

BURY COUNCIL

OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Bury Council commissioned Knight Kavanagh & Page Ltd (KKP) to produce an Open Space Assessment to provide an up-to-date evidence base and to help inform future decision-making processes.

The purpose of an open space assessment is to recognise the role of open space provision as a resource to Bury. The report helps understand both the quality/value and quantity of open space across the authority, if there are any shortfalls/surpluses and where there may be opportunities for improvements to ensure that residents can benefit from accessible and high-quality open space facilities.

Open spaces contribute to the health, well-being, cultural heritage, landscape, education, climate change mitigation, biodiversity and movement for people and wildlife. It is therefore vital for local authorities to know what provision currently exists and what the priorities and requirements are for the future.

Open space is categorised into the following typologies:

Type of open space	Primary purpose
Parks and gardens	Parks and formal gardens, open to the general public. Accessible, high quality opportunities for informal recreation and community events.
Natural and semi-natural greenspaces	Supports wildlife conservation, biodiversity and environmental education and awareness.
Amenity greenspace	Opportunities for informal activities close to home or work or enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas.
Provision for children and young people	Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children and young people.
Allotments	Opportunities to grow own produce. Added benefits include the long-term promotion of sustainable living, health and social inclusion.
Cemeteries, churchyards and other burial grounds	Provides burial space but is considered to provide a place of quiet contemplation and is often linked to the promotion of wildlife conservation and biodiversity.

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AUDIT SUMMARY

There are a total of 393 sites equating to 1,111 hectares of open space. The largest contributor to provision is natural/semi-natural greenspace (800 hectares), accounting for 72% of open space in Bury.

Open space typology	Number of sites	Total amount (hectares) ¹
Allotments	30	16
Amenity greenspace	68	124
Cemeteries/churchyards	30	50
Civic Spaces	12	1
Natural & semi-natural greenspace	96	800
Park and gardens	44	111
Provision for children & young people	93	9
TOTAL	393	1,111

Quantity

Current provision levels are used to inform existing quantity shortfalls. The table below shows the position for each sub-area as to whether it is sufficient or identified as having a shortfall in quantity for each type of open space.

Provision shortfalls against current provision level by analysis area (hectares per 1,000 population)

Typology	Parks	Natural	Amenity	Play	Allotments
Current Bury level	0.57	4.11	0.64	0.04	0.08
Bury - existing	0.99	2.03	0.45	0.05	0.06
Bury - balance	+0.42	-2.08	-0.19	+0.01	-0.02
Prestwich - existing	0.25	5.59	0.14	0.05	0.18
Prestwich - balance	-0.32	+1.48	-0.50	+0.01	+0.09
Radcliffe - existing	0.49	5.59	0.81	0.04	0.02
Radcliffe - balance	-0.08	+1.48	+0.18	Level	-0.06
Ramsbottom and Tottington - existing	0.71	5.13	0.77	0.05	0.10
Ramsbottom and Tottington - balance	+0.14	+1.02	+0.13	+0.01	+0.02
Whitefield - existing	0.16	3.62	1.18	0.04	0.07
Whitefield - balance	-0.41	-0.49	+0.55	Level	-0.01

¹ Rounded to the nearest whole number

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Quality and Value

There is a generally a good quality of open space across assessed typologies. This is reflected in most assessed sites (65%) scoring above their set quality thresholds.

Proportionally there are more (43%) play sites to rate below the quality threshold. This is often due to maintenance/appearance observations and/or the range and quality of equipment on site.

Typology	Quality		Value	
	Low	High	Low	High
Amenity greenspace	23%	77%	8%	92%
Natural & semi-natural greenspace	24%	76%	0	100%
Park and gardens	36%	64%	7%	93%
Provision for children and young people	43%	57%	1%	99%
Totals	35%	65%	3%	97%

Virtually all sites (97%) are assessed as being above the threshold for value, reflecting the role and importance of open space provision to local communities and environments.

A high value site is considered to be one that is well used by the local community, well maintained (with a balance for conservation), provides a safe environment and has features of interest, for example, good quality play equipment and landscaping. Sites that provide for a cross section of users and have a multi-functional use are considered a higher value than those offering limited functions and viewed as unattractive.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following provides a summary on the key findings from the application of the quantity, quality, and accessibility standards. It incorporates and recommends what the Council should be seeking to achieve in order to address the issues highlighted.

Several quantity shortfalls in the open space typologies are highlighted. Creating new provision to address these existing shortfalls (particularly any quantity shortfalls) is often challenging (as significant amounts of new forms of provision would need to be created). Often a more realistic approach is to ensure sufficient accessibility and quality of existing provision. Exploring opportunities to enhance existing provision and linkages to these sites should be endorsed. However, it highlights the need for new housing developments to provide new open space provision to ensure shortfalls are not exacerbated.

The report summarises the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1
Sites helping or with the potential to help serve areas identified as having gaps in catchment mapping should be recognised as important.

These sites potentially help to meet the identified catchment gaps for other open space typologies. Their existence is crucial in terms of access to open space provision. They should therefore be viewed as open space provision that are likely to provide multiple social and value benefits.

The approach to these sites should be to enhance their quality and/or value to the applied standards (i.e. high quality and/or value). Across the authority, there are 58 sites highlighted as helping to serve gaps in accessibility catchment mapping.

Recommendation 2
Ensure low quality/value sites helping to serve potential gaps in accessibility catchments are prioritised for enhancement

There are 67 sites to rate as below quality and/or value thresholds. Of these 67 sites, 23 are identified as helping to potentially serve catchment gaps in other types of open space.

These sites should first look to be enhanced in terms of quality. Consideration should be given to changing the primary typology or strengthening the secondary function of these sites, to one which they currently help to serve a gap in provision, even if their quality cannot currently be enhanced. For some sites, such as natural and semi-natural greenspace, the ability to adapt or strengthen secondary roles may be limited due to the features and characteristics of the site.

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Recommendation 3

Recognise areas with sufficient provision in open space and consider how they may be able to meet other areas of need

The study identifies 70 sites rated as lower quality and lower value. For an area with a quantity sufficiency in one type of open space, and where opportunities allow, a change of primary typology could be considered for some sites of that same type.

It is important that other factors, such as the potential typology change of a site creating a different catchment gap and/or the potential to help serve deficiencies in other types of provision should also be considered. The Council may also be aware of other issues, such as the importance of a site for heritage, biodiversity or as a visual amenity that may also indicate that a site should continue to stay the same typology.

Recommendation 4

Keeping data, report and supporting evidence base up to date to reflect changes

This study provides a snapshot in time. Whilst significant changes are not as common for open space provision, inevitably over time changes in provision occur through creation of new provision, loss of existing provision and/or alterations to site boundaries and management. Population change and housing growth are also another consideration to review when undertaking any form of update as this may impact on quantity provision levels and standards. It is therefore important for the Council to undertake regular reviews of the data and/or actions informed by it.

Recommendation 5

Recommended standards to inform future growth requirements

Several strategic allocations are identified for Bury as part of the Places for Everyone (Joint Development Plan). Each development area is envisaged to be slightly different in size and distribution of land.

The open space requirements, calculated using the recommended quantity standards, should be updated as required over the Plan period to reflect changes in population projections and dwelling numbers.