipment

The way in which play equipment is incorporated into a site should offer opportunities for a **range of physical and imaginative activity**. It should also offer opportunities for **social activity**.

Play Zones:

Play Zones should have **at least 5 types** of play function provided by at least three pieces of equipment, all of these should be accessible to **children of all abilities**. Children should have the opportunity to challenge themselves through experiences such as climbing, balancing, swinging, rocking and sliding.

There should be equipment suitable for children across the **age range of 3-13**.

Large scale equipped Play Zones:

Large scale equipped Play Zones should offer **at least 8 types** of play opportunities provided by at least five pieces of equipment, which should be accessible to **children of all abilities**, except where it can be demonstrated that a particular piece of equipment has benefits in challenging able bodied children that cannot otherwise be made accessible to all.

There should be equipment suitable for children across the **age range of 3-18**.

European Standards that must be complied with:

EN1176, Playground Equipment Standard (1997, with additional recommendations in 1998 and 1999)

EN1177, Impact Absorbing Playground Surfacing – safety requirements and test measures (1998)

BS EN 14974:2006+A1:2010, Facilities for users of roller sports equipment – Safety requirements and test methods

BS EN 15312:2007+A1: 2010, Free access multi-sport equipment. Requirements, including safety and test methods

9. Natural Greenspace and Green Corridors

9.1 Introduction

The Open Space Audit and community consultations on the Open Space Strategy showed that there is demand for more natural open space, such as woodland, heathland, grassland, wetland, green access routes and open water, which furthers biodiversity and nature conservation, and offers opportunities for walking, cycling, horse riding, leisure, sustainable and active travel and environmental education.

Therefore Natural Greenspace or Green Corridors is included as a type of open space required as part of open space provision in new developments. This type of open space could be formally designated in the Aberdeen Local Development Plan as Policy NE1 Green Space Network, or it could be covered by another land use zoning, such as Residential, but supports the objectives of Green Space Network, as explained in section 5.

9.2 Quality Standards

Natural greenspace and green corridors should:

Have a natural appearance and include minimal man made artificial features, promoting a sense of nature and tranquillity
Enable contact with wildlife
Include recognisable habitats and wildlife such as birds, butterflies, wildflowers, woodland, scrub and open water
Allow people to easily identify with, and get a real sense of which season it is
Provide opportunities for exploration or 'natural play' through the existence of varied habitats.
Consist of where possible local, native species and habitats

10. Allotments

10.1 Introduction

Developments that are likely to cause a demand for small-scale, local food production, such as high density housing, or flats will require to include the provision of allotments as part of their open space provision. Figure 5 outlines the quantitative and accessibility standards for allotments.

10.2 Quality Standards

Allotments should be developed with the following quality standards.

Safe, Secure: Appropriate measures to ensure a safe site, i.e. natural surveillance; lockable communal storage area / meeting space. Design should meet Grampian Police 'Secure by Design' standards.
Biodiverse: Include native, productive hedging; other peripheral / communal planting / wildlife schemes (i.e. ponds and beekeeping) and consider Aberdeen City Council & other local and national nature conservation guidelines.
Services: One compost bin per plot; Community composting facility for general use; Dedicated burning area; Metered water supply with turn taps on stand pipe(s) – one standpipe per 10-15 plots; Sites should make use of water efficiency opportunities, i.e. ground water, rain water capture; at least one communal Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant toilet – one per 50 plots. Natural / low maintenance systems preferred, i.e. off the main water network – soakaway / septic tank.
Inclusive: At least one disabled friendly plot with wheelchair access and raised beds.
Access: One plot per site located close to entrance, toilet and standpipe, with a minimum of one per 50 plots; Car access to gate, with appropriate turning/parking/etc – determined by location / distance from homes; Appropriate parking – disabled parking spaces should match number of disabled plots, and where parking desired, one additional parking space per ten plots. Design should meet DDA guidelines and provide best drainage solutions, i.e. reduction of hard surfaces.
Community: A flexible mix of plots sizes, from 50m ² to 200m ² ; community / group plots size as appropriate, through discussion with local community / stakeholders; weather and vandal proof notice board inside site; name sign outside; set aside area in site for potential future communal meeting space, other initiative for decision of plotting community, i.e. demonstration beds, wildlife initiatives, etc.
Health: Ground cultivatable to a minimum depth of 60cm (100cm ideal standard); tested / known to be safe for the growth of consumable products (as determined by local authority potentially contaminated land records); away from areas that pose risks of contamination, i.e. busy roads, industry and flood risk.

11. Maintenance and Management of Open Spaces

Scottish Planning Policy emphasises that appropriate maintenance and management arrangements are essential to the quality of the open space environment.

Open space maintenance relates to a set of defined tasks that aim to preserve the condition of spaces. Management of open spaces requires a long-term perspective, with flexibility to respond and adapt to issues or changes such as community needs and priorities, biodiversity, climate change, improvements to access, quality, safety and competing uses. It is therefore important that maintenance and management are given full consideration alongside the planning and design of spaces.

The planning system has limited control over open space maintenance. It can however, make provision for maintenance through planning conditions or agreements.

The **preferred approach to management and maintenance** is for the Council to adopt public open space as long as:

- the provision meets the appropriate quality standards at the time of adoption
- the developer provides a commuted sum on or before the date of adoption, sufficient to fund the management and maintenance for a period of 18 years
- the developer pays all of the legal costs relating to the transfer of the land or facilities to the Council.

Appendix C includes costs for 18 years' maintenance of each type of open space required by this Supplementary Guidance.

Other arrangements for the management of open spaces are available but through consultation with stakeholders they tend to have more disadvantages. These include:

- Residents' Association with Factoring Arrangements: residents of a new development are responsible for management of the open spaces within the development and appoint a factor to carry out the maintenance
- Third Party Arrangements can involve the Council or developers making arrangements with a suitable third party for long term maintenance. Examples of such third parties can include commercial grounds maintenance companies, local amenity organisations and environmental trusts.

12. Applying The Policies

12.1 Pre-application Discussions

Throughout the process of pre-application discussions developers are encouraged to seek advice from the Council on the quantity, quality and accessibility of existing open space local to their proposed development. Advice from other parties could also be sought at this stage in order to identify key considerations at the earliest opportunity (see Figure 6). Planning Circular 7/2007 states that **sportscotland** must be consulted on any development which is likely to lead to the loss, or prejudice the use, of certain outdoor sports facilities.

Advice may also be available on opportunities to link the development with existing or planned open space, including paths, green space network, play or sports facilities, helping to set the context for development and add to a sense of place. Although advice is based on the best available information at the time, this may be subject to change over time as information sources are updated.

12.2 Masterplans

The Aberdeen Masterplanning Process – A Guide For Developers 2008 explains how open space and Green Space Network needs to be considered within Strategic Frameworks, Development Frameworks and Masterplans, playing a fundamental role in offering context, identity and connections.

12.3 On and Off-site Provision

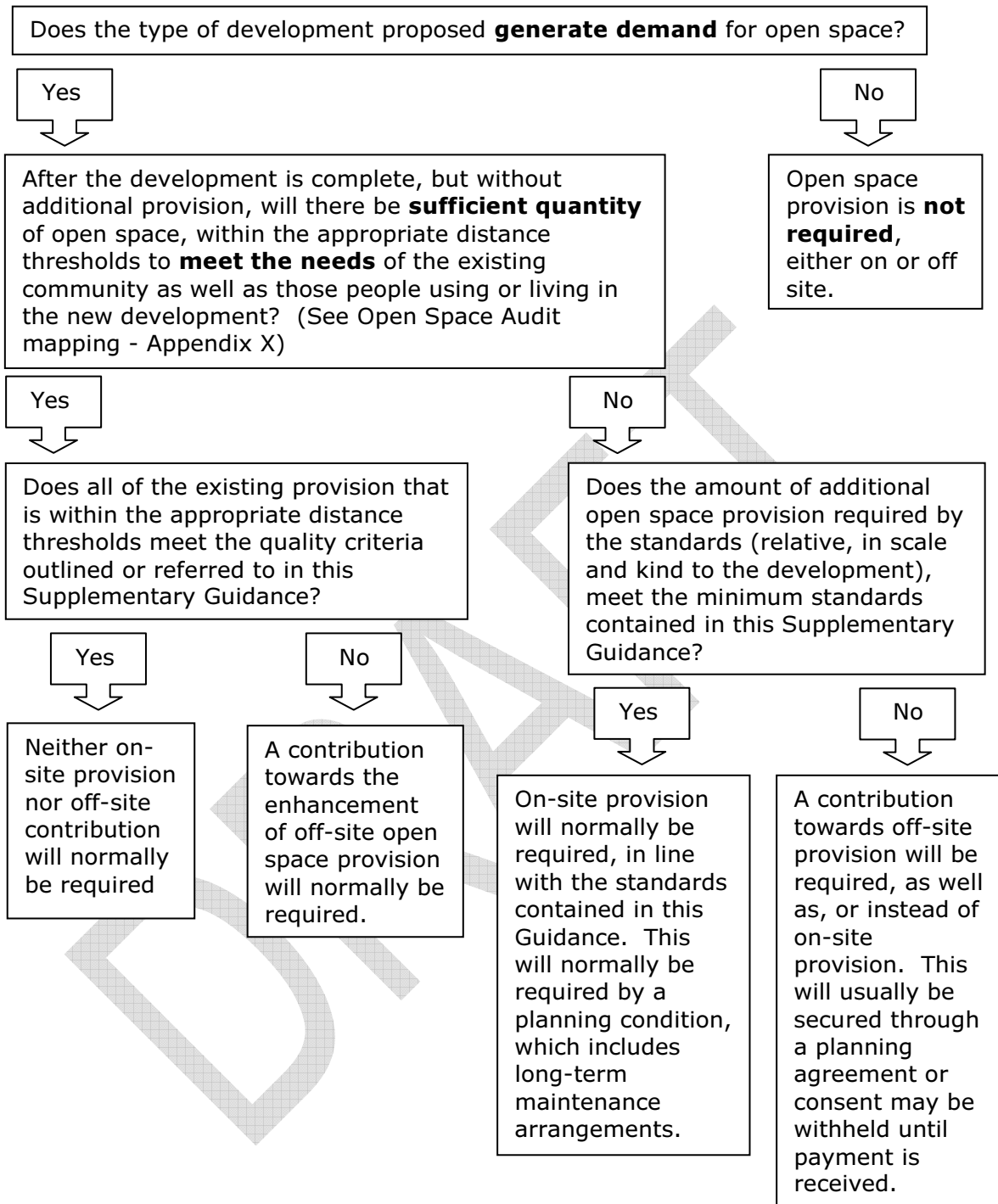
Planning conditions will normally be used to secure on-site provision. Off-site provision may be necessary to mitigate the development's direct or cumulative impacts on existing infrastructure or facilities. A planning agreement will be normally used in these circumstances, outlining the financial contribution necessary to deliver the off-site provision, which may include the creation of new open space or enhancing the accessibility or quality of existing spaces.

Any planning agreement will be related in scale and kind to the development, as per Planning Circular 1/2010. Planning agreements will not be used to resolve existing deficiencies or to secure contributions to the achievement of wider planning objectives not necessary to allow permission to be granted for sustainable development.

Figure 7 below is designed to assist in the process of identifying whether on or off site provision is appropriate.

Appendix C outlines the costs of off-site provision, which will be used in calculating developer contributions.

Figure 7: Process for identifying necessary on and off-site provision



12.4 Calculating Required Provision

Aberdeen's open space standards are based on the likely number of residents within a new development. This can be calculated using the average number of people who live in each dwelling. This information is available from the Scottish Household Survey and is outlined in figure 8.

Example: a development of two hundred three-bedroom houses and one hundred one-bedroom flats will equate to 650 people.

$$(200 \times 2.6 = 520) + (100 \times 1.3 = 130) = 650$$

Figure 8: Average Household Occupancy in Aberdeen

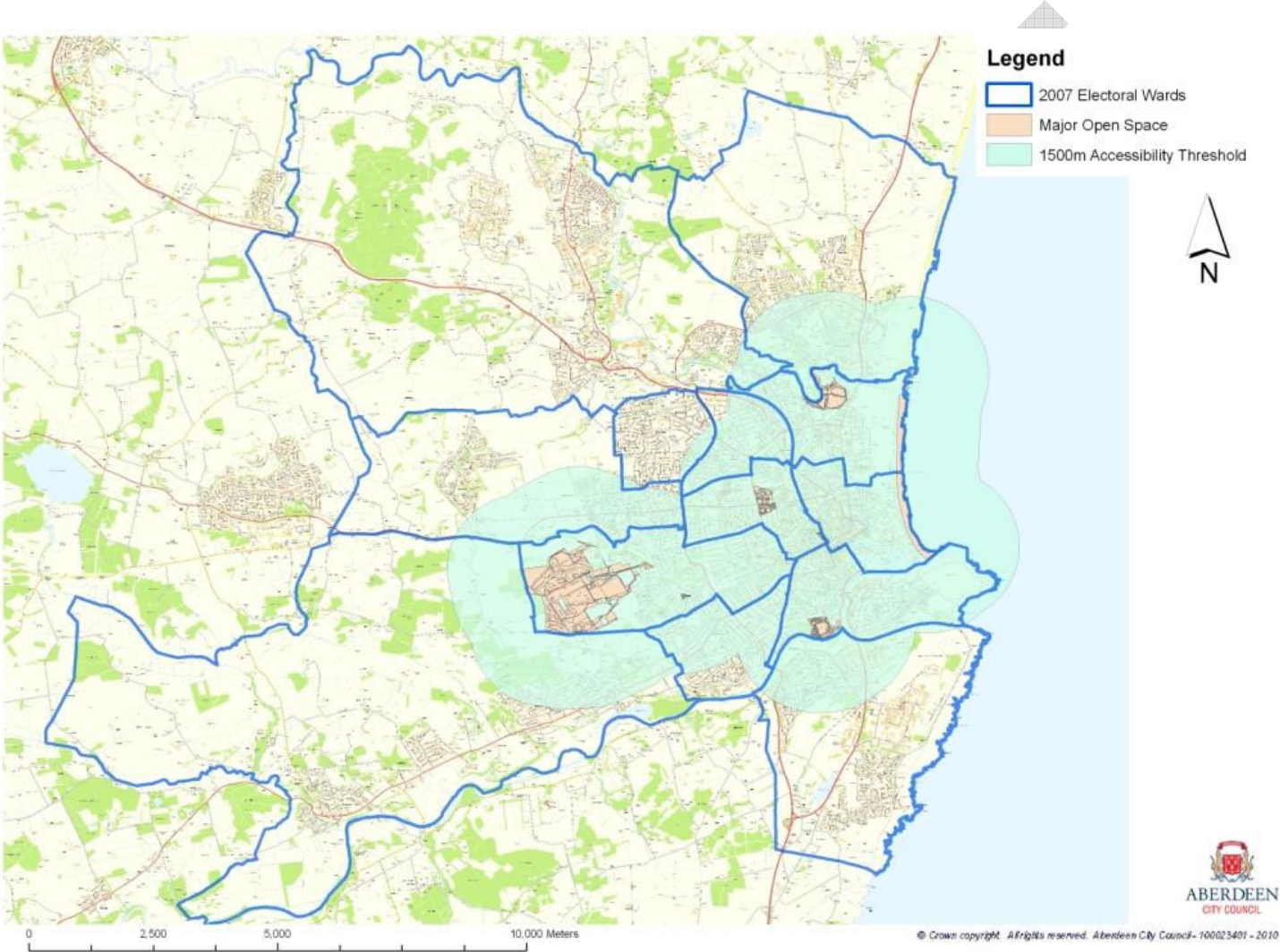
Dwelling Size	Average Household Size (persons)
1 bedroom	1.3
2 bedroom	1.9
3 bedroom	2.6
4 bedroom	2.9
5 bedroom	3.6
6 bedroom	5.0
7 bedroom	6.0

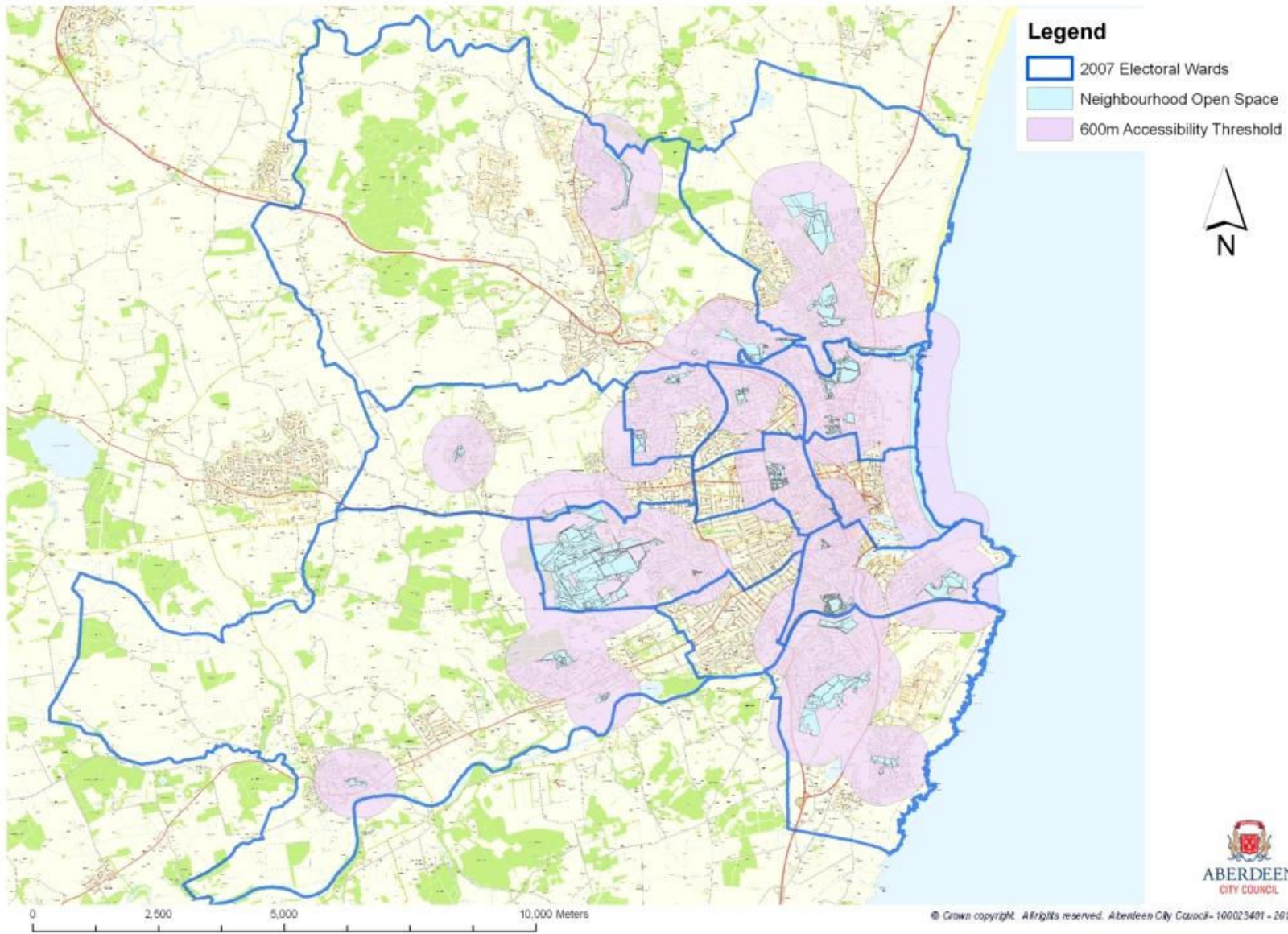
Source: Scottish Household Survey 2007/08, based on a sample of 1,046 Aberdeen households

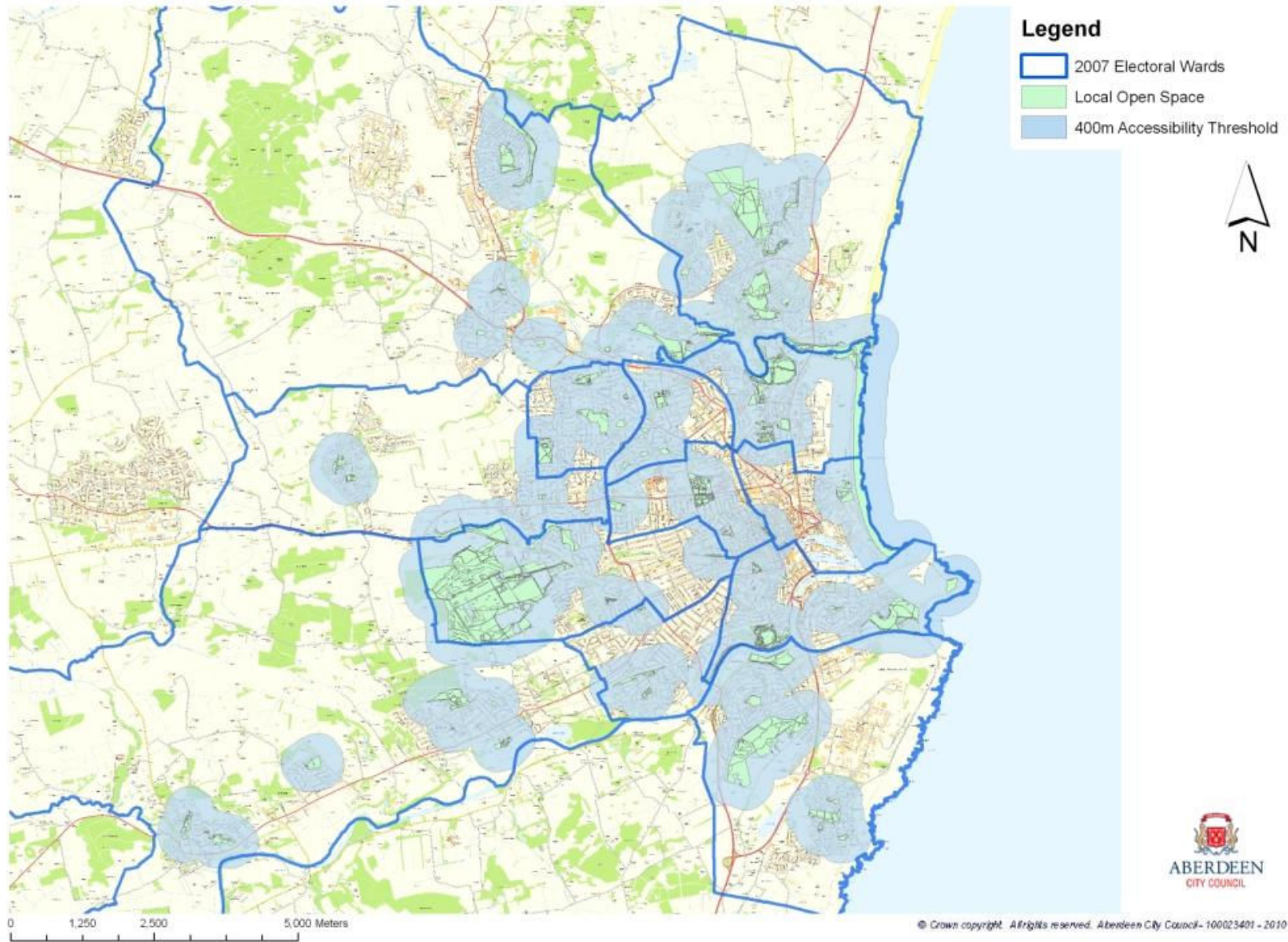
13. Useful References

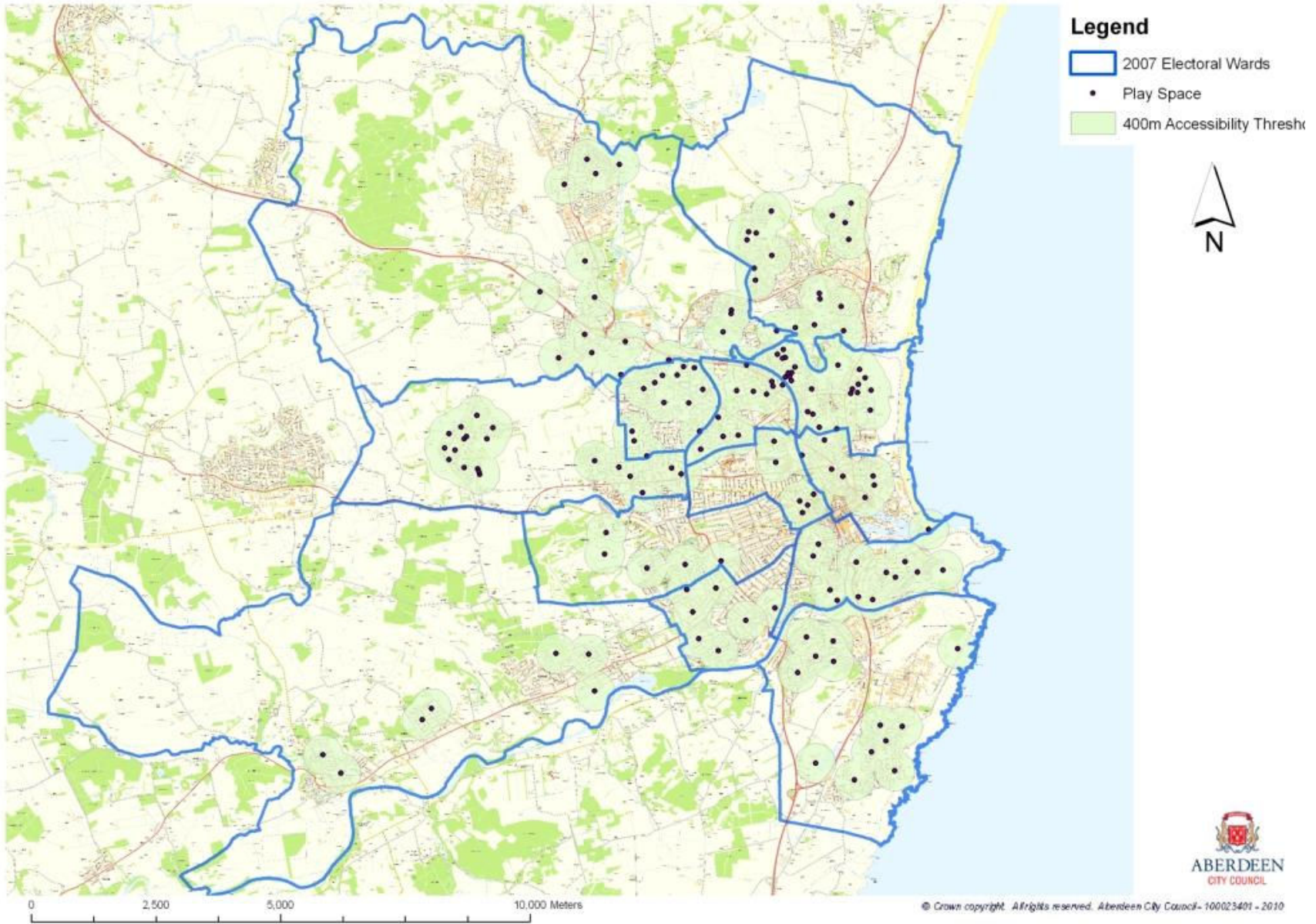
Scottish Planning Policy Designing Places Designing Streets PAN 65: Planning for Open Space PAN 78: Inclusive Design	www.scotland.gov.uk/publications
Scottish Outdoor Access Code	www.outdooraccess-scotland.com
Secured By Design	www.securedbydesign.com
Lowland Path Construction Equestrian Access Factsheets	www.pathsforall.org.uk
Cycling By Design	www.transportscotland.gov.uk
Aberdeen Open Space Strategy Buffer Strips Supplementary Guidance Trees and Woodlands Supplementary Guidance Transport and Accessibility Supplementary Guidance Infrastructure Requirements and Developer Contributions Supplementary Guidance Directional Signage Guidance for Paths 2011 Fit for the Future: Sport and Physical Activity Strategy	www.aberdeencity.gov.uk
Aberdeen Play Forum Aberdeen City Play Policy	www.aberdeenplayforum.org.uk
CABE	www.cabe.org.uk
Managing Risk in Play Provision Design for Play: A guide to creating successful play spaces	www.playengland.org.uk
Developing Accessible Play Space: A Good Practice Guide	www.communities.gov.uk
Disability Discrimination Act 1995	www.direct.gov.uk
National Playing Fields Association (NPFA)	www.fieldsintrust.org
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child	www.unicef.org.uk
School Playing Fields Planning and Design Guide	www.sportscotland.org.uk

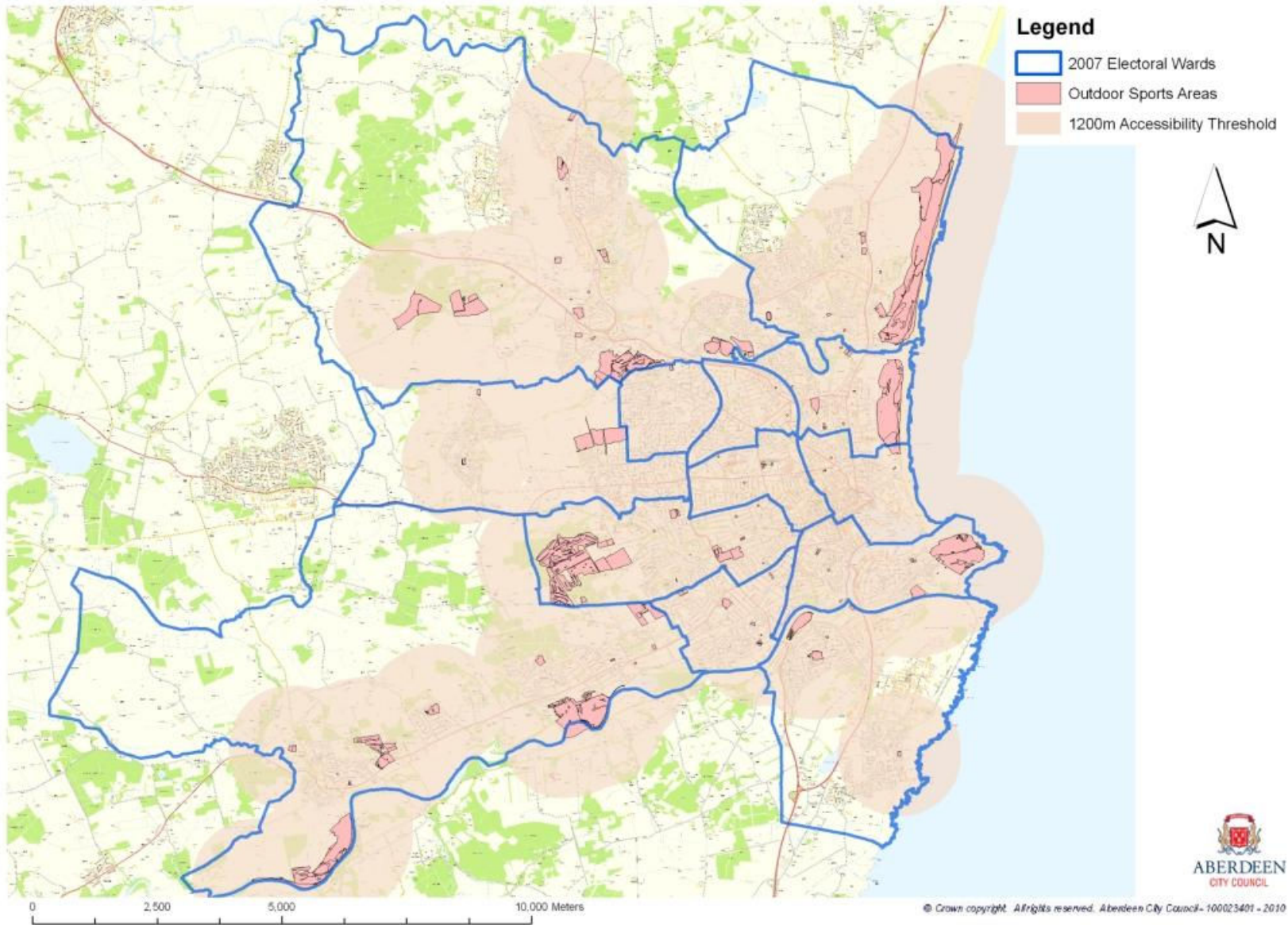
Appendix A – Open Space Audit - Provision Maps

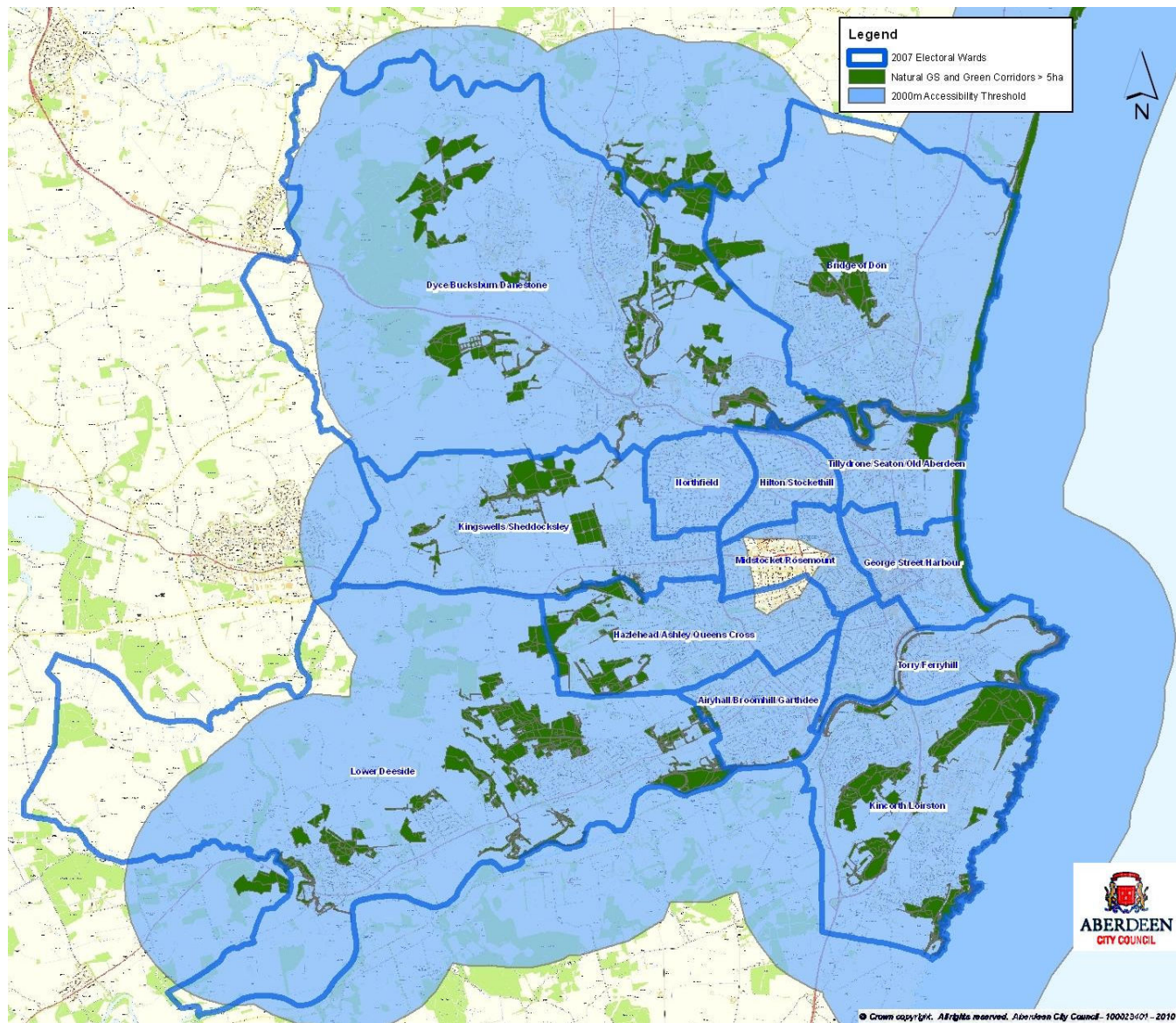


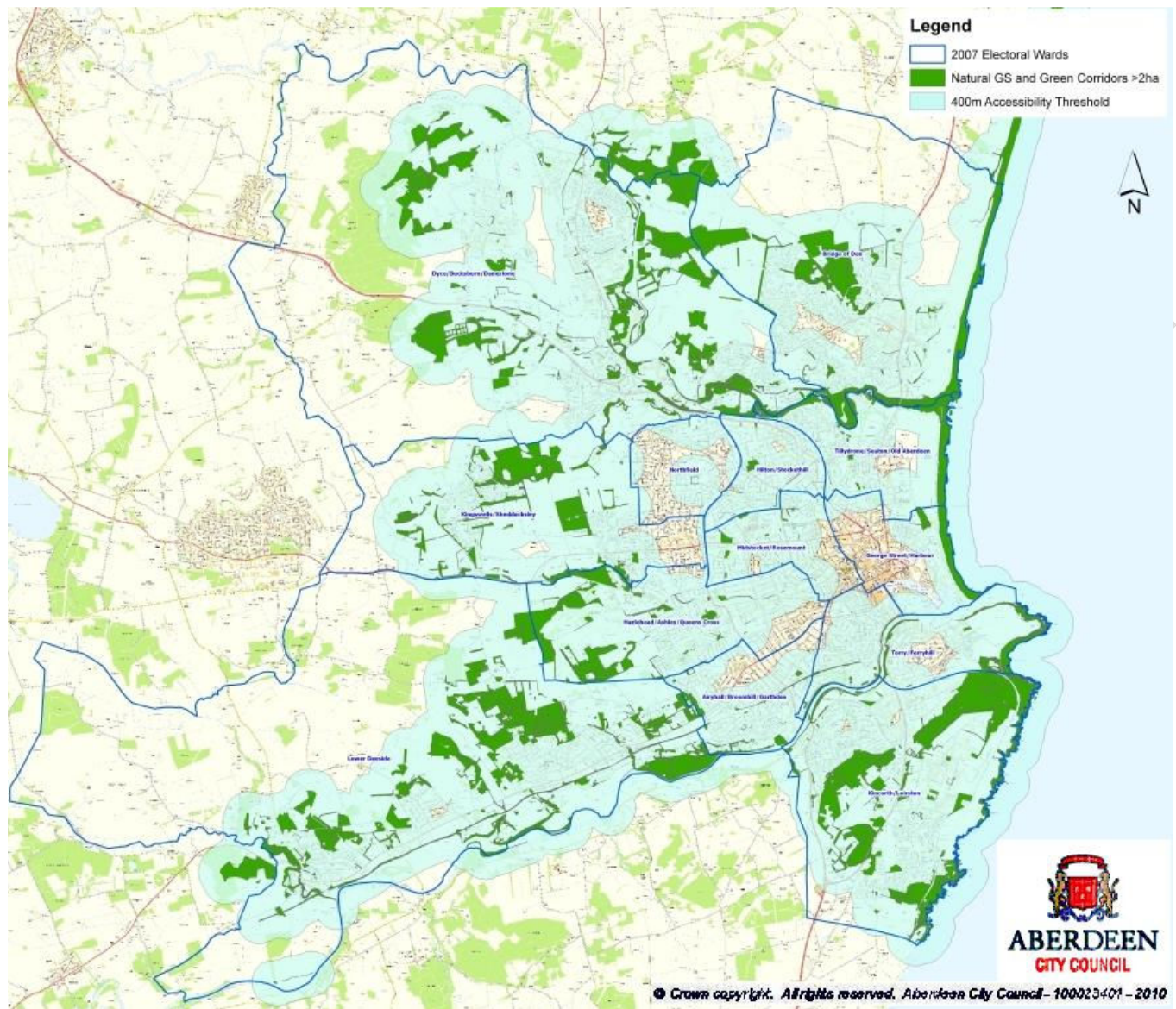


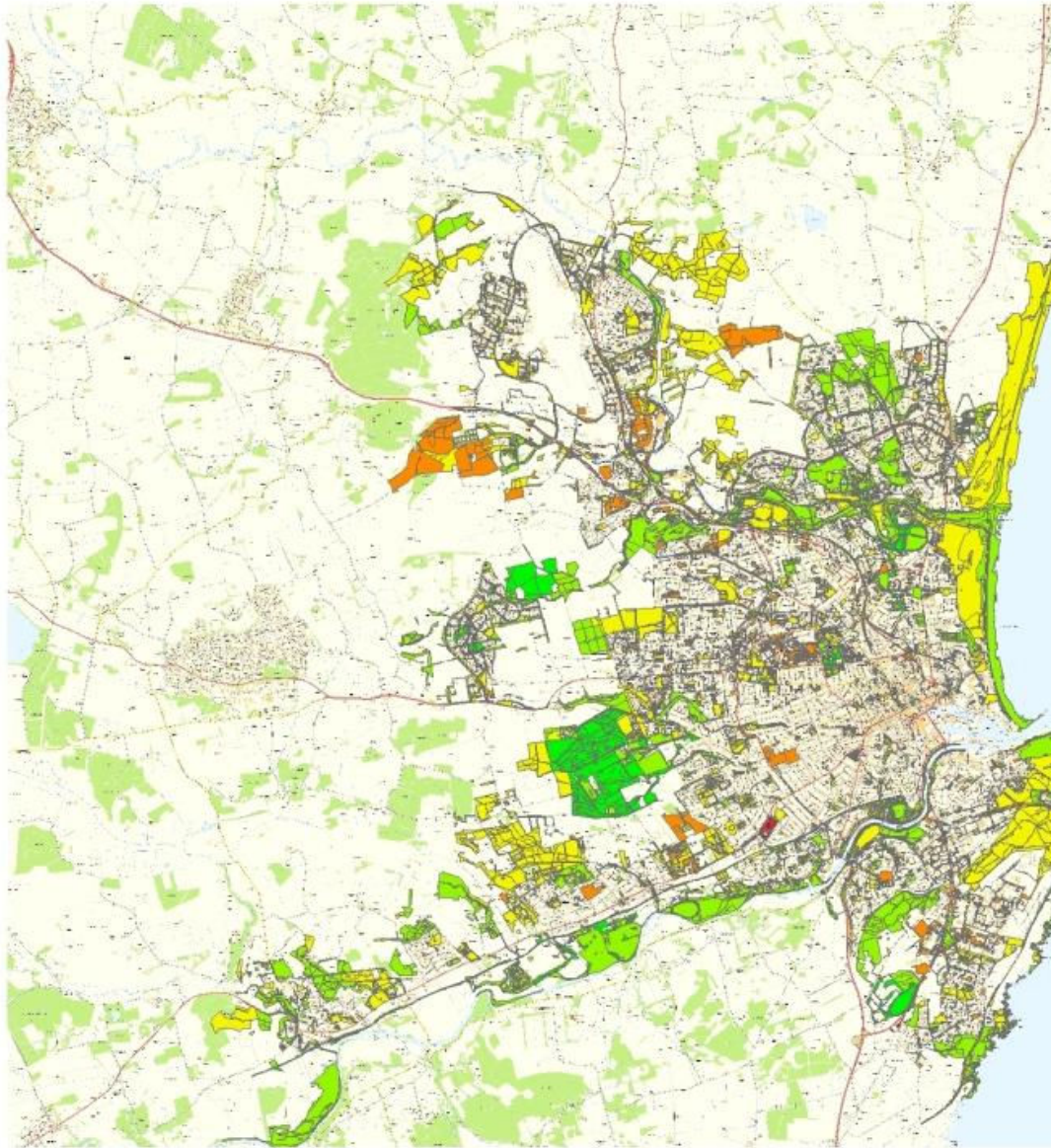












Legend

Open Space Audit 2010 - Quality

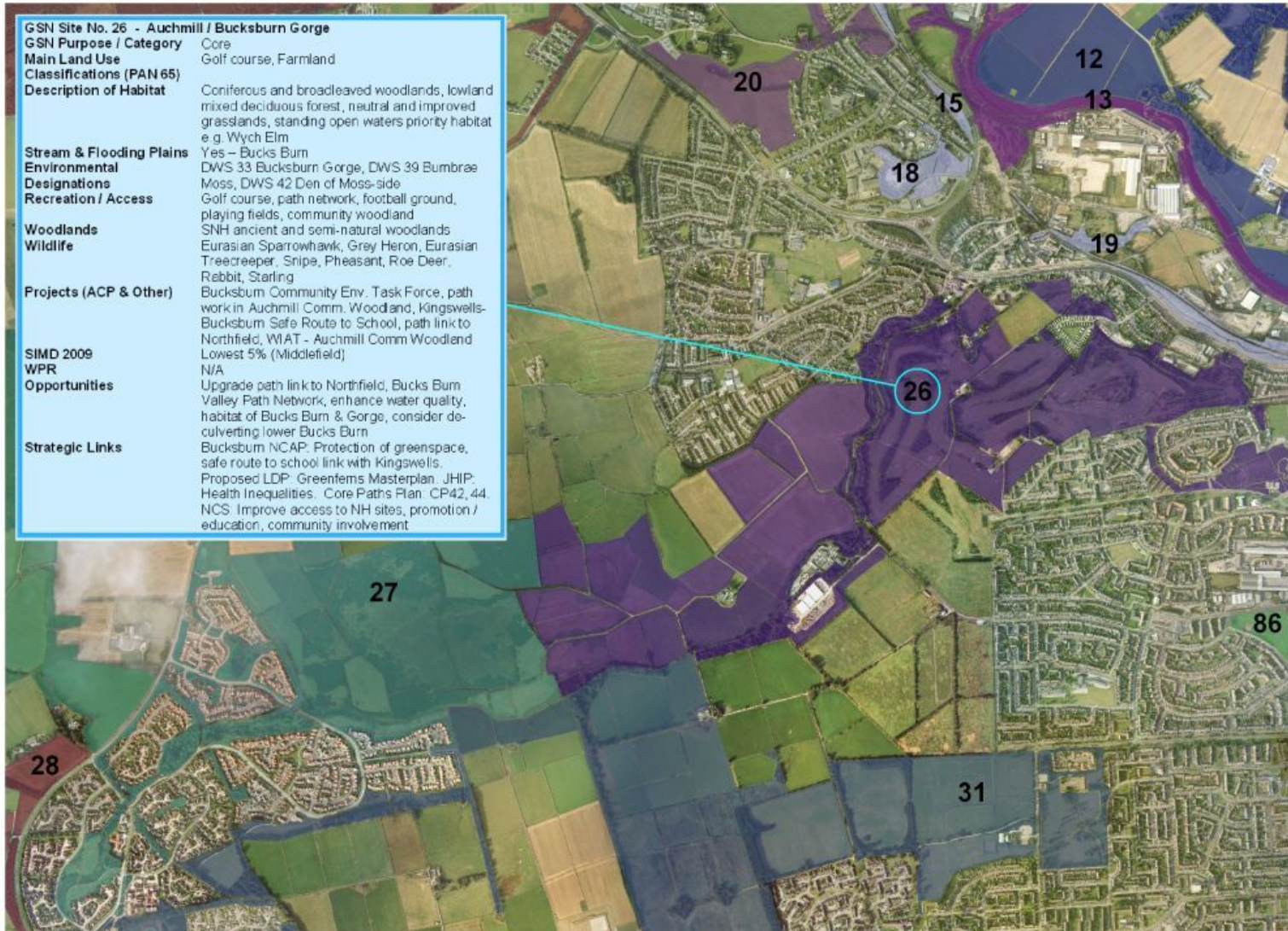
OVERALL QUALITY SCORE LOW (0) - HIGH (25)

- 0 - 5
- 6 - 10
- 11 - 15
- 16 - 20
- 21 - 25



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Appendix B – Green Space Network GIS Extract



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Appendix C – Costs of off-site provision (Developer Contributions) and Maintenance Commuted Sums

Figure 1: Cost per dwelling for off-site provision of each open space type

	Ave. Persons (Fig.8)	Play Space (0.3ha)	Outdoor Sports (1.6ha)	Natural Green Space (1ha)	Allotments (0.3ha)
1 Bedroom	1.3	£367	£647	£88	£78
2 Bedroom	1.9	£536	£946	£131	£114
3 Bedroom	2.6	£733	£1295	£179	£156
4+ Bedroom	4.4	£1241	£2191	£304	£264

The above figures are based on anticipated costs of the minimum size of each type of open space required by the standards provided in this document. Cost includes normal site preparation, drainage, equipment, special surfaces, landscaping, any other likely costs specific to the type of open space.

Figure 2: Cost per dwelling of commuted sum for each open space type

MAINTENANCE	Ave. Persons (Fig.8)	Play Space (0.3ha)	Outdoor Sports (1.6ha)	Natural GS (1ha)	Allotments (0.3ha)
1 Bedroom	1.3	£90	£59.20	£46.80	£35
2 Bedroom	1.9	£131	£86.53	£68.40	£51
3 Bedroom	2.6	£179	£118.40	£93.60	£70
4+ Bedroom	4.4	£304	£200.38	£158.40	£119

Appendix D – Checklist of Key Design Considerations in developing Open Space and Green Space Network

Landscape Setting and Context for Development
How will the scheme connect with the wider Green Space Network and landscape character?
Have existing natural and cultural features been incorporated into the proposed open space?
Does the provision of open space within the site or masterplan area create lasting value, identity and a distinct sense of place for the scheme?
Habitat and Access to Nature
How will the scheme connect with the wider Green Space Network in ecological and habitat terms?
Has potential damage and impacts on designated sites and protected species and necessary mitigation been considered?
Have existing habitats and landscape features such as hedges, trees and water ways been integrated into the scheme?
Have new accessible areas of habitat been created and do these contribute to local targets e.g. Local Biodiversity Action Plan / Nature Conservation Strategy?
Have local native species been specified within the landscape proposals?
How have natural play, education or interpretation opportunities been incorporated into the scheme to connect people to nature?
Access – Sustainable and Active Travel and Recreation
How will the scheme connect with the wider Green Space Network, Core Paths Plan and Open Space Strategy?
What provision has been made within the scheme to connect beyond the development boundary, to key destinations such as employment, community facilities, schools and surrounding settlements, in order to encourage sustainable, active and healthy travel and less dependence on the private car?
What consideration is there for 'access for all' and is it possible for all residents to access a range of open space from their home easily and conveniently?
Have opportunities for providing a range of functions, facilities and activities been considered in relation to local needs for accessible greenspace? For example, outdoor sports or play areas can incorporate natural greenspace, which could be used by both school and public users as part of the wider Green Space Network.
Has a management and maintenance plan been produced and is it funded robustly so the long term quality of the GI is ensured?

Food Production and Energy

Have adequately sized rear gardens been provided to allow small scale domestic food production?

What opportunity is there to combine food production with other greenspace functions such as recreation, strengthening communities, physical health and mental wellbeing?

Is there currently, or is there likely to be in future (due to housing mix) a demand for allotments in the area? and if so have these been designed into the layout of the scheme?
--

Has solar gain and shelter been considered in the design and positioning of open spaces?
--

Does structural planting create shelter from prevailing winds in winter and shade in summer, improving the usability of public open spaces?

Flood Attenuation and Water Management

Have sustainable drainage systems been designed to provide water resource management, increased biodiversity and an accessible recreational resource?

Have rainwater harvesting systems been incorporated to provide water for irrigation of gardens, public open spaces and use within ponds and other water features?

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