

4. Parks and gardens

Definition and context

- 4.1 Parks provide opportunities for various informal recreation and community events. They often contain a mix of facilities that may fall within different categories of open space, eg children's play facilities and sports pitches. Residents and visitors often choose to visit parks because of the vast array of facilities available and the different experiences that parks therefore offer. The 2007 Active People Survey reveals that walking is the most popular recreational activity for people in England. More than 8 million adults aged 16 and over did a recreational walk for at least 30 minutes in the 4 weeks preceding the survey. Parks provide opportunities for such an activity, particularly in the City environment.
- 4.2 The benefits of parks extend far wider than recreational benefits. Parks provide a sense of place for the local community, help to address social inclusion issues within wider society and also provide structural and landscaping benefits. Furthermore, parks can be havens for wildlife and the promotion of biodiversity, particularly in urban environments like Manchester.
- 4.3 Manchester City Council has sought to continually improve the quality of its parks despite the national trend of deteriorating standards over the last 30 years. The high quality of existing facilities is highlighted by the achievement of 27 Green Flag awards, awarded in recognition of the achievement of the national standard for excellence.
- 4.4 Parks have played a central role in the continuing regeneration of Manchester and have been instrumental in the rising profile of the City. As well as driving the achievement of many corporate objectives, parks are central to the character of the City and are seen as vital in ensuring that the City is an attractive place to live and work.
- 4.5 In order to comply with PPG17 and its Companion Guide, the different opportunities within parks have been separated according to the PPG17 typology under which they most appropriately fall. Large green areas, footpaths, lakes and less dense woodland will provide the park area (total hectares) and the facilities (such as play areas and sports facilities) will be calculated separately under their own classification. This ensures that sites are not captured twice within the assessment of facilities on offer, although it remains essential to recognise the multi functionality of these sites and the variety of opportunities that parks offer.
- 4.6 In light of the differences in the size of parks across Manchester, and the subsequent catchment areas these serve, parks have been subdivided into the following categories:
- Regional Parks – Heaton Park and Wythenshawe Park
 - City Parks – Alexandra, Queens, Boggart Hole Clough, Platt Fields, Philips and Debdale Park
 - Local Parks – all remaining smaller neighbourhood parks.

Heaton Park



Strategic context

National

- 4.7 A national survey commissioned by Sport England, the Countryside Agency and English Heritage was undertaken during 2003, studying 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 why people visit particular parks
 - the levels of satisfaction with the amenities on offer
 - why non-users do not use parks.
- 4.8 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.
- 4.9 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, with almost three quarters of adults from the higher social group visiting a park compared with only half of those from the lower social group
 - people from black and ethnic minority communities also have relatively low participation as well as those adults with a disability

- over 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 with almost two thirds visiting a park at least once a week, and 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.
- 4.10 It is clear that the benefits that parks can offer are now recognised on a national scale. There are a number of regional and local documents that refer to the importance of parks and gardens. The key issues arising from these documents and the links with this study are set out in Table 4.1 overleaf.

Table 4.1 –Strategic context – regional and local

Document Reviewed	Summary of key strategic drivers	Links to open space, sport and recreation study
Parks for All Seasons – A Parks Strategy for Manchester 2003	<p>This strategy recognises that parks and open spaces are a long term environmental and leisure asset and promotes the enhancement and protection of these open spaces.</p> <p>The Parks Strategy identifies the following priority actions in relation to urban countryside, sustainability and environmental impact, which embrace biodiversity management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review systems for recording wildlife in Manchester through appropriate partnerships. Develop wildlife and conservation strategies. • create habitat Management Plans for relevant parks and open spaces • adopt a Local Authority Eco-Management and Audit Scheme, and evaluate against national and local sustainable development indicators • promote close partnership working, with the integration of other environmental strategies and policies • incorporate the principles, policies and guidelines of a woodlands strategy into park management plans • attract further funding to complete survey of trees and woodland • develop links with appropriate voluntary groups and investigation into accessing environmental grants • develop a strategy for the interpretation and education use of the environmental resource. 	Evidence contained within this document will inform a review and update of the existing parks strategy and will ensure that a strategy can be created which delivers the priorities of local residents.
Wild about Manchester – Biodiversity Strategy (2005)	<p>Objective 2 of the strategy is to use a best practice approach for managing biodiversity and an action of this is to ensure biodiversity is managed sensitively in parks and open spaces. Targets of this action are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • biodiversity training for all park wardens • biodiversity incorporated in to management plans • to include biodiversity actions plans into parks and open spaces. 	

SECTION 4 – PARKS AND GARDENS

Document Reviewed	Summary of key strategic drivers	Links to open space, sport and recreation study
	Objective 3 of the strategy is to raise awareness of biodiversity in parks and a target is to have interpretation boards at parks in Manchester.	

Assessing local needs - consultation

- 4.11 Consultation undertaken as part of this study reinforced the value of parks to local residents, specifically:
- parks are the most frequently used and visited open spaces in Manchester, with 14% of respondents to the household survey using Local Parks daily and a further 32% using them weekly. City Parks are also popular, with 32% visiting these sites at least once a week
 - like the household survey, responses to the IT children and young people survey illustrates the popularity of these spaces, with 31% of children and young people stating that they used parks more often than another open space, making parks the most popular of all sites
 - reinforcing the value placed on parks, a key theme at drop in sessions and during workshops was the need to promote Manchester's park heritage and to protect existing parks from development. Participants in all surveys highlighted the importance of parks in terms of both the recreational and biodiversity these sites bring and many referenced the role that parks play in providing "green lungs" across the City council area
 - residents at drop in sessions highlighted that there is a requirement for not only large, centrally located parks and gardens but smaller facilities, accessible on foot, to local communities. Most residents indicated they would be willing to travel further to reach large City Parks (for example Heaton Park) than to small Local Parks. This was also reflected across the different surveys
 - the overall quality of parks across Manchester was commended. Despite the popularity of parks, it was clear that there is a lack of knowledge of the wide range of parks located across the City.

Assessing the current provision of parks in Manchester

- 4.12 The management and maintenance of parks across Manchester is coordinated by Manchester Leisure, who are responsible for over 100 sites. The creation, maintenance and enhancement of a sustainable network of high quality parks is a key priority of the Council and parks have historically been a key focus for investment.

Quantity of provision

- 4.13 Table 4.2 outlines the distribution of parks across the City considering the provision of regional, City and Local Parks. Further analysis on parks in each area of the City is found in Sections 14 to 19.

Table 4.2 – Parks in Manchester

Area	No of regional parks	No of City Parks	No of Local Parks	Regional Parks (ha)	City Parks (ha)	Local Parks (ha)	Regional Parks (ha per 1000)	City Parks (ha per 1000)	Local Parks (ha per 1000)
City Centre	0	0	3	0	0	1.17	0	0	0.12
East	0	1	21	0	17.95	50.74	0	0.25	0.70
Central	0	0	19	0	0	45.07	0	0	0.60
South	0	2	14	0	37.55	59.04	0	0.28	0.44
North	1	2	20	147.8	34.42	29.94	1.65	0.38	0.33
Wythenshawe	1	0	14	55.10	0	35.99	0.78	0	0.51
Overall	2	6	91	202.9	89.92	221.95	0.45	0.20	0.49

4.14 The key issues arising from table 4.2 above and consultations relating to the quantity of parks in the City include:

- there is a relatively even distribution of parks across the City, with all areas except the City Centre containing either a regional park or a City park. This also demonstrates the interrelationship between parks of different sizes
- 57.14 % of residents stated that there are more than enough or about the right amount of City Parks indicating that overall residents are satisfied with the quantity of larger parks
- across the different geographical areas there is a commonly held view that the level of provision is about right, particularly with regards City Parks. The highest level of satisfaction can be found in Wythenshawe – where 65% of residents feel that the overall level of provision is about right or more than enough. This high level of satisfaction is perhaps unsurprising given that one of the regional parks is located in this area
- analysis of the quantity of Local Parks per 1000 demonstrates that provision is higher in the East and Central areas (0.70 and 0.60 respectively). The east area contains the highest number of Local Parks (21)
- overall across the City, satisfaction with the amount of Local Parks was lower than that for larger parks, with 46% indicating that there is sufficient provision. The importance of protecting Local Parks from development was an overriding theme of workshops and drop in sessions

- residents in Wythenshawe and the East are the least satisfied with the quantity of local park provision with more residents indicating that provision is insufficient than who are satisfied. 65% of respondents in the East felt there was nearly enough/not enough provision of Local Parks. This is surprising given that there are more Local Parks in the east than in most other areas of the City although it may reflect on the size or quality of these facilities
- as in the household survey, there was an emphasis on the protection of existing parks at both drop in sessions and workshops with many residents reinforcing the amenity role that these sites play. Several sites were highlighted as important strategic sites. The quality of provision appeared to be as important to residents as the quantity of parks
- the role of green gardens within the City Centre was a frequent topic of conversation, with many residents and visitors highlighting the importance of breaking up the urban landscape.

Setting provision standards – quantity

- 4.15 The recommended local quantity standards for parks and gardens have been derived from the local needs consultation and audit of provision and are summarised below. Full justifications for the standards are provided within Appendix F.
- 4.16 Reflecting the varying functions of parks of different sizes, different standards have been set for Local Parks and City Parks. The quantity standards exclude regional parks.
- 4.17 In line with the key themes emerging from statistical and subjective consultation, the standard for both City Parks and Local Parks has been set at the existing level of provision. This reflects the overall emphasis on the protection of existing sites as well as qualitative improvements. Some areas of the City may still fall below the minimum standard of provision and additional provision may be required.

Quantity Standard – City Parks (see Appendices E and F – standards and justification, worksheet and calculator)

Existing level of provision	Recommended standard
0.20 hectares per 1000	0.20 hectares per 1000
Justification	

The majority of respondents to the household survey regard the provision of City Parks to be sufficient (57%) in quantitative terms. This suggests that there are limited expectations in terms of further provision. This perception is reflected across all areas of Manchester with the exception of the City Centre, which is unsurprising considering there is no City park located in this area. Over 49% of respondents in each area with a City park indicated that provision is sufficient. This was reinforced by the emphasis on the importance of the quality of facilities, rather than improvements to the overall stock of provision.

In light of the high satisfaction levels with the quantity of provision and the emphasis on quality, the local standard has been set at the existing level of provision. This places an emphasis on qualitative improvements whilst simultaneously protecting the existing City Parks in Manchester.

In order to ensure that the standard is reasonable, the two large sites, Wythenshawe Park and Heaton Park have been excluded from this calculation. Provision in these areas falls above the minimum standard.

This standard should be treated as a minimum level of provision. While it is equivalent to the overall quantity of provision across the City, this standard will also enable the identification of locational deficiencies when combined with the application of the accessibility standard.

Given the population growth that will be experienced up to 2026, in addition to providing additional parks if the need and opportunity arises, it is important for the local authority to seek to enhance accessibility to existing parks – for example by improving routes to them.

Quantity Standard – Local Parks (see Appendices E and F – standards and justification, worksheet and calculator)

Existing level of provision	Recommended standard
0.49 hectares per 1000	0.49 hectares per 1000
Justification	

Household survey results highlighted a split in opinion regarding the provision of Local Parks, with 53% of residents indicating that there is insufficient provision and 43% indicating there is sufficient provision. This perception was reflected across all analysis areas with the exception of the City Centre, where 77% of residents felt that was a lack of provision. Due to the nature of urban living, this response rate is unsurprising. However, this raises concerns over accessibility and the fact that residents may not be aware of the provision available to them. Some locational deficiencies were also identified. The value placed on local provision means that spaces local to the house are of particular importance.

Attendees at drop in sessions expressed greater satisfaction with the provision of Local Parks, however there was a desire for better promotion of parks to generate awareness of what is available, particularly Local Parks. There were also isolated comments regarding the distribution of Local Parks, with some areas subject to a lack of provision.

In light of the above evidence and the overall focus on improving and maintaining the quality of provision, it is recommended the local standard is set at the existing level of provision. The application of this standard means that those areas where deficiencies in terms of accessibility have been identified fall below the minimum quantity standard, new provision is required. In other areas where provision is sufficient, the focus will be on quality. The recommended standard therefore sets the challenge of providing a small number of additional parks, which in some areas may be delivered by upgrading amenity spaces, but in other areas will require alternative solutions.

The recommended standard should be viewed as a minimum level of provision across all areas.

Current provision - quality

- 4.18 The quality of existing parks and gardens in the City was assessed through site visits and is summarised in Tables 4.3 and 4.4. It is important to note that site assessments are conducted as a snapshot in time and are therefore reflective of the quality of the site on one specific day.
- 4.19 The quality scores are weighted according to the findings of the local consultation (as discussed in Section 2) and those elements that were highlighted through consultation as being a particularly important determinant of the quality of a park have been weighted higher. This ensures that they have a greater influence on the overall quality score that each site achieves. The full rationale behind this approach is set out in Appendix G.
- 4.20 Each site assessed achieves a quality score which is then calculated as a percentage. Tables 4.3 and 4.4 below outlines the range of quality scores of parks, the average quality score of a park and the lowest and highest quality parks on both a City wide and regeneration area level.

Table 4.3 – Quality of City Parks across Manchester

Area	Range of quality scores (%)	Average quality scores (%)	Lowest quality sites	Highest quality sites
City Centre	-	-	-	-
East	98 – 100	99	Phillips Park	Debdale Park
Central	-	-	-	-
South	74 – 100	87	Alexandra Park	Platt Fields Park
North	82 – 96	87	Heaton Park	Boggart Hole Clough
Wythenshawe	-	100	-	Wythenshawe Park
Overall	74 - 100	92	Alexandra Park	Wythenshawe Park

Table 4.4 – Quality of Local Parks across Manchester

Area	Range of quality scores (%)	Average quality scores (%)	Lowest quality sites	Highest quality sites
City Centre	96 - 97	96	St John's Gardens	Sackville Gardens
East	40 - 82	70	Chippenham Court Small Local Area Park	Openshaw Community Resource Centre
Central	62 – 98	76	Barracks Park	Ardwick Green
South	58 – 92	75	Clinton Avenue Park	Didsbury Park
North	44 - 98	58	Nutbank Common	Bay Trees
Wythenshawe	52 – 80	66	Northenden Riverside Park	Hollyhedge Park
Overall	40 – 98	69	Chippenham Court Small Local Area Park	Bay Trees

4.21 The key issues emerging from Tables 4.3 and 4.4 and the consultation relating to the quality of parks are:

- 37% of household survey respondents indicated that the quality of City Parks is good, while 32% suggest that it is average. These views are relatively consistent City wide
- the highest levels of satisfaction are found in North Manchester where 43% of respondents feel that the quality of provision is good. However, site assessments reveal that the average quality score of City Parks in this area is the lowest in the City. The reason for this perception may be the location of Heaton Park (one of the highest quality open spaces in the City) in this area of Manchester
- this overall level of satisfaction was reflected in comments in workshops and at drop in sessions, where residents praised the quality of City Parks
- site assessments reveal that the quality of City Parks is excellent, with the average quality score of a site being 92%
- drop in sessions and workshops revealed that the main concerns were maintenance of City Parks, safety and problems of litter and graffiti. In North Manchester, Boggart Hole Clough, despite achieving Green Flag status was highlighted as a site that has seen some deterioration in quality and subject to neglect over the past few years. Site visits suggest that the vegetation at this site could be improved. General comments made as part of the household

survey focus around opportunities to improve parks and the need to minimise dog fouling, as well as safety issues

- the quality of Local Parks was perceived to be slightly lower than City Parks, with 31% indicating that quality is good. 20% of respondents indicated that the quality of provision is poor. There was a similar trend across all the analysis area
- site assessments reveal that the quality of Local Parks is average, with the average quality score of a site being 69%
- the highest levels of satisfaction are found in the central analysis area where 35% of respondents feel that the quality of provision is good. The quality of Local Parks in this area of the City is the second highest in Manchester
- the lowest levels of satisfaction are found in the North where only 29% of respondents feel that the quality of provision is good. Site assessments reflect this perception, with the average quality score of a Local Park being the lowest in this area of the City (68%)
- general comments made by respondents to the household survey regarding the quality of parks focused around security and the need to reduce dog fouling and litter and ensure that facilities are well maintained
- attendees at workshops, many of whom currently have an interest in the maintenance of open spaces throughout the City, emphasised the benefit of information boards, providing residents with an understanding of the facilities available, in addition to the wildlife and habitats offered. The infrastructure within many Local Parks is perceived to be inferior to that in City Parks
- residents at drop in sessions highlighted the need for increased security and surveillance in parks. It was mentioned that problems such as robbery and vandalism are detracting people from visiting parks, which in turn creates a less than appealing environment for park users. Safety and security is therefore of paramount importance if parks are to be well used across the City. This is also reflected in the household survey
- workshop sessions highlighted the value of Friends of Parks groups, local residents who volunteer to care for and improve their local park or green space. Residents at drop in sessions acknowledged friends groups as an important asset and suggested that some parks may be reliant on them to maintain and upgrade. It was mentioned that this involvement must remain a priority and receive full support if parks are to adhere to quality standards. In particular, it was noted that while investment is often focused on the larger sites (particularly those which have achieved Green Flag awards) it is equally important to improve the quality of smaller facilities
- in addition to the recreational value of parks, many are particularly valuable in terms of nature conservation and biodiversity.

Setting provision standards – quality

- 4.22 The recommended local quality visions for City and Local Parks are summarised below. Full justifications and consultation relating to the quality of provision for the local standard is provided within Appendix G.
- 4.23 The aspirations are derived directly from the findings of local consultations. The quality standard for a City Park is set at 85% and the quality standard for a Local Park is set at 81%, the minimum score required to fall within the top quartile.

Quality standard (see Appendix G)

Recommended standard – PARKS AND GARDENS		
Local consultation, national guidance and best practice suggest that the following features are essential and desirable to local residents:		
City Parks		
Essential	Desirable	
Footpaths	Clean/Litter Free	
Flowers/Trees	Good Access	
Well Kept Grass	Nature Features	
Local Parks		
Essential	Desirable	
Flowers / Trees	Footpaths	
Clean / Litter free	Litter Bins	
Well kept grass	Access routes	
Detailed analysis of the local consultation suggests that with regards to parks, the relative importance of the key components is shown below. These scores have been used to weight the site assessments. The weightings for both City Parks and Local Parks are shown:		
Component of quality	City Parks	Local Parks
Security and Safety	4	4
Cleanliness and maintenance	3	2
Vegetation	2	3
Ancillary accommodation	1	1

Setting provision standards – accessibility

- 4.24 The accessibility of sites is paramount in maximising usage as well as providing an opportunity for people to use the site. The recommended local standard is set in the form of a distance threshold and is derived directly from the findings of the local consultations.
- 4.25 Site specific accessibility issues were also analysed as part of the site visits, where information and signage, transport and general access issues were assessed. All parks in Manchester are accessible free of charge and hence cost does not present a barrier to use. Poor perceptions of safety, alongside the distance from the home and the quality of facilities were the main barriers to usage of open spaces across the City.

4.26 Consultation and analysis of access to existing sites has shown that the key issues with regards accessibility are:

- site assessments reveal that while on the whole access to City Parks is good, there were some sites where the general access, such as footpaths and disabled access, could be improved
- a number of Local Parks were identified as having very poor signage, which was considered to create problems when locating this type of open space
- of the 31% of respondents who use City Parks more regularly than any other typology, the majority choose to walk to them (76%). 16% of users choose to travel by car. This is particularly the case in relation to residents in the East, City Centre and Central Manchester. 53% of residents indicated that they would expect to walk to a City park
- consultation clearly demonstrates however that while City Parks are important local resources for many residents, people who live further away from these sites are still willing to travel to access them, in particular Heaton Park which serves a wide catchment area
- residents at drop in sessions felt that there is a requirement for not only large, centrally located parks and gardens but smaller facilities, accessible on foot, to local communities. Most residents indicated they would be willing to travel further to reach large City Parks (Heaton Park) than to small Local Parks but would still expect local access to at least one park
- analysis of the current travel patterns shows a significant number of people (75%) walk to Local Parks in Manchester, with 32% of respondents walking between 0 and 5 minutes, 29% between 5 and 10 minutes and 20% between 11 and 15 minutes
- 74 % of respondents to the household survey indicated that they would expect a local park to be within walking distance of their home. Both the modal and mean response was 10 minutes, suggesting that local access is expected. The household survey indicates that a lack of local facilities is one of the key barriers to use of open spaces
- the importance of local access to facilities is also reflected in the survey for children and young people. 44% of children highlight proximity to their home as a key determinant of whether they will use a site, and 20% indicated that the distance of a facility from their home is one of the main barriers to usage. A perceived lack of safety was also identified as a key deterrent to participation
- general comments made as part of the household survey and during workshops and drop in sessions highlight the importance of effective access routes to and within parks. In particular it was considered important to ensure that parks are accessible to all sectors of the community.

4.27 The recommended local accessibility standard for City and Local Parks is summarised overleaf. Full justification for the local standard is provided within Appendix H. The standard is reflective of local aspirations with regards travel time, as well as the focus on improving the quality of parks and gardens across the City.

Accessibility Standard – City Parks (see Appendix H)

Recommended standard
15 MINUTE JOURNEY (Long term target - BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT)
Justification
<p>Setting separate accessibility standards for City Parks and Local Parks is consistent with PPG17, which makes reference to hierarchies of provision. This is in recognition of the fact that large facilities tend to attract users from a wider area and have a higher local profile. Residents are less likely to travel the same distances to Local Parks. In terms of investigating the spatial distributions of unmet demand, the proposed City Park standard should not be considered in isolation but rather in the context of Local Parks. Those living within the City park distance threshold will have no need of a local park as well if the City Park is within the distance threshold of a local park. Alternatively, those residents with no City Park within the recommended accessibility standard, for example some City Centre residents, will rely on local park provision. It will be important to provide an overall network of provision. The wide catchment of City Parks was further highlighted at drop-in sessions with many visitors to Manchester having used these facilities.</p> <p>There are varying opinions between residents in all areas as to whether they should expect to walk or drive to City Parks. Many of these are influenced by the location of existing sites. 76% of frequent users walk to City Parks, however the wider catchment of these facilities is clear. For the residents who walk to these parks, they are fulfilling the role of a local park. These sites are of strategic importance to the City as a whole. Therefore, a 15-minute drive / public transport time is recommended. This standard is in line with the modal response of those who expect to drive and takes into account the significantly varying views evident throughout consultation as well as ensuring the strategic distribution of City Parks.</p> <p>Setting smaller accessibility catchments could provide unrealistic expectations in terms of delivering further provision in areas outside of the distance threshold – however given that 57% think that the current level of provision is about right it is unlikely that increased provision will be required. Emphasis should be on enhancing the quality of provision and using the opportunity to improve Local Parks into more formalised provision like City Parks.</p> <p>Linking in with the health agenda, it is important to consider sustainable methods of transport and encouraging walking and cycling to and within open spaces.</p>

Accessibility Standard – Local Parks (see Appendix H)

Recommended standard
10 MINUTE WALK TIME
Justification
<p>There is a clear emphasis in favour of walking in terms of current travel patterns and expectations. 74% of respondents to the household survey would expect to walk to a local park, with 75% of regular users walking. Moreover, given the more local nature of these facilities compared to the City Parks, it is considered appropriate to focus on access to these sites on foot. This was further reflected in the IT Children and Young People Survey, where the location of facilities emerged as the key determinant of whether people use facilities. A standard promoting access on foot is therefore recommended.</p> <p>The standard has been set at a 10-minute walk time in line with the modal and mean responses and the second and third quartile figures. A lower accessibility standard could be justified on the basis of current users travel patterns – with most users travelling less than 10 minutes to access a local park. However, PPG17 states that lower thresholds are only needed where there is clear evidence that a significant proportion of local people do not use existing provision because they regard it as inaccessible. Given the findings of the local consultation (which highlight the good levels of use at Local Parks) this could not be substantiated. Furthermore, improvements to the quality of parks in some areas of the City were seen to be of greater importance than increases in park provision. Setting the standard at a 10 minute walk time will therefore ensure that any gaps in provision can be addressed, but will enable the focus on improving the quality of Local Parks to be maintained.</p> <p><u>City Centre</u></p> <p>Despite some concerns that not all residents are aware of local park provision within the City Centre or that some open spaces may be inaccessible, it is recommended that the standard is set at the same level (10 minute walk time) as all other analysis areas. With no City park provision in this area, it is important that local park provision meets the needs of City Centre residents. This standard will highlight any potential gaps in provision and ensure a focus on quality and accessibility improvements to Local Parks and gardens in the City Centre.</p>

Applying provision standards

- 4.28 The application of the recommended quantity, quality and accessibility standards is essential in understanding the existing distribution of parks and identifying areas where provision is insufficient to meet local need. While it is important to consider the application of each standard in isolation, in reality they should be considered in the context of each other.
- 4.29 The application of the local quantity standard for each area is set out in Table 4.5. The table illustrates the application of the standard against the current provision in each of the areas of the City and also highlights the quantity of population growth that could be sustained before provision falls below the minimum standard (where applicable). Table 4.5 does not include Heaton Park and Wythenshawe Park.

Table 4.5 – Application of quantity standard – City and Local Parks

Area	Current balance against local standard (City Parks)	Additional population growth that could be sustained (City Parks)	Current balance against local standard (Local Parks)	Additional population growth that could be sustained (Local Parks)
City Centre	-1.99	Below minimum	-3.70	Below minimum
East	3.47	14,989	15.26	28,790
Central	-14.95	Below minimum	8.44	17,219
South	10.59	52,958	-7.01	Below minimum
North	16.50	82,474. Also contains Heaton Park	-13.98	Below minimum
Wythenshawe	-14.09	Below minimum but contains Wythenshawe Park	1.47	2,994
OVERALL	Meets demand		0.48	1379

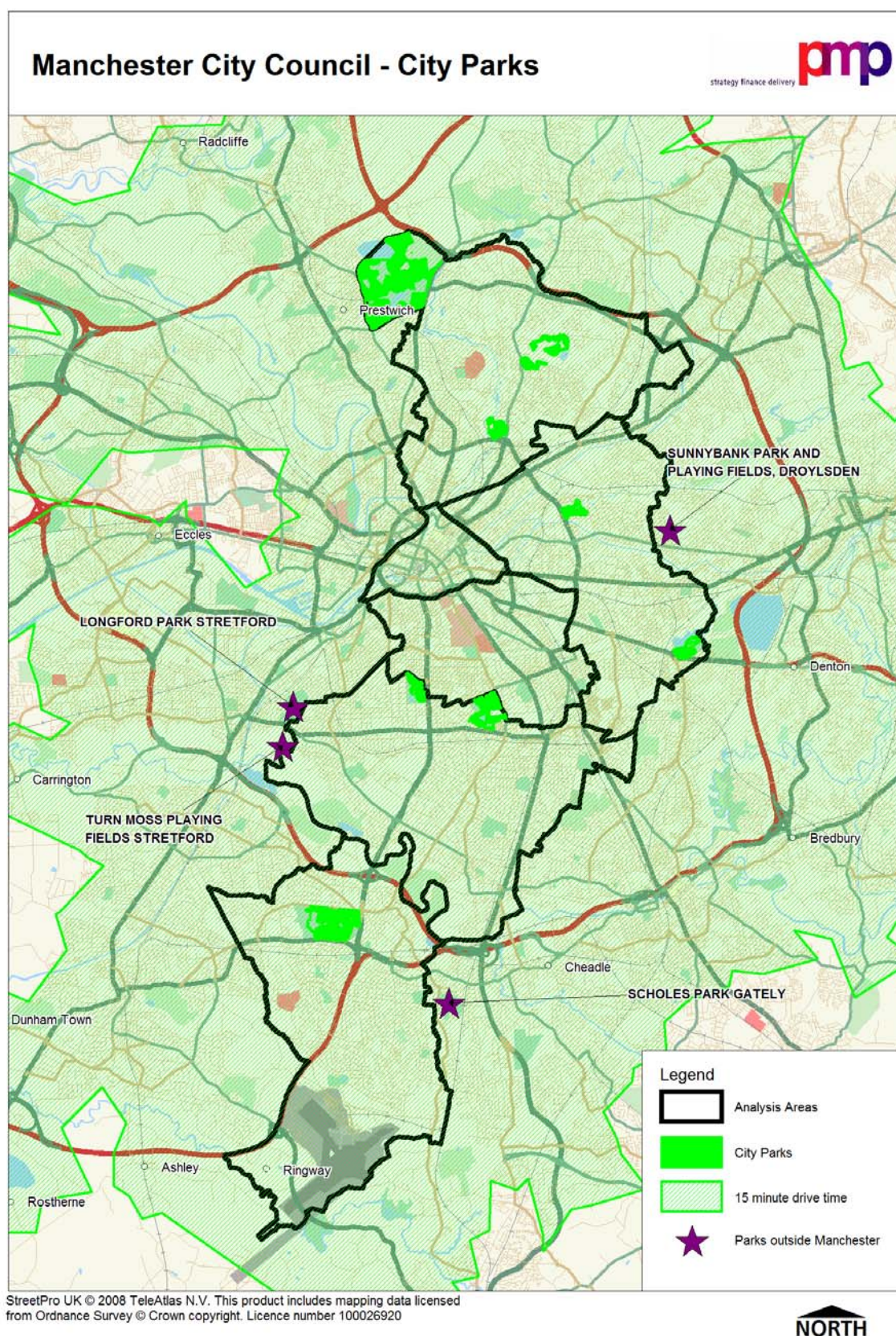
Green = above the standard. Red = below the standard. Excludes Regional Parks

4.30 As can be seen in Table 4.4 above:

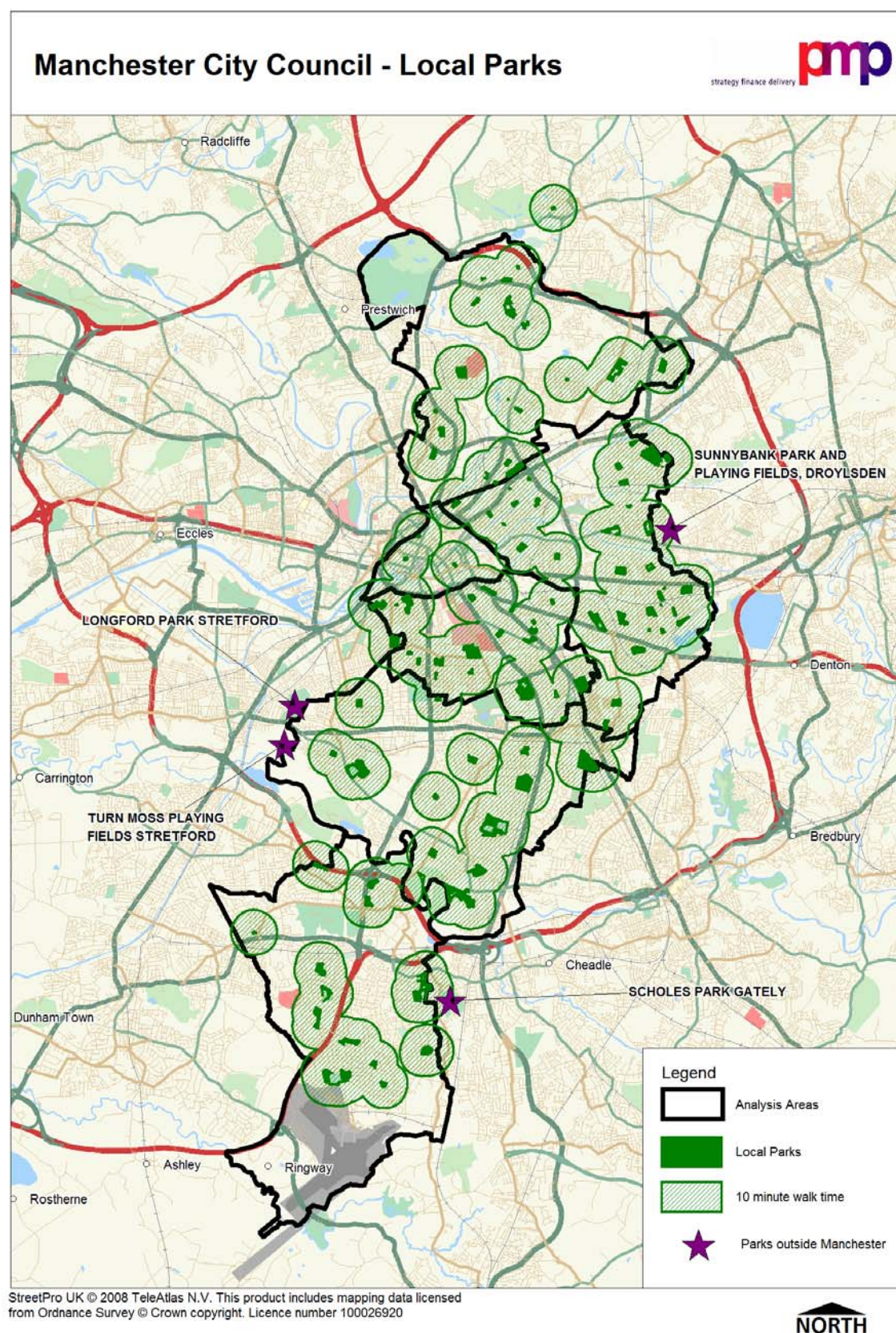
- overall there is adequate provision of both City and Local Parks to meet current demand although this disguises shortfalls in some areas of the City. Shortfalls of Local Parks are particularly important as this may mean residents are lacking in local open spaces. The wider catchment of City Parks means that residents are more likely to travel across the City to reach these facilities and that analysis on a geographical area basis is therefore inappropriate
- when evaluating the provision of Local Parks and City Parks in the context of each other, only the City Centre and central areas fall below the standard expected. The shortfall in the central area is generated by the lack of City Parks
- when considering the provision of Local Parks, it can be seen that the apparent 'surplus' could meet the needs of another 1379 residents although 28,000 additional residents can be accommodated in the East and 17,000 in the central area. This provides an indication only, as access to parks within each of the individual areas is as important as the overall quantity of provision.

- 4.31 In light of the wide catchment of parks and gardens, locational quantitative deficiencies should be treated as being of limited significance unless the deficiency is sufficiently large to justify the development of a new park – this would be measured by the use of minimum size criteria ie new parks would only be required where the population deficient in parks generates the need for a quantity of parks that exceeds the recommended minimum size.
- 4.32 The application of the local accessibility standards for parks and gardens is set out in Map 4.1 and 4.2. It must be noted that in the absence of detailed public transport mapping, map 4.1 illustrates a drive time catchment. In reality, public transport is likely to take longer.

Map 4.1 – City Parks in Manchester



Map 4.2 – Local Parks in Manchester



- 4.33 Map 4.1 indicates that all residents have access to a City park within the recommended 15 minute drive time / public transport time. Furthermore, most residents are also able to access large parks in other surrounding local authorities within a 15 minute drive time.
- 4.34 Map 4.2 illustrates that there is a good distribution of Local Parks across Manchester. It must also be noted that City Parks also fulfil the role of Local Parks where residents are within a 10 minute walk time of a site (the recommended catchment area for Local Parks). In this instance, the presence of a City park would negate the need for additional provision. The key areas of deficiency for Local Parks are therefore as follows:
- City Centre – nearly all residents have access to a local park, however pockets of deficiency are evident in the east
 - East Manchester – the majority of residents have access to a local park (or to Philips Park, which fulfils the role of a local park for many residents), however areas of deficiency are evident in Newton Heath
 - South Manchester – some deficiencies are evident to the west, although to an extent residents in Whalley Range are served by a park just over the border in Trafford MBC. Although there are also some deficiencies in Chorlton, Chorlton Water Park is in close proximity. Alexandra Park also offsets many deficiencies in the Hulme area of the City
 - North Manchester – although there are deficiencies to the north and west, when also considering the role that Heaton Park, Boggart Hole Clough and Queens Park play, provision is relatively even with few deficiencies
 - Wythenshawe – there are few Local Parks in the north of Wythenshawe although many of these residents are within the appropriate catchment of Wythenshawe Park. There are some deficiencies in the Benchill area.

The future delivery of parks across Manchester

- 4.35 The remainder of this section outlines the key priorities for the delivery of parks across Manchester in terms of quality, quantity and accessibility and then highlights specific issues for each area of the City which arise as a result of the application of the local standards. The key priorities have been derived from the main themes arising from consultation, as well as the analysis of existing provision and the application of the standards.
- 4.36 Specifically, the key priorities consider:
- maintaining and improving the usage of parks
 - quality of park provision
 - improving access to parks
 - protecting existing parks.

Usage of parks

- 4.37 The value of parks to local residents was one of the key themes of consultations across the City. The Parks Strategy for Manchester (2003) reinforces the value of parks both from a recreational and environmental perspective. The strategy encourages the protection and enhancement of parks.
- 4.38 Parks can play a key role in providing informal sport and recreation opportunities for local residents of all ages. Many residents who do not wish to play formal sports can participate in lighter physical activity in parks. Encouraging residents to use parks will be a key vehicle to the achievement of national and local targets to increase physical activity and reduce obesity.
- 4.39 Manchester City Council's parks are the focus of many events including:
- health walks
 - assault courses
 - 10k runs
 - den building and other similar activities for young people
 - bug hunts, bird feeding, plating and clean ups
 - NVQ Environmental Conservation training in biodiversity and nature conservation by park wardens
 - walks at parks that are of particular ecological importance, such as Boggart Hole Clough
 - community events.
- 4.40 Consultations undertaken as part of this study indicate that these events and opportunities encourage residents to visit parks and increase awareness as to what is available. The importance of ensuring that these events attract local residents, as well as visitors to the City, was highlighted during consultation. In order to maximise the usage of parks, it is essential to address the key barriers to participation, specifically:
- proximity to the home
 - perceived safety
 - quality of provision
 - awareness
 - maximising the use of parks for recreational purposes will drive the achievement of wider local and national objectives.

PG1

Maximise the role that parks can play in striving to increase participation in health and physical activity across the City by continuing to provide and promote activities to maximise usage. Ensure that activities and events are tailored to all sectors of the community. The key barriers to participation should also be considered.

Environmental role of parks

- 4.41 In addition to recreational opportunities, parks can play a key role in encouraging biodiversity. Parks within Manchester are particularly diverse and contain a variety of habitats and species. The need to promote and enhance conservation and biodiverse habitats emerged as a key theme of consultation in relation to both parks and natural and semi natural open spaces. As highlighted in Table 4.1, the Parks Strategy identifies a number of priority actions in relation to biodiversity in parks and promotes management systems which are sympathetic to the habitats of the site.
- 4.42 Manchester's Biodiversity Strategy (wildaboutmanchester) further emphasises the role parks can play in encouraging biodiversity. The strategy aims to promote, conserve and enhance biodiversity across the City.
- 4.43 All Manchester's parks are identified as priority habitats for managed greenspace and Heaton Park is identified as a priority habitat site for lowland broadleaved woodland. Heaton Park Reservoir (East) is identified as a grade a Site of Biological Importance and all Green Flag parks in the City are identified as grade C Sites of Biological Importance. The Green Flag award also aims to raise awareness of biodiversity and ensure that parks are managed with this in mind.
- 4.44 The Greater Manchester Biodiversity Project aims to conserve biodiversity in the area by bringing together individuals and organisations. The project has developed 19 Biodiversity Action Plans that cover a range of habitats and species. Key actions outlined in these plans include:
- reduction in the use of environmentally unsuitable products
 - disposing of waste in a more sensitive manner
 - eliminating peat usage
 - managing woodland in a sustainable way
 - creating and managing a variety of habitats
 - differential mowing
 - training staff on how to record, review and manage biodiversity in parks.
- 4.45 Friends of Parks Groups are instrumental in the conservation and development of biodiversity at parks. Many projects have been undertaken by groups at parks including the development of a woodland path and planting wildflowers in Alderman Rogers Park, the installation of wildflower information boards at Old Moat Park and the planting of a forest garden in Birchfields Park. The active role that Friends Groups play in open spaces in Manchester was highlighted as one of the most positive features of the City during the CN4M workshop.

- 4.46 In light of the emphasis on biodiversity and nature conservation and the role that parks can play in achieving the goals of this agenda, biodiversity and conservation should be a key component of any future parks and open spaces strategy.

PG2

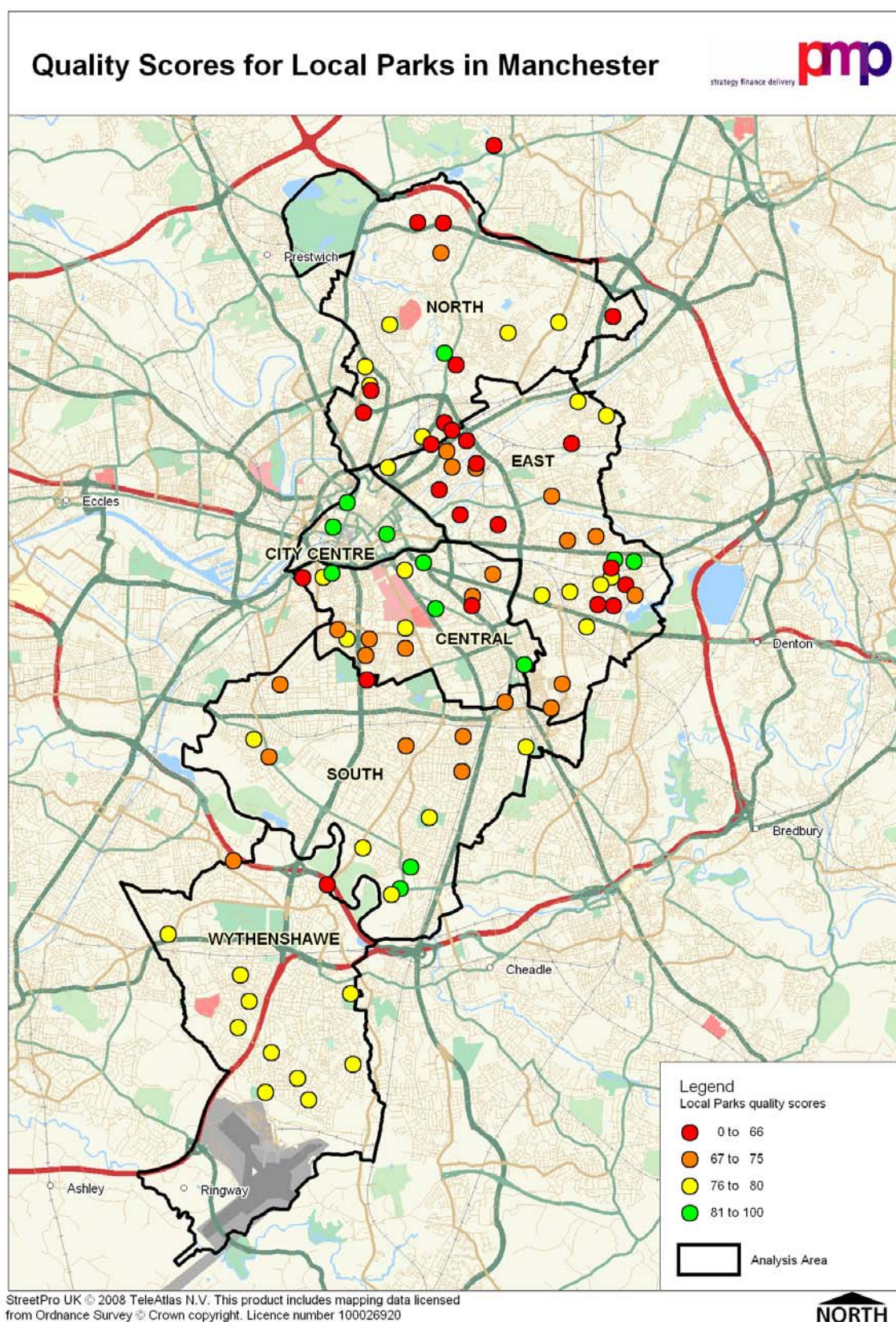
Continue to work with key partners to conserve, promote, manage and enhance biodiversity at parks in Manchester.

- 4.47 While the value of parks and the wider benefits that can stem from good quality provision are clear, if targets to maximise usage of parks and promote biodiversity are to be achieved, it is essential that facilities are of appropriate quality and that the distribution of facilities is sufficient to provide all residents with opportunities.

Quality of existing provision

- 4.48 The quality of City Parks in Manchester was commended throughout consultations and this is emphasised by the fact that six of the eight parks have achieved Green Flag status. This is supported by site assessments, which reveal that the average quality score of a City Park is 92%.
- 4.49 The Council should maintain and enhance the excellent quality of parks and seek to achieve Green Flag accreditation at Alexandra Park and Queens Park.
- 4.50 The quality of Local Parks is illustrated in Map 4.3 overleaf. Site assessments indicate that the overall quality of Local Parks is average, with the average quality score of a site being 69%. However, there are a number of sites that are of poor quality and this is highlighted by the fact that 35 sites scored below 70%. The poorest quality Local Parks in the City are as follows:
- Chippenham Court Small Local Area Park – 40%
 - Nutbank Common – 44%
 - Bignor Street Park – 48%.
- 4.51 Local Parks have been divided into quartiles, based on the quality scores achieved during site assessments. These quartiles are as follows:
- poor quality – 0% - 67%
 - average quality – 68% - 76%
 - good quality – 77% - 81%
 - excellent quality – 81% - 100%.
- 4.52 The quality benchmark for Local Parks is set at 81%, the score required for a local park to be categorised as excellent. For City Parks the quality benchmark has been set at 85%.
- 4.53 Map 4.3 outlines the quality of Local Parks in Manchester and indicates that there are clusters of poor quality sites, particularly in East Manchester. However, residents in the City Centre have access to high quality Local Parks.

Map 4.3 – Quality of Local Parks in Manchester



- 4.54 Those Local Parks which scored below 70% should be identified as priorities for improvement. The local quality standard indicates that the essential features of a Local Park are flowers and trees, a clean and litter free site and well kept grass. These features should be improved to ensure the provision of a high quality Local Park.
- 4.55 In addition to addressing the recreational needs of residents through the provision of high quality parks, it is essential to maximise the impact that parks and other open spaces can have on the provision of habitats and nature conservation in the City. It will be important to conserve the species that are already evident as well as ensuring that parks are sympathetically managed to facilitate a balance between recreation and biodiversity.

PG3

Seek to develop and enhance existing parks to ensure that they meet both local and regional needs. Drive a structured programme of improvements with clear defined outputs. This may include the production of parks management plans and an updated strategy. The strategy should focus on the provision of a high quality park in each area of the City. The role of parks in biodiversity and nature conservation should be integrated within these plans. Strive to achieve the recommended quality vision of a site assessment score of 85% for a City Park and 81% for a Local Park at all sites across the City.

- 4.56 In order to achieve parks of a high quality, it will be essential that partnership working continues. There are a number of active Friends Groups in the City who continue to offer help and support on specific sites. Security and safety and litter were highlighted as key issues for residents. Local community involvement can be instrumental in generating a culture of respect and encouraging residents to value the local resources. This will have a knock on effect on the quality of open spaces.

PG4

Promote and support community involvement in parks and gardens.

Improving access to parks

- 4.57 Good access to parks is as important as the provision of high quality sites, as without effective access routes, sites will be underused and consequently undervalued. Much of the Irwell City Park (to be developed in Salford) is outside of the City boundaries and access routes to this park will therefore be of particular importance.
- 4.58 Key issues arising as part of the analysis of accessibility included:
- the need to ensure that facilities are accessible to disabled residents
 - the importance of facilitating easy access to and within parks through the provision of effective pathways and entrances
 - the role that linkages between parks and other open spaces play in increasing usage.

- 4.59 Regional and City Parks are City wide resources with wide catchment areas. Accessibility mapping reveals that all residents have theoretical access to a City park within the recommended 15 minute travel time. In order to promote higher levels of usage, the improvement of access routes to City Parks (via public transport and also through the development and improvement of green linkages) should be prioritised. The potential to develop existing parks and open spaces into a green network was seen as a key opportunity
- 4.60 While Local Parks are located in close proximity to the home, it is essential that the principles of good access are embraced at these sites too.

PG5

Seek to develop effective public transport links to ensure that all residents are able to access City Parks easily. Ensure that access routes to and within parks facilitate usage.

Proactively plan the development of a green space network across the City which links parks as well as other open spaces and maximises the role of open spaces in every day life.

Protecting existing open space

- 4.61 The local quantity standard has been set at the existing level of provision. This places an emphasis on improving the quality of parks and ensuring that they are accessible, functional open spaces which meet the needs of local residents. While this disguises some areas where new provision may be required, on the whole, qualitative improvements will be of particular importance.
- 4.62 In light of the importance of parks to local residents and the role that these sites play in community life and supporting biodiversity, consideration should be given to the protection of these sites from development. The protection of these sites will also be a key component of the strategy to reduce climate change and promote urban cooling.

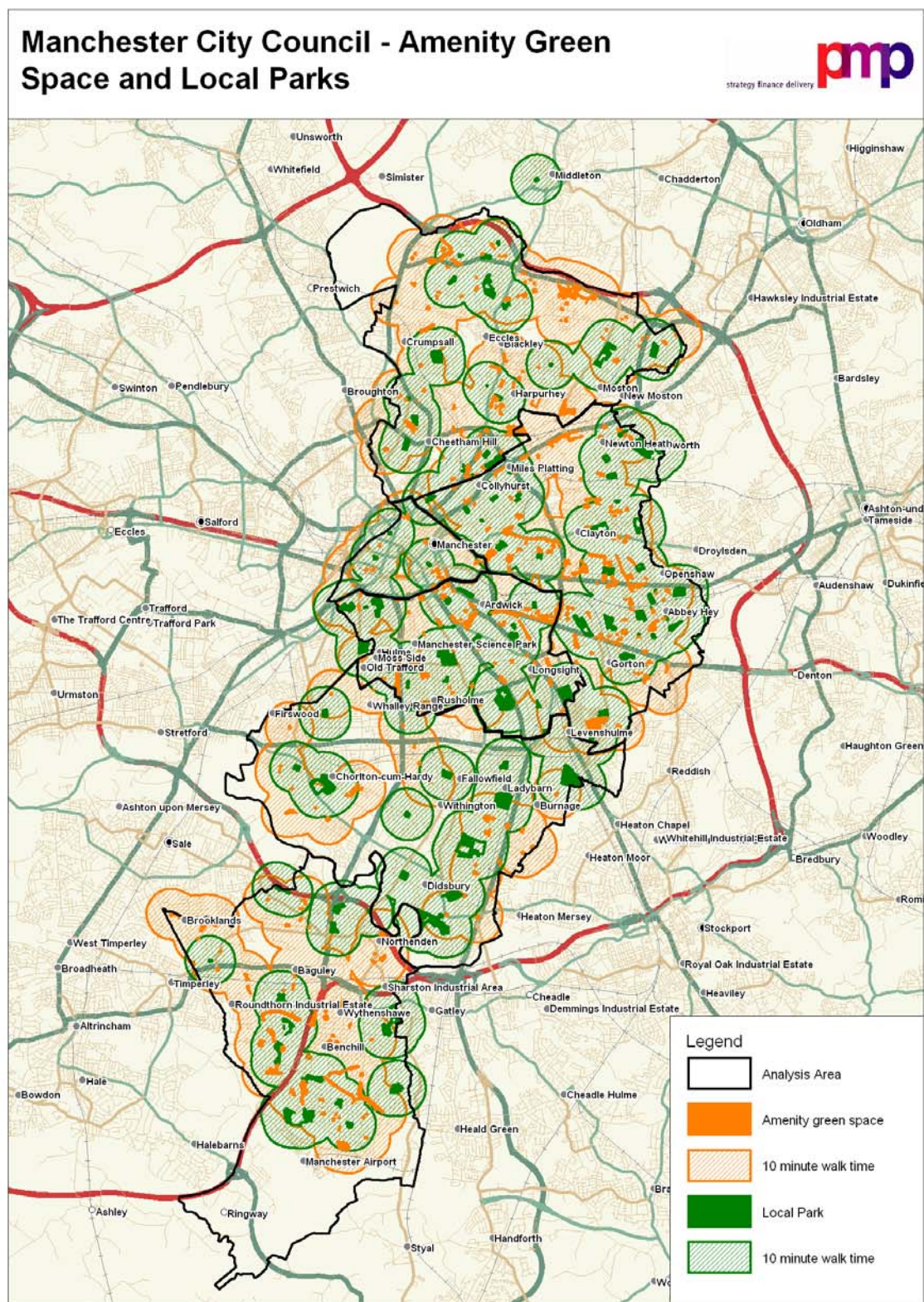
PG6

In light of the importance of parks, allocate all parks as protected open space through the Local Development Framework. Parks should only be lost to development where a series of exception criteria can be met.

Determining the priorities in each area of the City

- 4.63 In order to identify geographical areas of priority and those areas where there is potential unmet demand, we apply both the quantity and accessibility standards together. The quantity standards identify whether areas are quantitatively above or below the recommended minimum standard; and the accessibility standards will help to determine where those deficiencies are of high importance. The quality of existing provision is also of paramount importance, particularly in light of the emphasis on quality evident during local consultations.
- 4.64 While there is a focus on the quality of parks and ensuring that the wider opportunities these sites offer are maximised, it is important to ensure that all residents are within the appropriate catchment area of a park and that the existing parks have sufficient capacity to meet the needs of the residents. This is particularly important in light of the emphasis placed on parks during local consultation. Residents indicated that they are willing to travel further to higher quality parks, with a wider range of facilities.
- 4.65 Map 4.4 overleaf illustrates the provision of parks and gardens in the context of amenity green space in the area. Amenity green space can play a key role in the delivery of local open space to residents; however the provision of local amenity green space does not negate the need for more formalised provision, such as a park.
- 4.66 Amenity space provides more localised and informal play opportunities for residents. The presence of amenity green space in areas deficient of parks provides an opportunity to formalise these spaces to better meet the needs of local residents.
- 4.67 Where parks are provided within a 10 minute catchment (the recommended distance threshold for amenity green space as set in Section 6) they may negate the need for further provision of amenity green space (as a higher order facility they provide a greater range of facilities) as they fulfil similar roles. This is discussed in Section 6.

Map 4.4 - Provision of parks and gardens and amenity green space in Manchester



- 4.68 Map 4.4 indicates that all residents have access to a City Park, Local Park or amenity green space within the recommended distance threshold. There is however some areas where residents are lacking in some types of open space.
- 4.69 In order to maximise the benefit of new parks, any new facilities should be targeted in locations that are currently lacking in provision. Moreover, to ensure that the maximum number of residents are within the accessibility catchment of parks and gardens, any new site should be located so that there is no overlap with the catchment of existing parks. While across the City there is currently sufficient provision to meet the needs of residents in quantitative terms, population growth will mean that additional provision is likely to be required over the LDF period.
- 4.70 The analysis that follows considers the provision of Local Parks within each of the geographical areas of the City and highlights where future priorities should lie in each of the seven areas. While this provides a local level overview of provision, consideration should be given to the most appropriate strategy for parks on a City wide level.
- 4.71 While the overall strategy should focus on improving the quality of key sites, if the overall aim of ensuring that all residents are within 10 minutes of a quality local park is to be achieved, qualitative improvements will be required at sites across the City, as well as new provision as the population grows.

Manchester City Centre

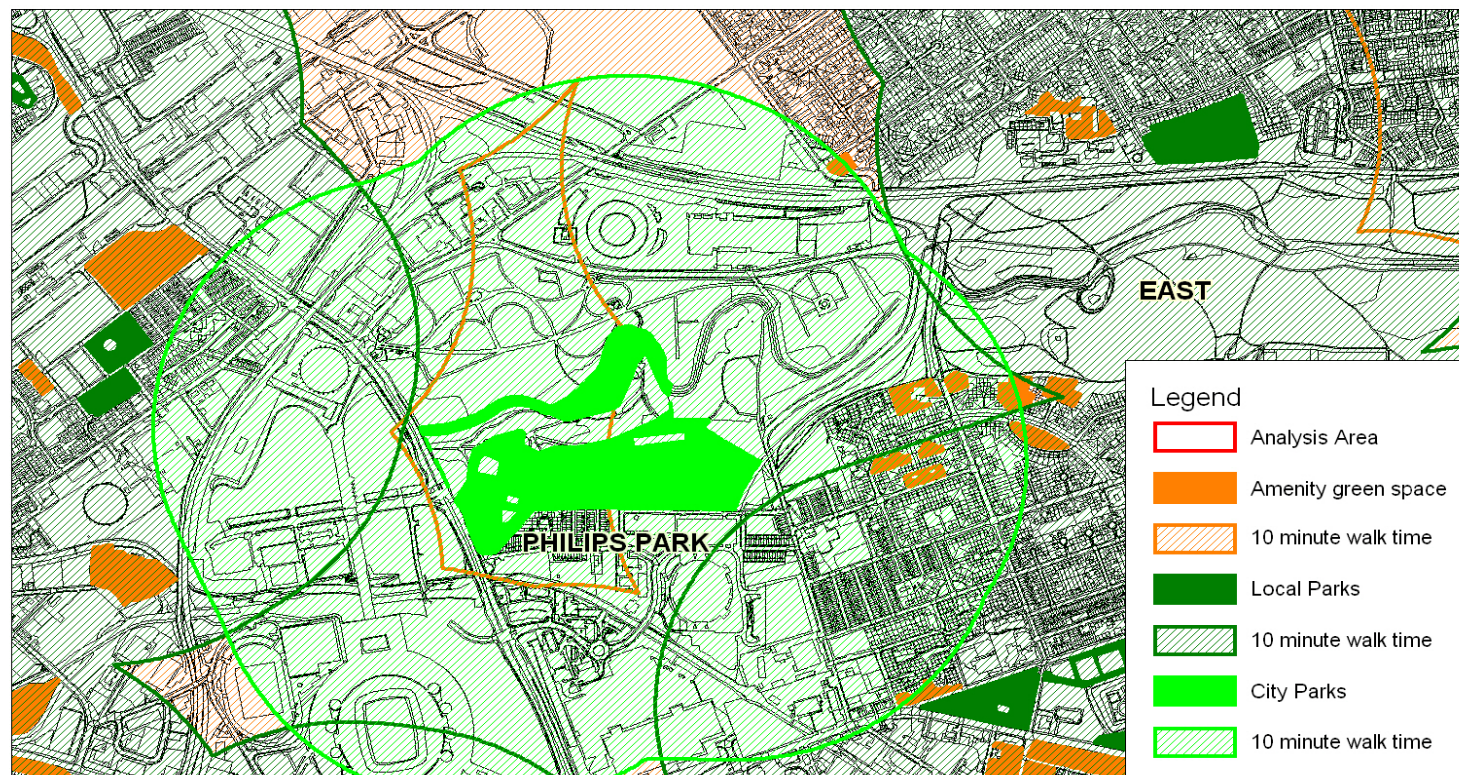
- 4.72 The City Centre contains the fewest number of parks and application of the quantity standard indicates that there is insufficient provision to meet demand. The current shortfall in the area equates to 3.70 hectares.
- 4.73 Despite a quantitative shortfall, accessibility mapping suggests that nearly all areas of the City Centre are within a 10 minute walk of a park or garden, meaning that there is a good distribution of these facilities for residents, workers and visitors to use. As well as parks being evenly distributed in the City Centre, parks in other areas are also within a 10 minute walk from the City Centre.
- 4.74 In addition to the high level of access to Local Parks, residents in the City Centre are also able to reach larger parks such as Heaton Park and Alexandra Park. The City Centre is a public transport hub, which means that access outside of the City Centre area is particularly easy for these residents. The creation of Irwell City Park will also provide additional parkland in the west of the City Centre and the development of the Oxford Road Corridor will further improve the quality and quantity of green space for residents in the City Centre. In addition to the centrally located parks, there a range of civic spaces across the City Centre area, which to an extent fill the role of parks / amenity spaces. The interrelationship between these types of open space will be explored further in section 19.
- 4.75 This even distribution of parks suggests that despite quantitative shortfalls, new provision would not be a priority and that maintaining the quality of existing sites would be the primary future focus. However in order to meet with aspirations that more green space is required in the City Centre, along with the recognition of the role that green spaces play in mitigating climate change and promoting urban cooling, opportunities for the further provision of parks in this area should be taken. To an extent, the development of the Irwell Valley Country Park will meet this requirement.

Ongoing	Maintain the quality of the three existing Green Flag parks
Medium Term	Promote the development of green linkages connecting the City Centre with parks and open spaces in nearby areas. This may include opening up access to river and canal corridors as well as making links between existing open spaces.
Longer Term	<p>Consider the development of an additional park / garden within the City Centre. Green space in the urban environment is particularly important and the provision of such facilities may help in the fight to mitigate climate change. This is also particularly important in light of the emphasis placed on this issue during consultation and the perception that parks should form the “green lungs” of the City.</p> <p>Ensure that the location of parks and open spaces are considered as part of any review of the transport network.</p>

East Manchester

- 4.76 The second highest quantity of Local Parks is found in East Manchester (50.74 hectares). Application of the quantity standard indicates that there is sufficient provision to meet current demand. In quantitative terms, an additional 28,790 residents could be accommodated before additional provision would be required.
- 4.77 Although there is sufficient provision to meet demand, accessibility mapping illustrates that there are some Local Parks with overlapping catchments and there is a small area where residents are outside of the catchment for Local Parks near to the City of Manchester Stadium. Philips Park (a City park) is located in this area and for residents within a 10 minute walking distance of this park (the recommended catchment for Local Parks) therefore alleviates deficiencies. Figure 4.1 highlights the role of Philips Park in East Manchester.

Figure 4.1 – Deficiencies in the centre of East Manchester



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- 4.78 When amalgamating the provision of Local Parks and amenity green space all residents have access to at least one of these types of open space within the recommended 10 minute walk time.
- 4.79 The quantity of parks in East Manchester suggests that future priority should be placed on qualitative improvements and addressing access issues. This supports the direction of the Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF), which sets the facilitation of access routes to regional, City and neighbourhood parks.
- 4.80 With regards to the quality of parks and gardens, analysis suggests that: the quality of City Parks is excellent. The average quality score of a site is 99% and both sites have achieved Green Flag status.
- 4.81 The quality of Local Parks is average, with the average quality score of a site being 70%. Three Local Parks have achieved Green Flag status, specifically Openshaw Park, Gaskell Street Park and St Michael and Angel Meadow.

Ongoing	Maintain the quality of the four existing Green Flag parks, specifically Philips Park, Openshaw Park, Gaskell Street Park and St Michael and Angel Meadow.
Short – Medium Term	Drive a programme of improvements to the quality of existing parks.
Medium Term	Promote the development of green linkages connecting East Manchester with central and North Manchester as well as with Tameside MBC. This may include opening up access to river and canal corridors as well as making links between existing open spaces. Access routes within parks should also be considered.
Longer Term	Evaluate the impact of population growth on the demand for additional parks in the area, considering both access to existing sites and the application of the quantity standard within the catchment area.

Central Manchester

- 4.82 Application of the accessibility standard indicates that nearly all residents have access to a local park. Quantitative analysis supports this high level of accessibility, with there being sufficient provision to meet current demand. The current quantity of parks would be sufficient to accommodate population growth of 17,219 residents.
- 4.83 This even distribution of parks suggests that new provision is not a priority in this area. Furthermore, the development of the Oxford Road Corridor will further improve the quality and quantity of green space for residents in this area of the City.
- 4.84 The quality of Local Parks in Central Manchester is average. The average quality score of a site is 76% and site scores range from 62% – 86%. In addition to this, Ardwick Green and Crowcroft Park have been awarded Green Flag status. However, Barracks Park (62%), Longsight Park North (67%) and Langport Avenue (68%) are three sites that scored below 70%. These sites should be prioritised for enhancement. Improvements to the quality of provision are also a priority in the SRF.

SECTION 4 – PARKS AND GARDENS

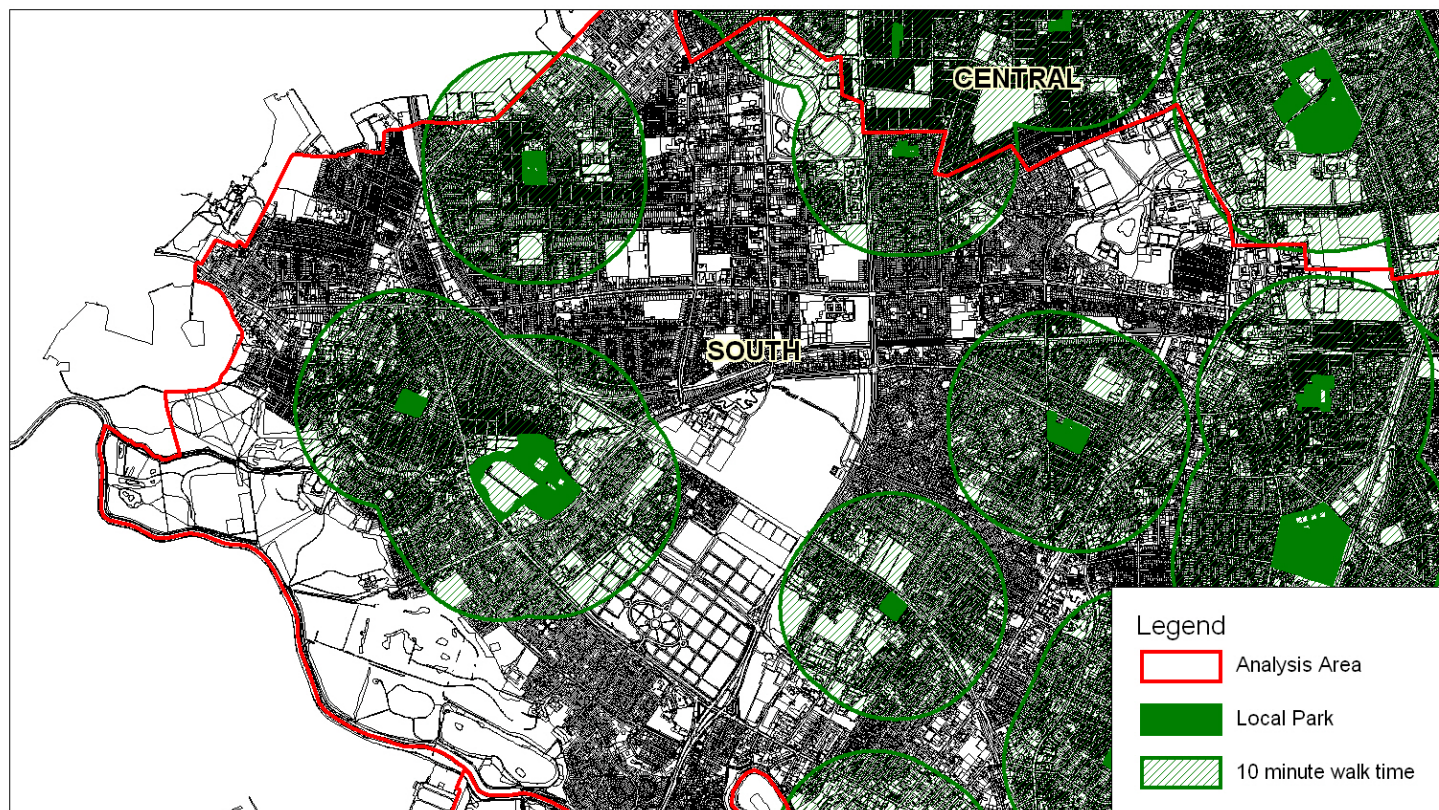
- 4.85 In light of deficiencies in other types of open space, it is essential that parks in the central area offer a wide range of opportunities for residents. This may include play provision, natural and semi natural open space.
- 4.86 In addition to qualitative improvements, in light of deficiencies in other types of open space, the creation of green links to improve access routes to Local Parks will be of priority importance in this area of the City. This will returned to in other sections of the report.

Ongoing	Maintain the quality of the two existing green flag parks, specifically Ardwick Green and Crowcroft Park
	In order to offset deficiencies of other types of open space consider the provision of a wide range of different environments within the park, including natural areas, facilities for children and young people and sports facilities.
Short – Medium Term	Drive a programme of improvements to the quality of existing parks.
	Promote the development of green linkages connecting residents in the central areas with parks and open spaces in the South, City Centre and East Manchester. This may include opening up access to river and canal corridors as well as making links between existing open spaces. Access routes within parks should also be considered. The creation of linkages will be particularly important if deficiencies in other types of open space are to be addressed.
Longer Term	Evaluate the impact of population growth on the adequacy of parks in the area. Innovative solutions may be required in light of the nature of the area and the limited opportunities for large scale new provision.

South Manchester

- 4.87 The highest quantity of Local Parks is found in South Manchester and application of the quantity standard indicates that provision exceeds the minimum standard. The current provision of Local Parks is sufficient to accommodate a population growth of 17,219.
- 4.88 Despite there being sufficient provision of Local Parks, accessibility mapping indicates that there is a poor distribution of sites with the majority of parks located in the east (around Fallowfield, Withington and Didsbury), which means that a large number of residents in the west of the area are outside the accessibility catchment of a local park.
- 4.89 Although residents in this area of deficiency are within a 15 minute drive of a City Park, the two City Parks in the area (Alexandra Park and Platt Fields Park) are located on the edge of the northern boundary of South Manchester, which means that residents do not have local access to a park. This area of deficiency is illustrated in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2 – Deficiencies in the west of South Manchester



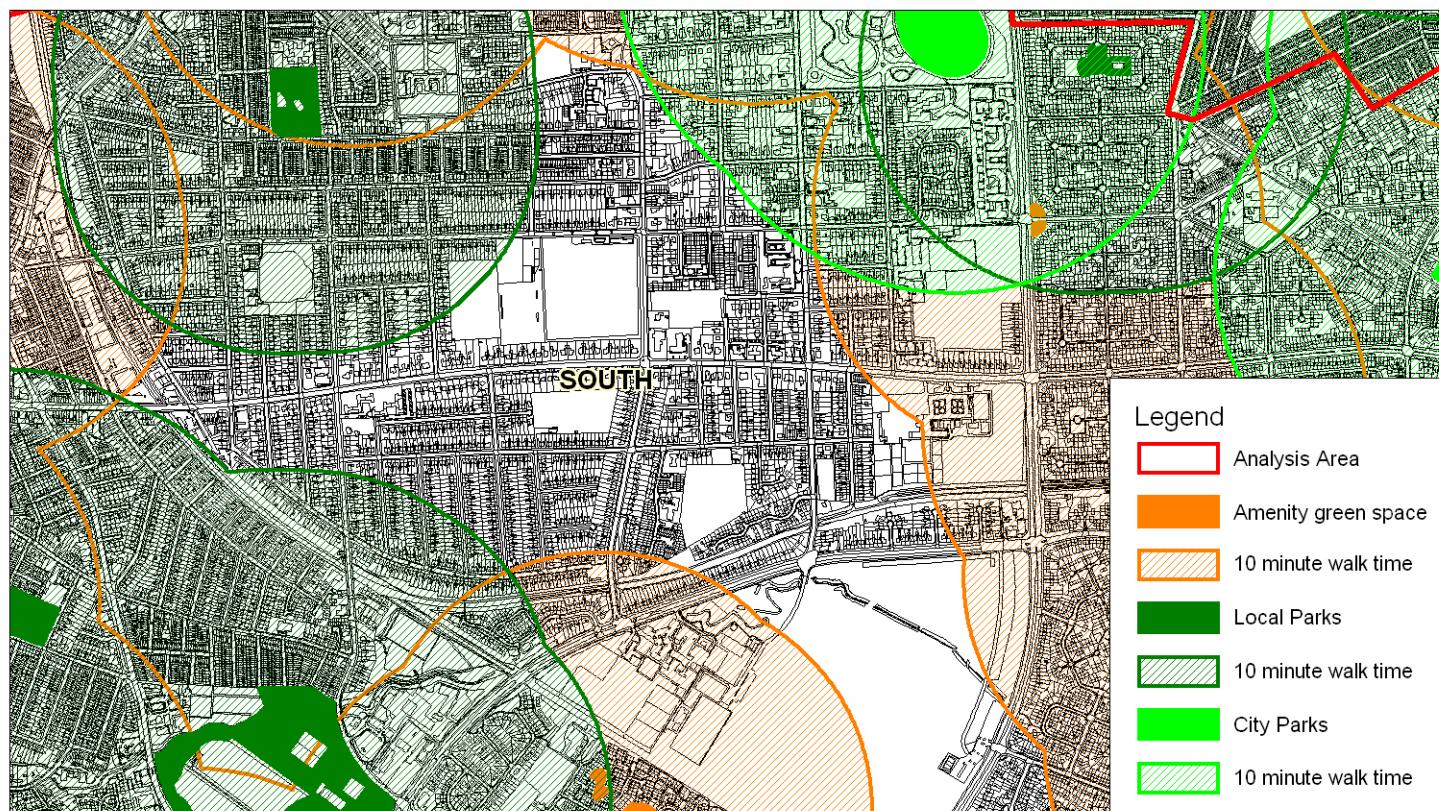
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- 4.90 When amalgamating the provision of Local Parks and amenity green space nearly all residents have access to at least one of these types of open space within a 10 minute walk time. However, residents in the Whalley Range / Chorlton Park area cannot access either a local park or amenity green space (Figure 4.3 overleaf).

Figure 4.3 – Deficiencies in South Manchester



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- 4.91 These deficiencies suggest that while the overall quantity of provision is sufficient, that consideration should be given to the provision of a new park to ensure that all residents are within the appropriate distance threshold. If new provision is not feasible, focus should be placed on improving green linkages and facilitating access to existing parks in the southern area of the City.
- 4.92 Seven Local Parks have achieved Green Flag status, highlighting the high quality of parks in the area. An objective of the SRF is to build upon its current assets. Analysis of quality issues with specific regards to South Manchester suggest that:
- the quality of City Parks is very good, with the average quality score of a site being 87%. Furthermore, Platt Fields Park is the highest quality City Park in Manchester (100%)
 - the quality of Local Parks is average. The average quality score of a site is 76% and quality scores range from 58% - 92%. Only two sites, Clinton Avenue Park (58%) and Kingswood Park (68%), scored below 70%.

Ongoing	Maintain the quality of the seven existing Green Flag parks.
	In order to offset deficiencies of other types of open space consider the provision of a wide range of different environments within the park, including natural areas, facilities for children and young people and sports facilities.
Short – Medium Term	Drive a programme of improvements to the quality of existing parks.
	Promote the development of green linkages connecting residents with open spaces in nearby areas. This may include opening up access to river and canal corridors as well as making links between existing open spaces. Access routes within parks should also be considered. The creation of linkages will be particularly important if deficiencies in other types of open space are to be addressed.
Medium – Long Term	Investigate the feasibility of providing a new park in the Whalley Range / Chorlton Park area of the City where there is currently a small gap in existing provision.
Longer Term	Evaluate the impact of population growth on the adequacy of parks in the area. Innovative solutions may be required in light of the nature of the area and the limited opportunities for large scale new provision.

North Manchester

- 4.93 Accessibility mapping illustrates that a number of residents in North Manchester are unable to access a local park within the recommended 10 minute walk time. Application of the quantity standard reinforces this deficiency, with there being a current shortfall in the area equating to 18.76 hectares (the greatest shortfall in the City).
- 4.94 Despite this, the provision of City Parks in the area is sufficient to meet demand and residents outside the catchment of a local park have local (within 10 minute walk time) access to a City park (Boggart Hole Clough and Queens Park). As a higher order facility the presence of these sites negates the need for local park provision.

- 4.95 Heaton Park, a regional park, is the largest park in Manchester and is located on the north west boundary. It provides a variety of facilities and recreational opportunities for residents and further negates the need for new provision in North Manchester.
- 4.96 Site visits indicate that the quality of larger parks in North Manchester is high, with two of the three sites achieving Green Flag status.
- 4.97 The quality of Local Parks in North Manchester is the lowest of all analysis areas in the City. The average quality score of a site is 58% and 12 sites have quality scores below 70%. Only Crumpsall Park has achieved Green Flag status. This highlights the need for qualitative improvements at Local Parks in North Manchester.
- 4.98 In light of the high quantities of larger parks in North Manchester and the consequential good access to facilities, future priorities should focus on qualitative improvements.

Ongoing	Maintain the quality of the three Green Flag accredited parks
Short – Medium Term	Drive a programme of improvements to the quality of existing parks.
Longer Term	Evaluate the impact of population growth on the capacity of existing parks.

Wythenshawe

- 4.99 Application of the quantity standard indicates that the provision of Local Parks in Wythenshawe is sufficient to meet demand. The current provision of Local Parks is sufficient to accommodate population growth of 2,995. The quantity of parks is further supplemented by the presence of Wythenshawe Park, a regional facility.
- 4.100 Despite the adequacy of provision in the area, accessibility mapping illustrates that a large number of residents in Wythenshawe / Northenden are outside the catchment of a local park. Wythenshawe Park negates the need for additional provision for residents who are within a 10 minute walk time of the park.
- 4.101 Wythenshawe Park is the only City Park located in the area and this park has achieved Green Flag status in recognition of the high quality of the site. Site assessments reinforce the quality of this site, with the quality score of Wythenshawe Park being 100%.
- 4.102 The quality of Local Parks is good. Quality scores range from 52% - 80% and the average quality score of a site is 66%. Baguely Park, Culmere Park and Painswick Park have all achieved Green Flag accreditation. However, four sites scored below 70%, highlighting the need for qualitative enhancements to these sites.
- 4.103 In light of the even distribution and quantity of parks in the area future priorities will lie primarily with qualitative improvements as well as improvements to access routes to maximise the usage of sites. This links with the priorities of the SRF.

Ongoing	Maintain the four Green Flag accredited parks, specifically Wythenshawe Park, Baguley Park, Culmere Park and Painswick Park.
Short – Medium Term	Drive a programme of improvements to the quality of existing parks.
	Promote the development of green linkages connecting residents with open spaces in nearby areas. This may include opening up access to river and canal corridors as well as making links between existing open spaces. Access routes within parks should also be considered. The creation of linkages will be particularly important if deficiencies in other types of open space are to be addressed.
Longer Term	Evaluate the impact of population growth on the capacity of existing parks.

Summary

- 4.104 Parks and gardens are particularly valuable to local residents and are one of the most frequently used open spaces by people of all ages and all sectors of the local community. Parks are perceived to be a key part of the character of the City.
- 4.105 The wide range of facilities available at this type of open space is seen as particularly important and perceived to provide a wide range of recreational opportunities for residents. The role of parks and gardens in meeting targets to increase level of physical activity and improve health should also not be underestimated. The wider benefits of parks are wide reaching and these sites are as valuable for the habitats they offer as well as the recreational opportunities that they provide.
- 4.106 The quality of parks and gardens is of particular importance to local residents. Many highlighted that the functionality of sites, along with the maintenance and perception of safety is of particular importance to them. Residents are willing to travel further to higher quality facilities. Key issues identified including security fears and minor issues such as dog fouling. Overall the quality of parks across Manchester was commended, and this is reflected by the achievement of 27 Green Flag awards.
- 4.107 There is an even distribution of parks across the City. Application of quantity standards suggests that currently the quantity of provision is sufficient to meet demand although population growth will see demand increase and new provision may be required to meet this additional need.
- 4.108 While the overall strategy should focus on improving the quality of key sites, if the overall aim of ensuring that all residents are within 10 minutes of a quality park is to be achieved, qualitative improvements will be required at sites across the City, as well as new provision in some areas.
- 4.109 It is therefore recommended that the key priorities for the future delivery of provision of parks in Manchester through the LDF and / or other mechanisms are:
- maximise the role that parks can play in striving to increase participation in health and physical activity across the City
 - continue to promote activities and alternative means of exercise at parks to maximise usage

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- ensure that the LDF contains policies that protect parks from development
- drive a strategic programme of qualitative improvements across the City
- facilitate access to parks through the development of public transport links to parks and the creation of green linkages.