

Parks and gardens

Definition

- 7.1 This type of open space includes urban parks, formal gardens and country parks. These provide opportunities for informal recreation and community events. This typology also has many wider benefits including those revealed by the site assessments. Parks provide a sense of place for the local community, ecological and education benefits, help with social inclusion and provide structural and landscaping benefits.

Picture 7.1 Bodiam Castle (Site ID 423)



Strategic context and consultation

- 7.2 English Heritage completed a survey during 2003 looking at the provision of parks within England. The aims of the survey were to establish:
- how many adults in England use parks
 - what activities people take part in when visiting parks
 - the reasons people visit particular parks
 - the levels of satisfaction with the amenities on offer
 - why non-users do not use parks.
- 7.3 The definition of a park used in the survey was very broad and included both formal provision such as town parks, country parks, recreation grounds and also less formal provision such as village greens and common land.
- 7.4 The findings of the study were:
- just under two thirds of adults in England had visited a public park during the previous 12 months

- there is a distinct bias in the use of parks by social groups. Almost three quarters of adults from higher social groups visited parks regularly compared with only half of those from lower social groups
- people from black and ethnic minority communities and disabled adults also had relatively low levels of usage of parks
- 8 in 10 adults who had used a park in the previous 12 months did so at least once a month during the spring and summer. Almost two thirds visited a park at least once a week. Women tended to visit parks more often than men
- it is estimated that the 24.3 million adults who use parks make approximately 1.2 billion visits during the spring and summer months and 600 million visits during the autumn and winter months – a total of 1.8 billion visits a year
- the most popular type of park visited was an urban or city park.

Local consultation

- 7.5 Parks and gardens were identified as being the third most visited open space typology, behind natural/semi natural areas and beaches/coastal areas. 50% of respondents use them more than once a month with 13% not using them at all.
- 7.6 Of respondents who use a park or garden as their primary open space, 20% walk less than five minutes to reach it and a further 39% walk between five and ten minutes. The most significant problems were vandalism/graffiti and dog fouling. The consultation showed that the majority of respondents are content with the current quantity of parks and gardens in the District.
- 7.7 In addition to the consultation work undertaken by PMP, the Council have been undertaking site specific consultation on their own parks and gardens. The results are at an interim stage and only those regarding Egerton Park are statistically valid due to the level of responses.
- 7.8 The results showed that 10% of respondents visited the park 2 or 3 times a year and 83% visited in excess of 3 times a year. The frequency of usage changed by up to 6% depending on the time of year and the length of stay is longer during the weekend than weekday in both the summer and winter. On average 75% of respondents stayed over 30 minutes in the park during the summer but this falls to 54% during the winter.
- 7.9 The vast majority of respondents (93%) visited from their home with 64% coming by foot and 32% by car. 68% of journeys took less than 10 minutes whilst the top reasons for visiting included:
- to enjoy flowers and trees
 - see birds and wildlife
 - enjoy the beauty of the surroundings
 - for a walk
 - to take a shortcut
 - to get some fresh air.

- 7.10 The cleanliness of the site was rated as good or very good by 69% of respondents whilst 93% of respondents rated the ease of getting about the site as good or very good. Overall 74% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied by the overall impression of Egerton Park.

Current position

- 7.11 There are six parks and gardens in the District. These are:

- Battle Abbey (Battle)
- Gun gardens (Rye)
- Egerton Park (Bexhill)
- St Barnabas Gardens (Bexhill)
- Bodiam Castle (Bodiam)
- Bateman's (Burwash)
- The Almonry (Battle)
- Great Dixter (Northiam)
- Manor Gardens (Bexhill)
- Merriments Garden (Hurst Green)
- Pashley Manor Gardens (Hurst Green).

- 7.12 The sites vary greatly in size and in function and some are private and require an entry to use the facilities. The parks are also managed by different groups, including the District Council, parish councils, and the National Trust.

Setting provision standards

- 7.13 In setting local standards for parks and gardens there is a need to take into account any existing national or local standards, current provision, other local authority standards for comparison, findings from the site assessments and consultation on local needs. Full justifications for the local standards are provided within Appendices

Quantity

- 7.14 The eleven sites are distributed fairly evenly across urban and rural areas of the District. The most sites are located in West Rother and Bexhill. The average site size for the District is 1,91ha, however this figure is heavily weighted by the Bodiam Castle site in West Rother. Table 7.1 below provides a breakdown of the sites by analysis area.

Table 7.1 Analysis area breakdown

| Analysis area | Number of sites | Total hectares | Average site size |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Bexhill | 3 | 4.78 | 1.59 |
| Battle | 2 | 2.08 | 1.04 |
| Rye | 1 | 0.25 | n/a |

| Analysis area | Number of sites | Total hectares | Average site size |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------|-------------------|
| East Rother | 1 | 0.76 | n/a |
| West Rother | 4 | 13.12 | 3.28 |

7.15 The total area of parks and gardens in the District is 20.99ha. This equates to a current provision level of 0.0.25ha per 1,000 population.

7.16 There are no definitive national or local quantity standards for parks and gardens.

7.17 The general view from respondents to the household survey was that current provision was 'just right' or 'too much' (65%). 11% of respondents felt that provision levels are "nearly enough" and 20% stated "not enough".

7.18 Due to the differences between the urban and rural areas two quantity standards have been set. The urban standard covers the Bexhill, Battle and Rye analysis areas whilst the rural standard covers the East and West analysis areas.

7.19 The recommended local urban quantity standard is 0.43ha per 1,000 population. This is the same as the current provision level of the Battle analysis area. This provision in Battle is the highest of all urban analysis areas, therefore the standard looks to preserve current Battle provision and look to increase that of Bexhill (0.12ha per 1,000) and Rye (0.06ha per 1,000). The recommended rural quantity standard is 0.71ha per 1,000 population. As with the urban standard, it has been set at the level of the higher of the analysis areas to protect the higher level of provision.

RECOMMENDED LOCAL QUANTITY STANDARD

*Urban – 0.43ha per
1,000 population*

*Rural – 0.71ha per
1,000 population*

Quality

7.20 Quality standards are an aspirational vision that reflects the wishes of the community. The vision can be applied to existing open spaces and provides a benchmark when designing and creating new areas of open space.

7.21 The site assessment matrices completed for each open space site across Rother provide a score for quality and site access. In addition, they provide an assessment of wider benefits such as educational or heritage benefits.

7.22 The quality site assessments are divided into sub categories and an expected score is assigned against each (1 low to 5 high, shown in brackets):

- cleanliness and maintenance (5)
- safety and security (4)
- vegetation (4)
- ancillary accommodation (4).

LOCAL QUALITY STANDARD

"Parks and gardens should be well kept with a variety of vegetation, flowers, trees and shrubs. Appropriate ancillary accommodation should be provided where appropriate (including seating, toilets and litter/dog bins) with clear signage to and within the site. Sites should be safe and secure with suitable lighting and where appropriate have a ranger / warden presence to further improve the security of the facilities. The Green Flag award is an aspiration for strategic sites throughout the District."

- 7.23 These scores are then weighted to reflect the perceived importance of each factor. Factors that are given higher weightings (e.g. cleanliness and maintenance, 5) are perceived to be the most important and to have the largest impact on the quality of the site. Factors with higher weightings will therefore influence the total score more than factors with lower weightings.
- 7.24 Scores for each factor, taking into account the weighting, can then be translated into a percentage or quality index. Where the site assessor considered a particular factor to be “not applicable”, the percentage does not take account of this factor and the overall score is therefore not affected.
- 7.25 The average site accessibility score is 75%. The highest rated site is the Gun gardens in Rye (Site ID 61). No sites were deemed to be inaccessible to wheelchair or pushchair users.
- 7.26 From the household questionnaires, the highest-rated quality factors for parks and gardens were for:
- clean/litter free
 - flowers and trees
 - well kept grass
 - toilets.

Accessibility

- 7.27 There are also no definitive national or local accessibility standards for parks and gardens.
- 7.28 Based on the household survey, the most popular mode of transport to parks and gardens is on foot. This was also confirmed through the results of the greenstat surveys. The 75% level was 20 minutes, approximately 1.6km along roads and footpaths. This equates to a 960m straight line distance. In the rural areas an identical length of time has been set but the mode of transport is changed to a drivetime. This recognises that it is not feasible to provide a park or garden facility for all settlements in the District.

RECOMMENDED ACCESSIBILITY STANDARD

**Urban 20 minute
walk**

(1.6km)

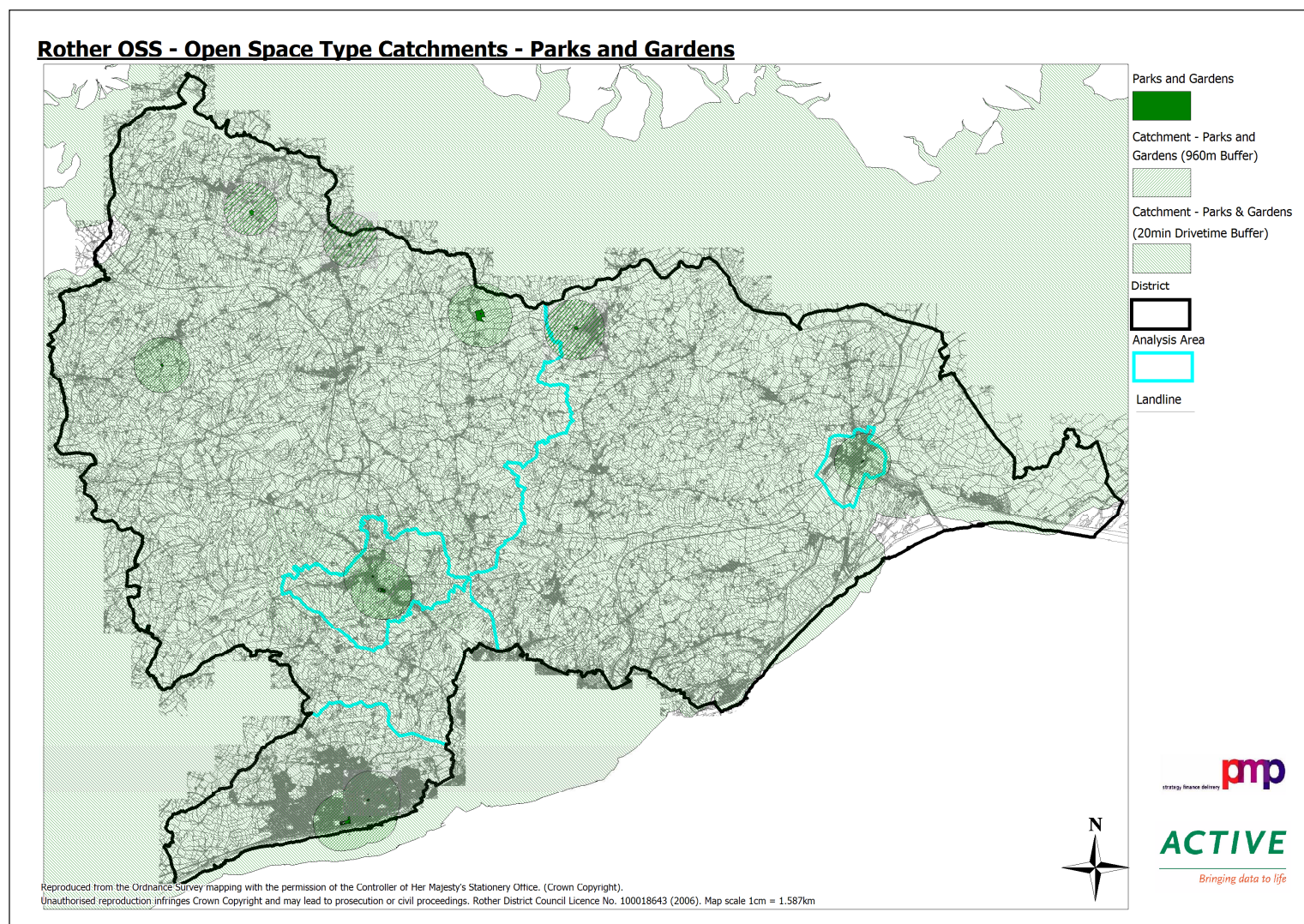
**Rural – 20 minute
drive**

Applying provision standards – identifying geographical areas and quantity deficiencies

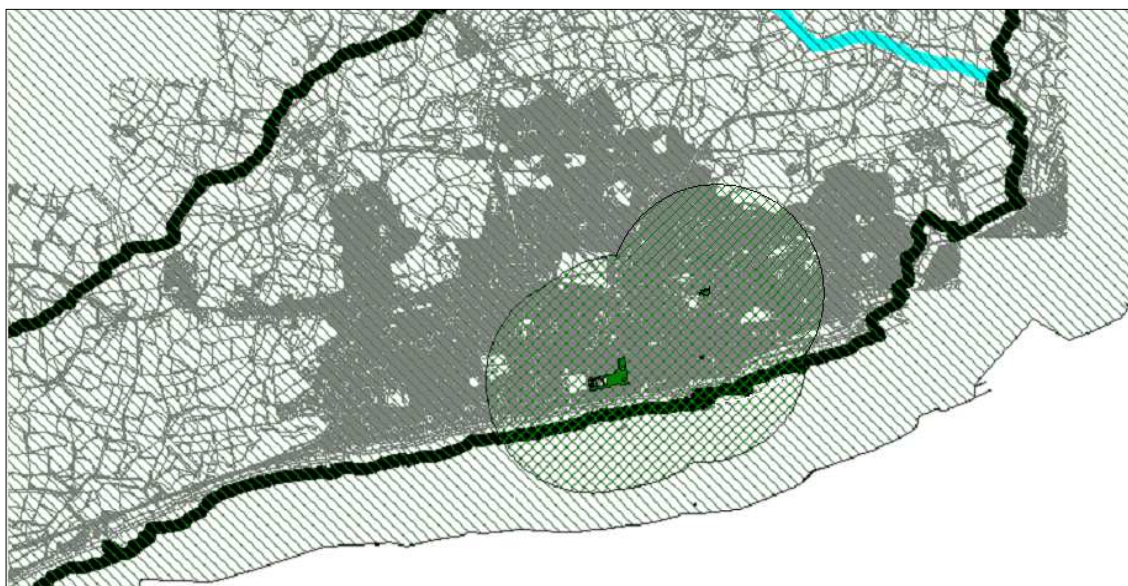
- 7.29 In order to identify important geographical areas and those areas with unmet needs, we apply both the quantity and accessibility standards together. The quantity standards enable the identification of areas that do not meet the minimum provision standards while the accessibility standards help to determine where those deficiencies are important.
- 7.30 Map 7.1 shows that virtually all rural areas of the District are covered by the 20 minute drivetime catchment plotted. There are small areas to the northwest and southeast without provision however the areas are too small to require additional provision.

SECTION 7 – PARKS AND GARDENS

Map 7.1 Accessibility catchment for parks and gardens



Map 7.2 *Parks and gardens in Bexhill*



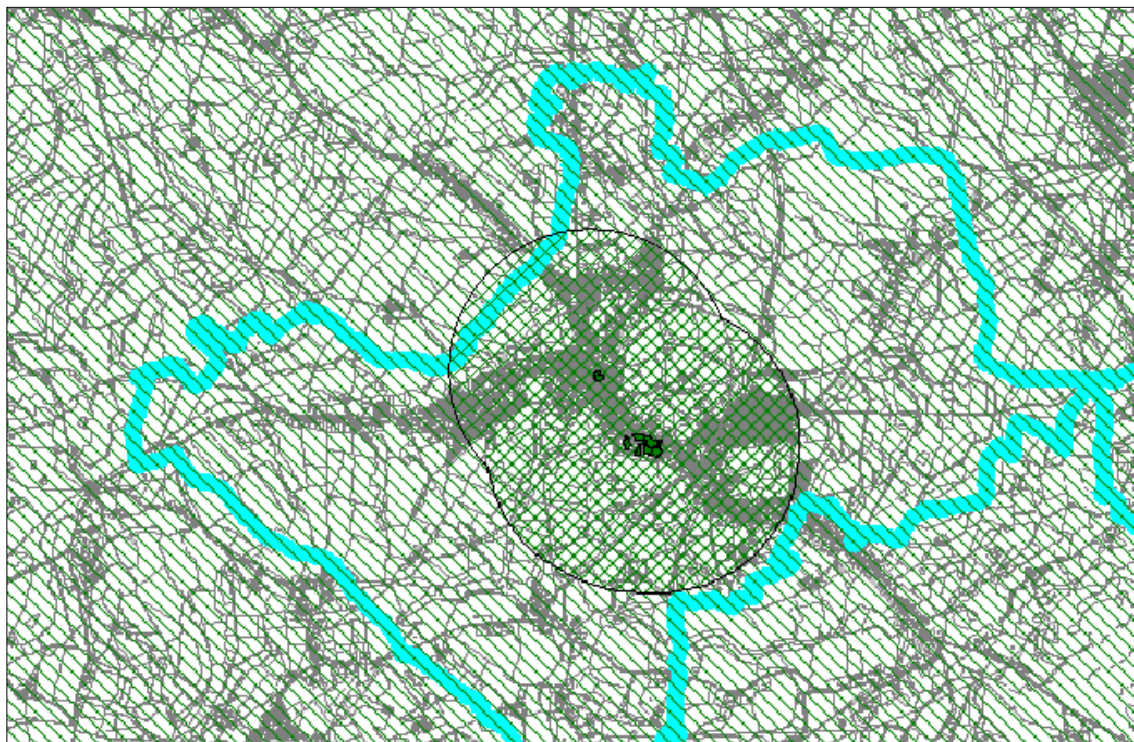
- 7.31 Map 7.2 shows that there are significant areas to the north, east and west of Bexhill without access to a park or garden within a twenty-minute walktime. However the Council have advanced plans for a new country park in Pebsham. As a country park this is likely to be more of a destination venue than the existing sites and therefore have a larger catchment area. It is recommended that the Council review the situation after five years of the park opening to establish catchment areas and to see whether new provision is needed in areas outside of the catchment areas seen in map 7.2

P&G 1

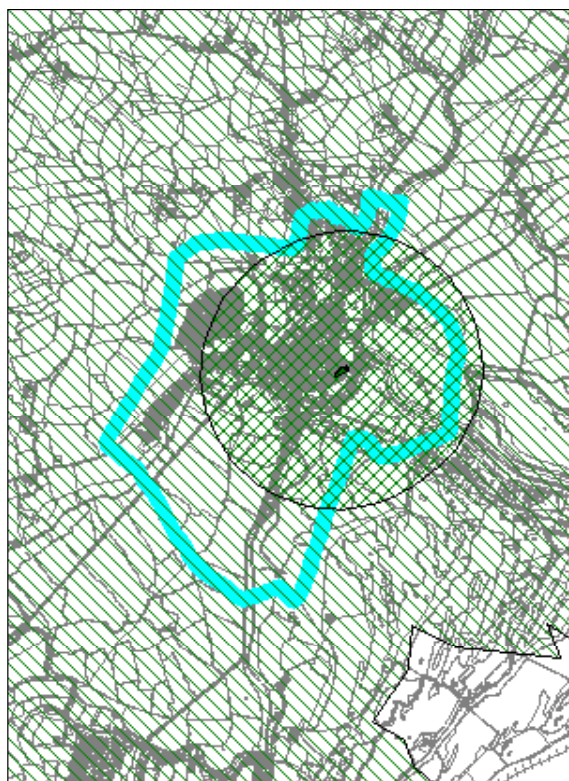
The Council to review the catchment areas of parks and gardens after the establishment of Pebsham Country Park.

- 7.32 Map 7.3 overleaf demonstrates that the park site in Battle is centrally located and its catchment area encompasses the majority of the Battle town. Outside of the catchment area there are a number of recreation grounds that replicate many of the functions of a park or garden. Therefore new provision is not recommended for this area without major new residential developments.

Map 7.3 Parks and gardens in Battle



Map 7.4 Parks and gardens in Rye



- 7.33 Map 7.4 displays a similar situation for Rye as for that for Battle. The catchment area for the park encompasses the majority of the Rye town with just minor areas on the periphery of the settlement without access. There are significant other open space resources in the areas outside of the park and garden catchment area, therefore new provision is not recommended.

Value assessment – identifying specific sites

- 7.34 Most sites that have a high level of use would normally have good or very good quality and accessibility ratings. Most sites with a low level of use would have an average or poor quality and accessibility rating. This is because the factors are related and interlinked.
- 7.35 Egerton Park has previously been seen as the premier park for the District however it has now become a somewhat tired facility and it is no longer appropriate for this to be the benchmark for parks and gardens sites in the District. The redevelopment of this park provides the Council with an opportunity to re-provide a facility that can be seen as a benchmark for provision in the District.

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| P&G 2 | The redeveloped Egerton Park in Bexhill to become the future benchmark for provision in the District. |
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Summary and recommendations

- 7.36 With a park or garden site present in Battle, Bexhill and Rye, and with the impending Pebsham Country Park, there are no major issues in terms of the quantity of parks and gardens in the District. Instead the Council should look to improvements to the quality of existing sites.
- 7.37 The Council does not currently have Green Flag Award status at any sites, it should be a goal to achieve this at all park and garden sites in District/Parish ownership in the District. The redevelopment of Egerton Park provides the perfect opportunity to design a site that will meet the Green Flag Award criteria. This site can then provide the quality benchmark for the rest of the District.

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| P&G 1 | The Council to review the catchment areas of parks and gardens after the establishment of Pebsham Country Park. |
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| P&G 2 | The redeveloped Egerton Park in Bexhill to become the future benchmark for provision in the District. |
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