



Landscape Architecture | Ecology | Greenspace

Shropshire Council

Shropshire Open Space and Recreation Needs Assessment

September 2018

REV B



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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out the findings of an up to date Public Open Space and Recreation Needs Assessment for Shropshire (the Report). The Report has been prepared in conjunction with Shropshire Council by Red Kite Network Limited an independent Landscape Architecture, Ecology and Greenspace consultancy based in Coalport, Shropshire.
- 1.2 The primary purpose of the Report is to review and provide an update on a previous study conducted by PMP Consultants in 2009, and to assess how well that methodology fits with the changing requirements of Open Space planning. However, during the process of undertaking this review Shropshire Council announced that it would undertake a review of its Local Plan.
- 1.3 The Local Plan Review (LPR) will replace Shropshire Council's adopted Core Strategy and Site Allocations and Management of Development (SAMDev) documents. As part of the LPR, the Council also reviewed its approach to the evidence base which supports the quality and quantity of Public Open Space in the Local Plan and is currently conducting (September 2018) a spatial analysis of Open Space provision using GIS mapping. The finding of this Report will therefore feed into both the evidence base review and the LPR and will help to inform future policy on open space provision in the Local Plan. Shropshire
- 1.3 The scope and findings of the Report have been undertaken in accordance with Shropshire Council's Consultancy Brief (April 2016). Broadly the Consultants Brief included the following requirements:
- To review and update the PMP 2009 Open Space and Recreation typology standards;
 - To review and update the PMP 2009 Open Space and Recreation study in relation to changes in national planning policy requirements and current best practice;
 - To conduct site visits and collect data to compare with the existing data from the PMP 2009 Open Space and Recreation study (supplied by Shropshire Council);
 - To identify and prioritise open space and recreational improvements as a contributor to relevant Shropshire Place Plans (see background below).
- 1.4 This Report should therefore be considered a review and update of the PMP Consultants Report 2009 with the specific aims of:
- Understanding the current quantitative provision of Public Open Space and Recreation areas in Shropshire;
 - Assessing existing Public Open Space and Recreation provision and any potential gaps, deficits or surplus in current supply and provision;
 - Informing a critical review of the current strategic approach to planning Public Open Space,

1.5 This Report is based upon, as far practical, the previous PMP Consultants Report 2009 and seeks to emulate methodologies conducted as part of that study. It should be noted that the PMP Consultants Report 2009 was conducted based on the now obsolete Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17) Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation and supporting documents (May 2005), which was superseded in 2012 by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

1.6 Paragraph 73 of the NPPF states that:

“Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. The assessments should identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities in the local area. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sports and recreational provision is required”.

1.7 The NPPF highlights that it is for each local authority to assess open space requirements within their area. This Report, together with the PMP Consultants Report 2009 and the Shropshire Council Green Space Accessibility/Connectivity review will be used as an evidence base for production of a policy document that will inform the Partial Local Plan Review 2016-2036. However, the assessment presented in this report should be considered in the context of the overall scope of the Consultants Brief. This Report is specifically intended to provide continuity and an update to the PMP 2009 report. This has determined the scope of the assessment and methodology employed by Red Kite Network Limited.

1.8 The principal audience for this Report is Shropshire Council. It is envisaged that Shropshire Council will use the data and information as part of the evidence base required for the Partial Local Plan Review. It is anticipated that the data will also be used to support wider strategic planning of Open Space throughout Shropshire.

1.9 The format and presentation of the Report is designed to provide a general summary of the context and findings, structured to align closely with the format of the original PMP report from 2009. To ensure that the report is succinct, where possible data analysis is presented as appendices. Broadly the content and purpose of each chapter is as follows.

- **Introduction-** General context and rationale for the assessment.
- **Background-** Contextual background to the assessment including planning policy.
- **Methodology-** Summary of the approach used for the assessment and variations since the previous PMP Consultants Report 2009.

- **Understanding existing supply of open spaces**- Current position statement in relation to Open Space and relevant Place Plans together with quality assessment and summary of responses from Town and Parish Councils.
- **Setting the standard**- Explanation and rationale for Open Space benchmarks and minimum standards.
- **Conclusions** - Summary of assessment, comments on the scope and limitations of the adopted methodology and recommendations for future actions and planning responses.
- **Long term strategic actions for open spaces**- Headline issues and opportunities for ongoing strategic planning of Open Space.

1.8 The information and data contained within this Report has been compiled and presented to be used to assist Shropshire Council in determining future Open Space and Recreation Needs for Shropshire until 2036. The data and information presented should be seen as a “snap shot” in time and is based upon quantitative and qualitative data supplied by Shropshire Council to Red Kite Network Limited during 2017. It is anticipated that Shropshire Council will update the data as and when necessary, and compare these findings to those from the spatial analysis and other assessments in order to monitor and measure progress towards meeting prescribed standards for Open Spaces.

1.9 Whilst every effort has been made by Red Kite Network Limited to ensure this report is accurate at the time of publication, Red Kite Network Limited do not accept any liability for any inaccuracies, omissions or errors. Reference should be made to Shropshire Council in respect of spatial analysis and hard data related to open space provision. The general limitations of the methodology are outlined in section 3.0 below.

2.0 Background

2.1 Geographical context

- 2.1.1 Shropshire is a large landlocked county within the West Midlands. Generally rural in character, Shropshire has 18 key market towns with an overall population of circa 310,000. The distribution of the population is largely centred on the county town of Shrewsbury with circa 75,000 residents. The remaining population is located within market towns with sparse and sometime isolated settlements and population to the south and west of the County. In 2017 it is estimated that there is approximately 2500 hectares of Open Space within Shropshire.
- 2.1.2 Shropshire Council is a unitary local authority covering the County of Shropshire with the exception of the Borough of Telford and Wrekin. Shropshire Council is responsible for a range of public services include Planning Policy and Development Control, Leisure and Culture, Housing, Education and Social Care. Within the context of Open Spaces, Shropshire Council takes the lead on Planning Policy and is also a service provider of several public open spaces throughout the County. There are 152 Town and Parish Councils in Shropshire, with varying degrees of responsibility for Open Spaces. The majority of Open Spaces are owned, managed and maintained by Town and Parish Council. For example, Shrewsbury Council, considered to be one the largest Town Councils in England, owns and manages circa 1094 hectares (ha) of open space.

2.2 Socio demographic context

- 2.2.1 The latest Office for National Statistics (ONS) mid year (2016) figures estimate a population of 313,373 people living in Shropshire. The population is estimated to have increased by 8.1% between 2001 and 2011. Population density is low at 0.96 people per ha when compared to the overall 4.09 for England.
- 2.2.2 In 2015 the average age of residents in Shropshire was 44. Approximately 44% of residents are over the age of 50, which relatively high compared to the figure of 36.4% for the West Midlands.
- 2.2.3 The distribution of the population is largely rural with a higher proportion of residents (175,469) living in rural areas compared to 130,660 living in urban areas. Approximately 98% of the Shropshire population are considered to be of white ethnic origin.
- 2.2.3 It is estimated by ONS that the population of Shropshire will increase by approximately 7.4% to reach 336,531 in 2036. However, it should be noted that these projections do not include the latest data for housing development; in some areas the rate of population increase will be significantly higher and this may result in overall population growth that is higher than the projected estimate.

2.3 Planning policy context

2.3.1 Shropshire Council's current Local Plan (2006-2026) comprises of the Core Strategy (2011) and the Site Allocations and Management of Development of Adopted Plan (SAMDev 2015).

2.3.2 Relevant Open Space policies within the Core Strategy (2011) include:

Policy CS6 – Sustainable Design and Development Principles

This policy promotes high quality design and sustainable development principles. The policy seeks to ensure that all development contributes to the health and wellbeing of communities, including safeguarding residential and local amenity and the achievement of local standards for the provision and quality of open space, sport and recreational facilities.

Policy CS8 – Facilities, Services and Infrastructure Provision

Policy CS8 seeks to ensure the protection and enhancement of existing facilities and services that contribute to quality of life. Open space and green infrastructure is referenced in this policy.

Policy CS9 – Infrastructure Contributions

Open Space is forms part of this policy.

Policy CS17 – Environmental Networks

The policy seeks to identify, protect, enhance and connect Shropshire's environmental assets to create a multifunctional network of natural and historic resources.

2.3.3 Relevant Open Space policies within the SAMDev (2015) include:

Policy MD1 : Scale and Distribution of Development

Sets out the proposals for the sustainable development of settlements and the number of dwellings per settlement to be delivered by 2026.

Policy MD2 : Sustainable Design

This policy requires development to contribute to the local character and amenity of an area by enhancing, incorporating or recreating natural assets in accordance with policy MD12.

The policy also considers the design of landscape and Open Space holistically as part of the whole development to provide safe, useable and well connected outdoor spaces, including natural and semi-natural features, and providing at least 30sqm of Open Space per person that meets local needs.

MD12 – The Natural Environment

This policy details the level of protection for natural assets, including the Shropshire Hills AONB.

- 2.3.4 Shropshire Council has embarked on a Partial Review of the Local Plan for the period 2016-2036. This is being undertaken in accordance with NPPF guidance largely to address long term provision for population growth, employment land and housing. The Local Development Scheme (LDS) sets out a proposed timescale for the Partial Review of the Local Plan over a three year period between 2017 and 2020. It is anticipated that the Partial Review of the Local Plan will be submitted to the Secretary of State in December 2018 and formally adopted in March 2020.
- 2.3.5 A Preferred Scale and Distribution of Development Consultation was undertaken between October and December 2017. This Report will assist with the results of the consultation and inform the strategic approach to planning Open Space in relation to planned housing development.

2.4 Shropshire Place Plans

- 2.4.1 Within Shropshire, each main settlement/market town and the surrounding area has a Place Plan. There are 18 Place Plans and each document is based on local community consultation and needs. The Place Plan areas are:

- Albrighton
- Bishop's Castle
- Bridgnorth
- Broseley
- Church Stretton
- Cleobury Mortimer
- Craven Arms
- Ellesmere
- Highley
- Ludlow
- Market Drayton
- Minsterley and Pontesbury
- Much Wenlock
- Oswestry
- Shifnal
- Shrewsbury
- Wem
- Whitchurch

2.4.2 Each Place Plan supports and informs the Local Plan. The main focus of the Place Plans relate to infrastructure and investment needs including utility services, transport, schools, community and leisure facilities. For example, in terms of Open Space provision, the Place Plan for Albrighton identifies a need for additional adult football pitch and a new childrens' play area. The key aims of each Place Plan are to:

- Provide a focus for us to target service delivery at locally identified priorities;
- Support delivery of Shropshire's Local Plan - ensuring new development is supported by the necessary infrastructure, including identifying requirements for development contributions (including CIL, S106 and on-site design);
- Assist in informing planning decisions - forming a material consideration for planning applications;
- Inform local partnership working - ensuring an agreed set of local priorities, coordinating actions and informing difficult decisions on where future resources should be targeted;
- Assist with external funding bids - providing evidence of local investment needs and priorities;
- Provide transparency to local communities - identifying where local investment is being targeted;
- Provide an area based resource of local information and evidence- designed to help inform and shape future decisions by all concerned with addressing important local issues.

2.4.3 Accordingly, this assessment is designed to inform and provide supporting data for the long-term requirements for Open Space for each Place Plan.

2.5 PMP Consultants Report 2009

2.5.1 PMP Consultants were commissioned in 2008 to prepare an assessment of open space, sport and recreational facilities. The assessment was undertaken to comply with PPG17 and brought together previous studies for the then local authorities of Shropshire namely: Bridgnorth, North Shropshire, Oswestry, Shrewsbury and Atcham, South Shropshire and Shropshire County Council. The assessment and report was undertaken at the time of the formation of the new unitary local authority for Shropshire; Shropshire Council.

2.5.2 The key aims and objectives of the study were to:

- Provide an understanding of local needs and aspirations;
- Compile a full audit of existing open space, sport and recreation facilities across the County
- Develop local standards that when applied, will ensure that all households can access a broad range of high quality open space, sport and recreation facilities;

- Highlight areas where there is sufficient or over provision and identify areas where there are deficiencies in either the quantity and/or quality of provision;
- Provide clarity and reasonable certainty to developers and landowners with regards to contributions to new open space, sport and recreation facilities of qualitative improvements to existing facilities through S106 agreements and Community Infrastructure Levy.

2.5.3 The methodology conducted as part of the assessment was designed to comply with the requirements of PPG17 and in summary included:

- **Step 1 – identifying local needs.** Community consultation using a range of techniques and qualitative and quantitative data gathering;
- **Step 2 – auditing local provision.** Mapping and identification of quantity of open space, overall condition or quality, accessibility and wider benefits;
- **Steps 3 & 4 – setting and applying provision standards.** Determining and setting standards based on national standards, local standards and community consultation.
- **Step 5 – drafting policies – recommendations and strategic priorities.** Determining long term open space priorities for towns and settlements.

2.5.4 The PMP report was issued in 2009 and was subsequently used by Shropshire Council to inform their Open Space Interim Planning Guidance (2012).

2.6 Shropshire Council Open Space Interim Planning Guidance (2012)

2.6.1 In January 2012, Shropshire Council adopted the Interim Planning Guidance (IPG) for Open Space to elaborate on Core Strategy Policies (see paragraph 2.3.2 above). The IPG was based on the evidence and data collated by PMP Consultants in 2009.

2.6.2 The IPG forms the existing Open Space Quantity Standard for Shropshire and seeks to ensure 3.00ha of Open Space per 1000 head of population (or 30m² per person) in relation to planned residential development. This figure is based on an amalgamation of Open Space typologies identified within the PMP Consultants 2009 report. The typologies include parks, amenity open space, provision for young children, provision for young people, natural and semi natural green space and allotments.

2.6.4 The IPG goes on to establish accessibility standards for Open Space. This is based on the PMP Consultants Report 2009 and identifies catchments for Open Space based on nationally prescribed or locally derived standards.

2.6.3 The table below sets out the current Open Space Quantity and Accessibility Standards for Shropshire.

Typology	Quantity Standard	Accessibility Standard
Local Parks	0.23 ha per 1000 population – above the existing level of provision	10 minute walk time in settlements large enough to require a park (determined by the application of the quantity standard). 20 minute drive time in all other settlements.
Country Parks	No standard set	20 minute drive time
Natural and Semi Natural Open Space	2.00 ha per 1000 population, to be applied to new provision only	Shrewsbury – 5 minutes walk time (240m) Market Towns and Smaller Settlements – 10 minutes walk time (480m)
Amenity Green Space	0.66 ha per 1000 population (Shrewsbury) 0.45 hectares per 1000 population (Market Towns) and 0.35hectares (Smaller Settlements– an increase on the existing level of provision in all areas	10 minute walk time
Provision for Children	0.035 ha per 1000 population (Shrewsbury) 0.105 hectares per 1000 population (Market Towns) and 0.105 hectares (Smaller Settlements– an increase on the existing level of provision in all areas	10 minute walk time
Provision for young people	0.055ha per 1000 population – this represents an increase on existing levels of provision	10 minute walk time
Outdoor Sports Facilities	Shrewsbury - Four strategically located multi-pitch sites, providing for competition and training, with good quality on-site changing and toilet provision, appropriate for, and accessible to, all user types. A minimum of 1 multi pitch site	20 minute drive time to each facility type

Typology	Quantity Standard	Accessibility Standard
	per Market Town providing for competition and training At least one playing pitch site per large village / village cluster	
Allotments	0.22 ha per 1000 population Above existing level of provision	10 minute drive time
Cemeteries and Churchyards	N/A. Indicative standard of 0.16 ha per annum required for burials	No standard set

- 2.6.4 The IPG seeks to also create a connecting network of functional and useable Open Space and to avoid piecemeal or small pocket parks, which may limit and sometimes negate the intended use multifunctional spaces. The Open Space Quality and Accessibility Standards are therefore seen as the minimum acceptable standard for Open Space provision and are used as the starting point of negotiations with developers.
- 2.6.5 The adopted Open Space standards currently used by Shropshire Council are outlined in the tables below.

Shropshire's Open Space Quantity Standard

Typology	Quantity Standard
Open Space <i>(Incorporating local parks, amenity open space, provision for children, provision for young people, natural and semi natural open space and allotments)</i>	3.00 ha per 1000 population <i>(equivalent to 30 square metres per person)</i>

Shropshire's Open Space Accessibility Standard

Typology	Accessibility Standard
Amenity Open Space	10 minute walk time
Recreational Open Space	10 minute walk time
Natural and Semi Natural Open Space	Shrewsbury – 5 minutes walk time (240m) Market Towns and Smaller Settlements – 10 minutes walk time (480m)

3.0 Methodology

3.1 General

- 3.1.1 The methodology conducted for the Shropshire Open Space Needs Assessment was conducted in accordance with the brief issued to Red Kite Network Limited. A small Project Group was established to help guide the production of the Assessment. The Project Group consisted of Officers from Shropshire Council’s Planning Policy, Outdoor Recreation and Leisure Teams. Informal ad hoc meetings were organised throughout 2017/18 with ongoing dialogue between Red Kite Network Limited personnel and Officers.
- 3.1.2 In general terms, the approach to the assessment was designed to reflect and build upon a previous study conducted by PMP Consultants in 2009. Where possible previous methodologies employed by PMP Consultants were replicated. It should be noted that the previous PMP Consultants Report of 2009 collated a data set, which related back to several open space studies conducted prior to the formation of Shropshire Council as a unitary authority. The overall method for this Report therefore focused on updating data where necessary, refreshing mapping of Open Space within County and assessing standards for provision. Consultation with local households and users of Open Space was limited largely due to financial constraints. However, Town and Parish Councils were asked to assist and make general observations about Open Space in their area.

3.2 Assessing quantity of Open Space

- 3.2.1 The first stage of the assessment focused determining the existing quantitative provision of public Open Space with Shropshire. The data set compiled by PMP Consultants in 2009 was used as the baseline position and Shropshire Council Officers updated the data set with known acquisitions and disposals of Open Space that had taken place since 2009. The data set was revised accordingly and issued to Red Kite Network Limited (see appendix A). 1577 individual Open Spaces were identified within Shropshire.
- 3.2.2 Shropshire Council’s GIS mapping system was also updated to reflect the revised data set. Each area of Open Space was incorporated into the GIS system with polygons of Open Space assigned a unique reference number and typology. The typologies assigned were those used as part of the previous PMP Consultants Report 2009 and are defined below.

Typology	General description	Primary purpose/function
Parks and gardens	Areas designated as parks which provide facilities (for example footpaths, play facilities, recreational areas) within a countryside or urban setting. Includes country parks, urban parks, heritage venues and formal gardens. Parks usually contain a variety of facilities, and may have one of more of the other types of open space within them e.g. sports pitches or children's play space.	Formal and informal recreation open space venues for community events, leisure and tourism.
Natural and semi natural green space	Includes publicly accessible woodlands, urban forestry, scrub, grasslands, wasteland.	Areas managed primarily for habitats and species. Including environmental education and interpretation.
Green corridors	Includes towpaths along canals and riverbanks, cycleways, rights of way and disused railway lines.	Green Infrastructure linking Open Spaces. Used for walking, cycling and horse riding. Species migration and linear habitats.
Amenity Green Space	Most commonly but not exclusively found in housing areas. Includes informal recreation green spaces and village greens.	Open Space primarily within residential areas designed to create visual value and sense of place. Used for informal children's play.
Children's play areas	Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children below aged 12. While it is recognised that a wide variety of opportunities for children exist (including play schemes and open spaces not specifically designed for this purpose), as per PPG17, this typology considers only those spaces specifically designed as equipped play facilities.	Formally designed areas of equipped play for children.

Typology	General description	Primary purpose/function
Provision for young people	<p>Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving young people aged 12 and above. While it is recognised that a wide variety of opportunities for young people exist (including youth clubs and open spaces not specifically designed for this purpose, as per PPG17, this typology considers only those spaces specifically designed for use by young people eg:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teenage shelters • skateboard parks • BMX tracks 	Formally designed areas for activities and young people to socialise.
Outdoor sports	<p>Natural or artificial surfaces either publicly or privately owned used for sport and recreation. Includes school playing fields. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • outdoor sports pitches • tennis courts and bowls greens • golf courses • athletics tracks • playing fields (including school playing fields) water sports. 	Formal spaces for outdoor sports.
Allotments	<p>Opportunities for those people who wish to do so to grow their own produce as part of the long-term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion. May also include urban farms or community gardens. This typology does not include private gardens.</p>	Propagation/cultivation of fruit and vegetables for domestic use.
Churchyards and cemeteries	<p>Cemeteries and churchyards including disused churchyards and other burial grounds.</p>	Burial or cremation of dead often used by bereaved for quiet contemplation.
Civic spaces	<p>Hard surfaced areas located within town centres.</p>	Community, heritage or cultural events and activities such as Remembrance Sunday.

3.2.3 Following the compilation of the data set and revised GIS mapping of Open Space the data and mapping were reviewed by Red Kite Network Limited and Shropshire Council Officers to determine any obvious anomalies. Several reiterations were made and then agreed by Shropshire Council.

3.2.4 The data was then analysed by Red Kite Network Limited to determine the overall quantity of Open Space typologies in Shropshire against existing population figures. This was then further broken down by Place Plan analysis. The overall quality for each typology and hectares of provision per 1000 head of population derived.

3.3 Assessing the quality of Open Space

3.3.1 In conjunction with the quantity assessment, a quality assessment of Open Spaces within Shropshire was also undertaken. Red Kite Network Limited prepared the criteria, scoring and methodology for the quality assessment (see appendix B) and provided training for a representative of Shropshire Council to complete a quality assessment. The assessment criteria were based on the PMP Consultants Report 2009 in order to maintain parallels with the original methodology. In the original 2009 report all sites were assessed; for this report 500 Open Spaces were selected at random by Shropshire Council and each one assessed using the criteria and scored accordingly. The overall quality score for each Open Space assessed was then incorporated within the main data set.

3.4 Assessing the accessibility and use of Open Space

3.4.1 Following the quantity and quality assessment, consultation with the Town and Parish Councils was undertaken. Contact details for Town and Parish Councils within Shropshire were obtained from the Shropshire Association of Local Councils (SALC). Each Town and Parish Council were contacted by email and provided information about Open Space in their area. A web link to Shropshire Council's Open Space GIS map and an excel spreadsheet of Open Space was provided. Town and Parish Councils were asked to review and "sense check" any errors or omissions of Open Space in their area. In addition, Town and Parish Councils were asked to complete a short on line survey and comment, in general terms, about the quantity, quality and accessibility of Open Space in their area. The response rate was low with 54 Town and Parish Councils responding to relevant parts of the survey; some sections only received 2 responses. This level of response is not suitable for statistical analysis but will be used as a qualitative source to underpin findings from other consultations for the relevant typologies.

3.5 Limitations of the methodology

3.5.1 The methodology conducted as part of the study was limited by available resources. Given the resources available, the methodology for the assessment focused on obtaining and updating quantitative information for Open Space. Where practical, methodologies from the PMP

Consultants Report 2009 were followed. However, the following limitations of the assessment should be noted.

- **Quantity data-** The data set used for the assessment was derived from the original PMP Consultations Report 2009. Any inaccuracies or errors were not verified. The data was updated by Shropshire Council in 2017/18 and is considered to provide only a “snap shot” of Open Space in time. It should be noted that the previous PMP Consultants 2009 Report analysed quantitative data by Large Towns, Market Towns and Smaller Settlements in an effort to reflect the diverse and often isolated nature of settlements across Shropshire. Since 2009, Place Plans have now been developed to reflect market towns and their sphere of influence. This was done to make the data gathered for this Report directly compatible with the Place Plan areas, however it does limit the ability to directly compare the findings of this Report with the data from 2009 due to the use of a different set of spatial boundaries.
- **Quality-** The 2009 report include a comprehensive audit of all open spaces. Due to budgetary constraint the quality audit of open spaces for this Report was limited to only 500 venues. This equates to only 30% of Open Spaces within the County. This provides a useful snapshot of information about those sites, at that time, but because each site is different this data cannot be used to make a general assessment of all sites. Although the quality audit was conducted using the same method as the PMP Consultants 2009 Report, it should be noted that the assessor differed from the previous study so the subjective assessment will differ between individuals. In addition, quality assessments can be subjective and may be influenced by seasonal variations or indeed natural bias. Due to these limitations in methodology and data set any like for like comparison of changes in perceived quality should therefore be considered in this context.
- **Accessibility-** Threshold or catchment analysis was not undertaken as part of this assessment. Consultation to determine perception and patterns of uses, drive and walk times were limited to on line correspondence with Town and Parish Councils. For example, household surveys and on-site visitor surveys were not undertaken to determine how far people are will to travel to different typologies of Open Space. Shropshire Council are producing their own quantitative analysis of accessibility and catchment areas using detailed GIS mapping. Accessibility standards will be reviewed by Shropshire Council when they have completed their analysis.
- **Value-** As part the PMP Consultants 2009 Report, the wider benefits of Open Spaces were considered. This included issues such as proximity and connective to other Open Spaces. Value judgements about Open Space in relation to quantitative and qualitative

provision are not within the scope of this Report. An assessment of proximity and connectivity will form part of the analysis being conducted by Shropshire Council.

- **Neighbouring authorities-** Within this type of assessment, it is usually convention to consider cross border use of Open Space with neighbouring local authorities. For example, residents to the south of the County may well use Open Spaces in North Worcestershire and Herefordshire. This “hinterland” of activity may include many Open Spaces that are used by Shropshire residents and likewise could be quite adequately be provide any perceived deficiencies in quantitative provision.
- **Hierarchies of Open Space-** The location, size, type and facilities provided at Open Spaces can generate quite significant catchments. Country Parks, such as Severn Valley Country Park are known for example to serve a large population and considered to be a “destination” venue. Likewise, other parks in settlements such Severn Park in Bridgnorth may only have a town wide or neighbourhood catchment. This differentiation is important when considering long term strategies for investment. There may for example, be a requirement for a more even distribution of “destination” spaces with Shropshire and this should perhaps be considered at a later date. The PMP Consultants Report 2009, divided Country Parks and Local Parks into two separate hierarchies within the Parks and Gardens typology. The rationale for this stated that Country Parks were outside of Settlement Areas and served a large catchment of population. However this Report focuses on Place Plans, which encompass market towns and smaller settlements. For the purposes of this assessment, Country Parks have not been differentiated and are included within the calculations for Parks and Gardens. Shropshire Council are developing a defined standard for appropriate catchment areas for a hierarchy of open spaces of different functions and sizes, based on the Natural England ANG standards which use this approach.
- **Outdoor Sports-** Although the data collation captured existing outdoor sport provision, a detailed assessment of outdoor sport pitches e.g. football and tennis for formal recreation has not been undertaken as this falls outside the scope of this report. Outdoor sport should be considered in greater detail in accordance with methodologies prescribed by Sport England. However, data contained within this report may be utilised as baseline information to inform a more detailed assessment of outdoor sport provision. Sports facilities should be included in any typology assessment conducted by Shropshire Council.

4.0 Understanding the existing supply of open spaces

4.1 Introduction

4.1.2 This section of the Report outlines the current (2017/18) provision of Open Space within Shropshire based on the criteria and mapping used for this assessment. An overall total for Shropshire is outlined with more detailed analysis for each of the 18 Shropshire Place Plans provided within appendix D.

4.2 Quantity of Open Space within Shropshire 2017/18

4.2.1 The table below sets out the overall quantity of Open Space by typology in Shropshire based on the typologies used in the 2009 report and current population estimates.

Typology	Overall Provision (Hectares)	Provision (Hectares) per 1000 population
Parks and gardens	710.93	2.283
Natural and semi natural green space	517.27	1.6611
Green corridors	3.65	0.00117
Amenity Green Space	131.99	0.4238
Children's play areas	20.17	0.0647
Provision for young people	8.24	0.0264
Outdoor sports	976.77	3.1367
Allotments	26.08	0.0837
Churchyards and cemeteries	107.88	0.3464
Civic spaces	0.46	0.0014
Total all typologies	2503.43	8.0392

4.2.2 The table below set out the overall quantity of Open Space within each Place Plan area based on current population estimates.

Place Plan	Overall Provision (Hectares)	Provision (Hectares) per 1000 population
Allbrighton	16.41	2.1038
Bishops Castle	46.72	4.4075
Bridgnorth	141.37	5.8417
Broseley	61.81	11.0375
Church Stretton	45.59	5.4927
Cleobury Mortimer	19.57	2.4772
Craven Arms	19.43	2.9892
Ellesmere	89.93	10.3367
Highley	58.43	14.2512
Ludlow	74.27	4.5564

Place Plan	Overall Provision (Hectares)	Provision (Hectares) per 1000 population
Market Drayton	88.19	3.8012
Much Wenlock	21.32	4.351
Oswestry	328.90	7.9636
Pontesbury and Minsterley	40.49	8.098
Shifnal	22.99	2.8382
Shrewsbury	1094.68	11.2159
Wem	165.07	10.2527
Whitchurch	168.37	11.1503

4.3 Quality of Open Space with Shropshire 2017/18

4.3.1 As part of the quality audit, 500 Open Spaces were assessed using the methodology conducted by PMP Consultants in 2009. The data for sites that were visited for the 2017 audit was then compared with data for the same sites from 2009 (see table below).

Place Plan	Quality percentage change since 2009
Albrighton	+9.73
Bishops Castle	+17.26
Bridgnorth	+6.40
Broseley	+1.49
Church Stretton	+10.19
Cleobury Mortimer	No results
Craven Arms	+12.74
Ellesmere	No results
Highley	No results
Ludlow	-8.51
Market Drayton	-20.0
Much Wenlock	No results
Oswestry	+21.55
Pontesbury and Minsterley	No results
Shifnal	+2.01
Shrewsbury	No results
Wem	+12.83
Whitchurch	+ 21.09

4.3.2 There was notably increased perception of quality of Open Space in Whitchurch, Wem, Bishops Castle, Oswestry and Craven Arms. There were notable decreases in overall perception of quality in Market Drayton and Ludlow. This may be attributed to a number of issues since 2009 so any direct comparison or assumptions should be avoided. However, an overall general trend

would indicate that there has been an increase in perceived quality of those Open Spaces assessed in 2017 when compared to those assessed in 2009. The areas reporting the largest perceived improvements in quality correlate fairly closely to the sites benefiting from improvements under the 2010-2012 Play Builder national investment programme.

4.4 Town and Parish Council Consultation 2017

4.4.1 The consultation undertaken with Town and Parish Councils within Shropshire during 2017 received 54 partial responses. This low level of response does not support statistically reliable analysis but can be used as a qualitative source to be used alongside findings from other consultations for the relevant typologies. The following general trends were identified by respondents.

- 63% felt that quantity of Open Space had remained the same during the last five years with 16% indicated a slight increase and 15% indicating a slight decrease.
- 49% stated that they felt that the amount of Open Space required in the next ten years would remain the same with 37% suggesting that there would need to be a slight increase.
- Of those stating that Open Space would need to be significant or slightly increased in the next ten years, amenity green space (42%) and provision for young people aged 12-18 years (19%) were identified as priorities for future provision.
- When asked about changes in quality of Open Spaces in the last five years, 47% suggested that quality had remained the same with 11% indicating a slight decline.
- When asked to consider the quality of Open Space in the ten years, 56% stated that it would remain the same, with 26% suggesting a slight increase and 11% a slight decline.
- 76% of respondents thought that the local community highly valued Open Spaces.
- Town and Parish Councils indicated that 77% of their local community used Open Spaces every day.
- When asked to consider the overall future provision of Open Space within their community in the next ten years, 27% stated that the amount of Open Space needed to increase; 27% suggested that the amount of Open Space needed to remain the same and 20% indicating that the quality of Open Space needed to improve.

4.4.2 Further details are provided in appendix C.

5.0 Reviewing the standards

5.1 General

5.1.1 There are a number of ways to calculate minimum standards for Open Space provision within Shropshire. The former PPG17 guidance suggested that Open Space standards should be based on a clear understanding of existing localised provision allied with comparison with other similar service providers and standards prescribed by National Governing Bodies concerned with public open space such as Sport England or Natural England. In order to provide a broad context for the review of Open Space standards, this report, has where possible emulated the philosophy of the former PPG17. Summarised below are general benchmarks and comparative standards for Open Space.

5.2.1 Standards or “benchmarks” for public Open Space typologies are relatively scarce and have historically been largely driven by the National Play Fields Association (NPFA) now Fields In Trust (FIT). Fields in Trust recognise that the determination of Open Space standards should not be viewed as an exact standard and should be determined locally depending on a range of factors e.g. community aspirations. Traditionally, it has been difficult to impose or suggested standards for public Open Space as some areas of the country do not provide public spaces. In the majority of cases where Open Spaces are provided, there are often long standing localised customs and practices for service provision, which can sometime hamper direct comparison with predetermined standards. The former PPG17 guide did provide a framework for determining Open Space standards based on local provision. This assumed a general calculation of existing provision and extrapolated this “average” as being the minimum standard. However, this approach does not consider any aspirational standards or indeed take into account local authority areas where there is discernible dearth of Open Space. The drive for a minimum standard based on average provision would only serve, in some circumstances, to exacerbate and perpetuate a shortfall in long term provision of Open Space. It is therefore necessary to consider and contrast national standards and other relevant benchmarks to provide a useful reference point for considered appropriate standards for Open Spaces in Shropshire. Minimum standards are important but do not address issues of quality and connectivity, and they should be used as part of a set of measures that work together to create a network of high quality open spaces that reflect local needs.

5.2 National Standards for Open Space

5.2.1 Fields In Trust have undertaken extensive analysis of Open Space minimum standards. Their documents, Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play (2008) and Guidance for Sport and Play: Beyond the Six Acre Standard (2015) are based on extensive consultation and comparative analysis and sets out the following *minimum* standards.

Typology	Quantity Standard (ha/1000 popn)	Accessibility Standard (walking distance)
Play space	0.8 ha	Local Area Play (LAP)- 100m Locally Equipped Area for Play - 400m Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play- 1000m
Multi Use Games Areas (MUGA) and Skateparks	0.3 ha	700m
Parks and Gardens	0.8 ha	710m
Amenity Greenspace	0.6 ha	480m
Natural and semi natural green space	1.8 ha	720m

5.2.2 Natural England have, since the late 1990s, advocated minimum standards for access to natural or semi natural spaces known as Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt). Their document, Nature Nearby: Accessible Greenspace Guidance (2010) recommends the following *minimum* standards.

- Everyone, wherever they live, should have an accessible natural greenspace of at least 2 hectares in size, no more than 300 metres (5 minutes walk) from home;
- At least one accessible 20 hectare site within two kilometres of home;
- One accessible 100 hectare site within five kilometres of home; and
- One accessible 500 hectare site within ten kilometres of home; plus
- a minimum of one hectare of statutory Local Nature Reserves per thousand population.

The ANGSt model does not suggest provision of natural or semi natural green spaces per 1000 head of the population. However, the general presumption is that everyone should have easy access to natural spaces within 5 minutes walk of their home.

5.3 Benchmarks for Open Space Standards

5.3.1 Within comparable Open Space assessments for local authority areas, regard is often given to comparing or “benchmarking” standards. Whilst this can be useful exercise, it does not take into consideration the many (and varied) local demographic, geographic, historic, social and economic factors that form the often unique fabric of Open Spaces within local authority areas.

5.3.2 For example the Scottish Government has recently undertaken a considerable amount of proactive research to map and determine Open Space standards. Part of this detail seeks to determine Open Space provision across of range of built development. In the context of residential development, the *minimum* standard is:

- 60m² total open space per household comprising:
- 40m² of open space per household, divided between parks, sports areas, green corridors, semi-natural space and civic space.
- 20m² per household of informal play / recreation space and equipped play areas.

5.3.2 Likewise, the vast majority of local authorities within England have prepared Open Space Studies to inform requirements for their respective Local Plans. There are no known mechanisms for formally comparing local authority service provision, however similar studies conducted elsewhere within England can provide an indicative illustration of Open Space delivery with value as a reference point when assessing quantitative provision. Outlined below are two case studies drawn from recently conducted and adopted local authority studies.

5.3.3 City of York Local Plan Evidence Base: Open Space and Green Infrastructure (2014)

Typology	Open Space Standard per Ha/1000 popn.
Parks	0.18
Natural/Semi Natural	2.13
Amenity	1.45
Children's playspace	0.25
Outdoor sports facilities	1.78
Allotments	0.29

5.3.4 Stafford Borough Council Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment (June 2013)

Typology	Open Space Standard per m ² per person	Open Space Standard Converted to ha/1000 popn
Parks and amenity green space	Urban- 15 Rural- 10	Urban 1.5 Rural 1.0
Play provision	0.45	0.045
Outdoor sports pitches	14.6	1.46
Allotments	Urban- 3.5 Rural- 1.6	Urban 0.35 Rural 0.16

5.4 Shropshire Open Space Standards and Benchmarks

5.4.1 For the purposes of the assessment, and based on the information above, the following benchmark standards have been used to illustrate and compare current Open Space provision within Shropshire.

Typology	Benchmark standard	Benchmark Standard (Hectares) per 1000 population
Parks and gardens	Fields In Trust	0.8
Natural and semi natural green space	Fields In Trust	1.8
Green corridors	None available	0
Amenity Green Space	Fields In Trust	0.6
Children's play areas	Fields in Trust	0.8
Provision for young people	Fields In Trust	0.3
Outdoor sports	City of York	1.78
Allotments	City of York	0.29
Churchyards and cemeteries	None available	0
Civic spaces	None available	0

5.4.2 The benchmarks, when compared to existing Open Space, reveal the current indicative deficit and surplus of provision in Shropshire.

Typology	Current provision of Shropshire Open Space (2017) Hectares per 1000 population	Benchmark Standard (Hectares) per 1000 population	Surplus/deficit
Parks and gardens	2.283	0.18	+2.103
Natural and semi natural green space	1.6611	1.8	-0.4689
Green corridors	0.00117	0	0
Amenity Green Space	0.4238	0.6	-0.18
Children's play areas	0.0647	0.8	- 0.7353
Provision for young people	0.0264	0.3	-0.27
Outdoor sports	3.1367	1.6	+1.5367
Allotments	0.0837	0.3	- 0.2163
Churchyards and cemeteries	0.3464	0	0
Civic spaces	0.0014	0	0

6.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

- 6.1.1 The primary purpose of this report was to provide an updated set of data that would follow, and provide continuity to the findings of the PMP 2009 report. In doing so it has also provided an opportunity to assess how well the scope of that methodology, and the standards informed by it, fit with the changing situation in Shropshire and current concepts of how Open Space functions in planning as a contributor to health and wellbeing, transport, air quality and wildlife and biodiversity objectives.
- 6.1.2 The data collected and presented in the Report provides a detailed snapshot of Open Space in Shropshire. Observed changes in quality recorded during the site visits provide a measure of the effectiveness of investment and improvements carried out since 2009; for example many of the areas showing a significant improvement in quality were selected for improvements and new equipment under the 2010-2012 Play Builder national investment programme.
- 6.1.3 Other findings relating to the provision of each type of Open Space and comparison of these to proposed benchmark standards provide indications of which types may need to be prioritised in each area and create a point of reference to check against the findings of other Open Space analysis being conducted by Shropshire Council.
- 6.1.4 The consultation of Town and Parish Councils did not receive a large enough set of responses to be statistically reliable, but it does provide a valuable qualitative measure of perceptions, useful in itself and as a framework for further qualitative research. This is essential for a balanced assessment and to ensure that provision reflects the priorities of local communities as well as evidence from quantitative data.
- 6.1.5 The 2009 methodology, adapted for this Report as stipulated in the Client Brief is well designed for assessing individual sites in detail and the provision of the various types of Open Space within the Place Plan areas, recorded as a simple spatial total of hectares per capita. This approach is very much a product of the way Open Space planning was conducted in 2009.
- 6.1.6 The limitations of this approach are that it does not provide a means of assessing whether the sites (and links) work well as component parts of a coherent network, and that without a catchment area analysis it cannot detect the reality of variations in access and provision within each Place Plan area. The total quantity of Open Space within a particular Place Plan area might meet the standard, but despite this it could be located in such a way that most of the population of that area does not have satisfactory access to it.
- 6.1.7 Open Space planning in 2017 places greater emphasis on the need to consider Open Spaces as parts of a larger functional network of open space and green corridors that link them to each other and function as a transport network. Assessing and planning the overall quality,

accessibility, and connectivity of a wider network of open spaces will require a different analytical approach and a different set of criteria to be used as a basis for setting new standards. It is understood that Shropshire Council are currently conducting a spatial analysis of Open Space provision using GIS mapping based on the ANGSt model, specifically to address these issues.

6.2 Recommendation

- 6.2.1 It is recommended that the findings of this Report are used together with the findings of Shropshire Council's spatial analysis and any other data sources, to provide a separate evidence base document to inform the Local Plan Review. This should then be used as the basis for setting new standards that reflect the priorities, opportunities and challenges of Open Space in Shropshire in 2018.
- 6.2.2 It is recommended that the Open Space Standards set by the IPG (2017) remain unchanged until the data required to make a full assessment has been collected by Shropshire Council, as described above.