



West Oxfordshire District Council



Public Open Space Audit

2008

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WODC Public Open Space Audit 2008

1. Introduction

1.1. This Open Space Audit has been produced by West Oxfordshire District Council to complement the existing PPG17 Study produced by Strategic Leisure Ltd in 2006. The audit is also closely linked to guidance given in Planning Policy Guidance Note 17.

1.2. The purpose of this study is to identify areas of Public Open Space (POS) within five larger settlements of West Oxfordshire. These settlements are; **Witney, Carterton, Chipping Norton, Eynsham and Woodstock**. The aim is to produce individual maps showing the POS for each settlement, and a spreadsheet with all the data recorded on it. Such auditing will enable local authorities to access, identify and reference relevant data on particular POS sites.

2. Definition

2.1. Open space is defined in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as land laid out as a public garden, or used for the purposes of public recreation, or land which is a burial ground. However, open space should be taken to mean all open space with public access, including not just land, but also areas of water such as rivers and lakes which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can also act as a visual amenity.

3. Methodology

3.1. The first stage of the study was to identify the current open spaces within and adjoining the five settlements (*listed earlier*). Aerial photographs, Ordnance Survey landline maps and other data supplied by the District and County Councils were used to distinguish the areas of open space for each settlement. All potential open spaces were then mapped onto a GIS overlay and given an individual typology. When deciding what type should be attributed to each area of open space it was important to note that all sites have varying characteristics and uses, therefore their typology relates to their primary purpose.

3.2. The following list illustrates the broad range of open space typologies used in the Strategic Leisure Study which were also used for the purpose of this audit:

i. Allotment

An area of local community importance and generally managed and maintained by local population. With a range of high education and health values, areas are normally restricted in their access.

ii. Amenity Greenspace

Housing Amenity Land:

An area of public space less than two hectares serving a 200 metre catchment. In addition to improving residential amenity, these may contain facilities such as seating areas or a playground.

iii. Church/Cemetery

Displaying a distinct historic quality and landscape form with specialist horticulture and arboriculture management, and of spiritual importance. Usually with clearly demarcated boundaries and appropriate signage.

iv. Civic Space

Public Squares:

Land including civic and market squares, and other hard surfaced areas designed for pedestrians.

v. Parks and Gardens

a) Village Green/Recreational:

Formal area maintained to a high standard with opportunities to participate in outdoor sports and recreation at a local level.

b) Village Green Amenity:

Formal area laid out and maintained to a high standard, not used for active recreation rather an area for quiet contemplation and appreciation.

c) Country Estates:

Large Historic House, and Grounds that are open to the public. Buildings and gardens may be listed for their historic importance and act as a 'Honey Pot'. Often outlying land freely accessible whilst the inner hub is for fee paying visitors only.

vi. Provision for Children and Young People

Exclusive Play Areas, play equipment, seating, bins, dog free. High safety standards may be traditional fixed equipment or specifically designed areas and seating for young people.

vii. Semi-natural Sites

a) Ecological/ Ancient Monuments/ Woodlands/ Commons:

Requires specialist management and maintenance skills. The creation, protection and conservation of diverse flora and fauna areas are important. Interpretation and usage of these sites is important: - including woodlands, urban forestry, scrub, grasslands (e.g. commons and meadows) wetlands, open and running water, wastelands and derelict open land and rock areas.

viii. Sports Grounds

a) Institutional:

Often with well defined and secure boundaries. The land is attached to an establishment e.g. schools, hospitals, or university. These sites are often managed to a high standard and visibly are not part of the public realm.

b) Indoor Sports Facilities:

Swimming pools, indoor sports halls and leisure centres, indoor bowls centres and indoor tennis centres.

c) Outdoor Sports Facilities:

Formal sports pitches, changing facilities often with car parks, bins and benches, may be for Football, Cricket, Rugby, Hockey, Bowls or Tennis and are for members or fee paying users.

3.3. Once all the data had been edited into the mapping system, it was then transferred into an excel spreadsheet where additional information was added to each result. For example: where the sites were situated (e.g. road name), and the approximate area of the site in hectares. Each result was given an individual 'Site ID' which allowed for easy referencing between the spreadsheet and the map. Following preparation of the draft report, the relevant Town and Parish Councils provided further useful information.

4. Analysis of Results:

4.1. This part of the study examines the spatial and typology patterns found across the five main settlements, highlighting any similarities and anomalies that appeared.

i. Carterton –

- A considerable amount of housing amenity land is situated in the North-East quadrant of town on Defence Estates land. This area is due to be redeveloped in the next few years.
- Large areas of semi natural/ecological open space are situated on the perimeter of Carterton.
- There are 3 outdoor sports facilities positioned throughout the town, most of which are situated on the outskirts.
- Considering the size of Carterton, there seems to be a shortage of allotments. There is only one area of allotments covering 1.56 hectares, situated in the North, off Kilkenny Lane.

ii. Chipping Norton –

- Large areas of semi-natural land dominate the north-west of the town.
- Two large areas of allotment land are situated to the north and the south-east.
- Very little housing amenity land especially towards the historic town centre.
- Similar to other towns in the area, most of the POS is situated on the perimeter of the built-up areas.
- There are many outdoor leisure facilities covering large areas of land around the town such as the golf course to the east and the rugby football club situated to the south.

iii. Eynsham –

- There is a real scarcity of POS within the village, in particular there is very little housing amenity land.
- A large percentage of the POS is situated around the perimeter of the village especially to the south-east.
- Eynsham only has small areas of ecological/semi-natural land within the village but lies a relatively short distance from the River Thames.

iv. Witney –

- Generally there is a well dispersed pattern of POS throughout the town, in particular sports grounds and housing amenity land.
- Church Green is situated in the centre of town and provides a vital POS for the town centre.
- The River Windrush valley through Witney sub-divides into two areas and provides the two largest areas of open space which are of ecological value. Noticeably many outdoor facilities are situated on the outskirts of town.
- There are three allotment areas north of the A40 and one large allotment area situated just to the south of the A40. Three of the allotment areas are of substantial size; each one is over half a hectare, whereas the smallest allotment is only 0.07 of a hectare.

v. Woodstock –

- Most of the open space in Woodstock is dominated by sports ground, mainly institutional, found to the east of the town.
- Development is restricted on the south and west sides of the town due to the large area of private parkland (Blenheim Palace), covering most of the surrounding land.
- The River Glyme enters Woodstock to the north of the town providing a large area of ecological land.
- Similar to other settlements, there is very little POS in the historic town centre.