

5 THE DEVELOPMENT OF STANDARDS OF PROVISION

5.1 General: justification for standards

Standards of provision should be informed by both the assessment of the current quantity, quality, and accessibility of existing open space and recreation provision; and, the established needs and aspirations of the community. Standards are one of the major end products of the study.

Standards should also reflect the importance attached to different kinds of open space by the community through the consultation exercise, and if they are adopted for use the types of open space they cover should be reflected in the revised development plans in terms of the way in which open spaces are treated and designated on the proposals maps.

Broadly speaking, PPG17 suggests that standards should have three basic components covering: quantity (per capita); quality; and, accessibility. The results of community consultation helps greatly to inform the development of local standards in respect of the three required components. For both local authorities the consultation described in the previous section and the concluding points have implications for the development of local standards considered in this section:

- **Quantity:** The community values local spaces, and this appreciation extends to types of space and recreation opportunity not explicitly recognised by the current local plan standards. In particular, the importance of accessible natural green space, recreation corridors, parks and recreation grounds, and provision for teenagers. These and others should be better embraced in new standards.
- **Quality:** Clean, safe, and high quality maintenance of spaces are seen as very important along within an appropriate range of facilities and opportunities. These considerations need to be reflected in the provision of a diversity of spaces and accompanying facilities maintained to a high standard.
- **Accessibility:** This needs to reflect the needs of potential user. Spaces likely to be used on a very frequent and regular basis need to be within easy walking distance and safe to access. Other larger opportunities where visits are longer but perhaps less frequent can be further away.

As already stated earlier in the report both local authorities rely on the NPFA Six Acre Standard to guide the planning and protection of open spaces within their respective areas. Therefore comments in relation to existing local plan standards for both Christchurch Borough and East Dorset District Councils can be summarised in the following table (figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1

OS type	General comment	Comments in relation to existing local plan standards		
		Quantity	Quality	Access
Parks and gardens	Consultation shows these to be valued and well used	Provided for in standard	Not provided for in standard	Not provided for in standard
Accessible Natural Green Space	Features such as countryside, woodland, walks and footpaths are highly prized & frequently used for recreation	Not provided for in standard	Not provided for in standard	Not provided for in standard
Amenity/Informal Green Space	Generally informal space (which could cover a variety of spaces) is valued, and the consultation does suggest frequent use and value attached by local people	Amenity green space provided for in current standards	Not provided for in standard	Not provided for in standard
Children and young people's equipped space	Although use is confined to a section of the community, the consultation does suggest a strong desire for good local facilities, within easy walking distance	Provided for in current standard, although needs of teenagers generally overlooked.	Provided for in current standard, although needs of teenagers generally overlooked.	Provided for in current standard, although needs of teenagers generally overlooked.
Allotments	Use generally confined to a small section of the community, but used regularly by those people	Not provided for in standard	Not provided for in standard	Not provided for in standard
Outdoor Sports Space	Only used (for sport) by a section of the community, but used regularly by those people that do play sport.	Outdoor sports space provided for in standard	Not provided for in standard	Not provided for in standard

5.2 The suggested standards

The following standards are based on the results of local consultation, but are also informed by pragmatic considerations, and are intended to be achievable. The standards proposed are for minimum levels of provision, and they are being provided to guide planning developer contributions from new development in respect of important community facilities. Therefore, just because geographical areas may enjoy levels of provision exceeding minimum standards does not mean there is surplus provision, as all such provision may be well used. In addition, the standards (as they relate to various forms of open space) reflect only the importance of such areas for given recreation activities. Open spaces may have intrinsic value for other reasons, including visual and ecological. The recreational utility of open space must therefore be viewed in the round and in the context of broader environmental and planning considerations, beyond the scope of this report.

On the other hand, it would be unreasonable to expect developers to contribute to open space provision reflecting a standard based on areas where there is a very high level of provision. This would prove very difficult to achieve.

Much of the open space covered by the suggested standards is 'open and informal access' and does not necessarily have an identifiable maximum capacity or minimum level for justifying provision. Use and capacity will be influenced by manifold factors such as:

- User perception: whether a site is felt to be too busy, or too quiet and remote to encourage use. Space is sometimes seen as a medium for social intercourse, but on other occasions as a means to 'escape'.
- Technical capacity: whether additional use is restricted for functional reasons, such as when pitches or allotments are fully booked, or when all the equipment in a play area is being used at times of most demand.
- Safe capacity: where there are clear reasons that usage of a site should be restricted for personal and collective well being.
- Ecological capacity: the level of use beyond which important natural habitats are damaged and unable to recover.

With some types of open space it is therefore fairly easy to quantify the levels of use, and thus conclude whether it is being used to capacity or otherwise. Teams can express a demand for a 'pitch' and individuals for 'allotments' and this demand in each case can be met by providing a space meeting a certain size whilst also satisfying key criteria.

On the other hand if people appear to enjoy the use of 'parks', 'informal open space', or 'natural green space' it is very difficult to establish any specific criteria determining 'how much' should be provided in areas where there is a shortage of such space, or else where it is considered appropriate to create additional space to meet the needs of increased population.

It would be inappropriate to base quantitative standards for such space solely on existing levels of provision in a locality as these vary greatly between areas. To base standards on the situation in the best provided areas could prove unrealistic. To vary standards according to what is considered to be realistic in different areas would not be equitable.

As a pragmatic alternative this section seeks to justify the suggested spatial components where appropriate against practical factors (explained for each standard).

5.3 Joint standards

It had been an intention of the study to provide evidence for the development of separate standards for each of the two local authorities. However, given that the standards are intended to be for minimum levels of provision, it becomes impossible to achieve this original ambition, for the most part.

There should however be a difference in approach in how standards are **interpreted** between the two local authorities.

Although the standards may be similar across the two local authority areas, their interpretation and application may differ depending on circumstances. This section provides some guidance on how this might happen, but additional guidance could be provided through a Supplementary Planning Document.

The standards will need to be supplemented by additional guidance to assist in the interpretation of their application, and to also indicate associated capital and maintenance costs (where appropriate).

Indicative access catchments have been plotted on maps later in this report. These are based on walking times and drive times considered to be reasonable. It is rarely possible to take a straightline route, and this consideration has been factored into the catchment radii shown in the area profiles. It will also be important in the micro planning of new provision to take full account of locally specific barriers to access. It has not been possible within this study to consider these matters in detail in plotting catchments around facilities. However, within the towns features such as main roads, railways, and rivers may hamper access in some areas.

5.4 Standards provided

Standards suggested in this section include those for:

- Recreation Grounds and Public Gardens (with reference also to Country Parks)
- Accessible Natural Green Space
- Amenity/Informal Green Space
- Children's Equipped Play Space and Teenage Play Space
- Allotments and Community Gardens
- Active Outdoor Space
- Sports Halls & Swimming Pools
- Community and Village Halls
- Other open space

The following explanation of these proposed standards also highlights existing national and local plan standards covering similar themes with a discussion as to why these may not be appropriate to either or both of the local authority areas.

5.5 Recreation Grounds and Public Gardens (with reference to country parks)

Existing National and Local Policies: There are no existing national or local standards or related guidance relating specifically to these kinds of opportunity. Neither is there local plan policies guiding their planning and provision.

General justification for a local standard: The audit of provision as well as the consultation has identified the significance of and importance attached to Recreation Grounds and Public Gardens. It is therefore highly appropriate for local standards of provision to reflect their existing and continued significance through making express provision for these features.

Quantity: A minimum level of provision of **0.5 ha per 1000** people is suggested both as a basis for a contribution from new housing, but also as a minimum target for provision. This level is considered to be realistic for new provision. Recreation Grounds and Public Gardens by their nature are comprised from different types of open space. Such a space of reasonable size may, for example, accommodate outdoor sports, informal recreation space, children's play and natural/semi natural green space. Standards for these other interests are provided elsewhere in this section, and this particular standard simply deals with the 'articulating space' required to bind the other elements together. It could help provide for circulation space between the various elements, and space for people to arrive, leave and congregate. It could also accommodate buildings and other structures.

This figure compares with the current calculated level of provision of Recreation Grounds and Public Gardens in the two local authority areas as follows (see Figures 3.1 and 3.4 in Section 3)

- Christchurch Borough: 1.26 ha per 1000 people.
- East Dorset District: 0.78 ha per 1000 people.

However, the above figures are based on the overall areas of sites, and not just the articulating space.

Space covered by this standard should therefore be combined with provision for other open space (see below) to provide larger truly multifunctional areas. The space provided should be of an appropriate shape and character to allow for meaningful recreational use, and its possible integration with other types of open space opportunity (see under 'Quality' below).

Accessibility: A distance of **450 metres (straightline)**, or about 10 minutes walking time is felt to be appropriate (so that local people can gain convenient access by foot). The public consultation suggests that around 75% of those interviewed would be prepared to travel around 10 minutes to reach a local park, and that many of these trips would be by foot. It would be reasonable to also adopt a larger (drivetime) catchment for the major provision of this kind- of perhaps around 15 minutes. This would be consistent with local people's preparedness to travel further to larger facilities as expressed through the community survey. It is possible that vehicular trips may be shared purpose journeys, perhaps combining a visit to a high quality park with shopping and/or other commitments.

Quality: The Councils may wish to consider the value of working jointly towards a hierarchy embracing provision aimed at frequent local use, and also regular (but perhaps less frequent) strategic use which perhaps might be in the form of a Country Park resource hosting other opportunities.

- **Strategic level:** Landscaping with a variety of natural and semi natural features, including natural habitats and planted beds. Space for outdoor pitch and other sports provision as appropriate (see separate standards). Space for children's and youth play facilities (see separate standards). Car parking. Footpaths. Cycleways. Buildings for secured storage and for catering outlets. Due regard to external links by foot and bicycle which may require improvements to the external environment (see below). Events venue. A notable and defining architectural feature. Seating. Litter and dog bins. Toilets. Refreshment venues. Picnic tables. Consideration of zoning between active and passive zones. The overall size of the park might be expected to be approaching or greater than **40 hectares**. Strategic provision might also take the form of a Country Park.
- **Local level:** Landscaping with a variety of natural features, including natural habitats. Space for outdoor pitch and other sports provision as appropriate (see separate standards). Space for children's and youth play facilities (see separate standards). Car parking. Footpaths. Cycleways. Buildings for secured storage and/or catering outlets (if appropriate). Due regard to external links by foot and bicycle which may require improvements to the external environment. Seating. Litter and dog bins. The overall size of the park might be expected to be at least **2 hectares**.

Beyond this 2-tier hierarchy contributions from developers arising from the application of this standard might also be used to create small 'pocket parks' in certain circumstances.

Country Park: As mentioned, an element of contributions based on this standard might also be used towards the provision of a Country Park. **Map 5.1: 5 minutes Drivetime from Moors Valley Country Park** identifies general ease of access by vehicle to this major recreation opportunity. From the map it is apparent that there are large parts of the western side of East Dorset, and much of Christchurch Borough, that do not have easy access to this facility. Although the coast and beaches may in some way offer alternative opportunities for those living in Christchurch, a Country Park style resource on or beyond the western boundary of the study area would meet the needs of many people within the study area, but also in other parts of heavily populated South East Dorset. This is an example of where local authorities could pool developer contributions in helping to provide an opportunity of pan authority benefit.

5.6 Links to parks and between open spaces

Although the study area's parks and other spaces are appreciated and valued, their use clearly depends on how easy they are to access. There is little point considering the provision of new or improvement of existing parks and spaces without parallel consideration of the means of access to them, and especially by foot and bike, and for people with disabilities. This has shown to be particularly critical for certain groups in the community, particularly children and teenagers. New standards for parks should therefore also include guidance on the improvement of approach routes by foot and bike for which developer contributions should be sought. The Councils will need to determine:

- the linear distance threshold upon which such contributions should be based; and,
- the nature of improvements sought to facilitate and improve upon ease and safety of access which might include clearly defined cycle lanes, safe crossing points, provision for disabled access etc.

5.7 Accessible Natural and Semi Natural Green Space

Existing National and Local Policies: English Nature has proposed national guidance on an Accessible Natural Green Space Standard (ANGSt) which suggests that provision should be made of at least 2 ha of accessible greenspace per 1000 population according to a system of tiers into which sites of different sizes fit:

- No person should live more than 300m from an area of natural green space of at least 2 ha in size;
- There should be at least one accessible 20 ha site within 2 km from home;
- There should be one accessible 100 ha site within 5 km; and,
- There should be one accessible 500 ha site within 10 km.

There are no local standards relating specifically to the provision of accessible natural green space.

General justification for a local standard: The audit of provision as well as the consultation has identified the significance of and importance attached to natural green spaces (which might include riverside walks, countryside, woodlands) and it is therefore desirable for local standards of provision to cover these features. In the absence of an existing local standard it would be appropriate to consider the English Nature ANGSt guidance as a starting point for the development of a local standard. However, it is probably unrealistic to aim for a general minimum level of provision of 2 hectares per 1000 within towns in particular, as it would be largely impossible to find the additional land available to achieve such an objective.

It is felt that a minimum level of provision of 1 ha per 1000 people would be more achievable for the purpose of determining developer contributions. It might be argued that this level of provision does not reflect the value ascribed to such space by the public through the consultation. Given that there are no adopted standards in the Local Plans covering such space, this level of provision would be a major improvement over the current situation through providing clear policy guidance. A changed management regime on some open space sites could also help to improve the stock of Accessible Natural Green Space (such as encouraging natural habitats to develop around the fringes of playing fields and recreation grounds, and the 'conversion' of other informal space to this function).

In the longer term there might be value in developing a hierarchy of provision as suggested by the ANGSt guidance, offering a range of smaller and larger opportunities set within a geographical dimension. However, it is felt strongly that the focus should be initially on improving provision and accessibility within easy walking distance.

Quantity: A minimum level of provision of 1 ha per 1000 people is suggested both as a basis for a contribution from new housing, but also as a minimum target for provision in the study area. This is considered to be realistic and capable of delivery, through developer contributions. The space provided should be of an appropriate shape and character to allow for meaningful recreational use, and its possible integration with other types of open space opportunity (see under 'Quality' below). Wherever possible, local provision should be of at least **2 hectares** in size.

This figure compares with the estimated current provision of (Accessible) Natural and Semi Natural Green Space in the two local authorities (see Figures 3.1 and 3.4 in Section 3):

- Christchurch Borough: 12.8 hectares per 1000 people.
- East Dorset District: 73.5 hectares per 1000 people.

At first sight it might seem that the suggested standard is extremely low compared with current provision in either authority. However, there will be many developed parts of the study area that cannot easily access existing opportunities. 1 hectare per 1000 would be the equivalent of, say, providing a large football pitch size area in a neighbourhood/community or, ideally, double the area if the desired 2 ha size for a local site is achieved. This will also need to be within easy walking distance from most areas. (See below for access criteria). Most of the above space will in fact be outside development limits and not within easy access by foot from residential areas.

It is also the case that:

- a) the above quantities for each local authority will include some land which it is not easy to gain enter other than in a strictly controlled manner. (Some sites (for example) may only have permitted access by footpaths and other off road routes running through them,
- b) b) as paragraph 3.7 of Section 3 explains, some of the above space will be located in important ecological designations, and where it would not be appropriate to encourage additional access and the aim should really be to deflect damaging recreation activity to alternative sites.

Accessibility: A hierarchy of natural green space sites will be developed. For larger sites a distance of **600 metres (straightline)** (15 minutes walktime) may be appropriate. For smaller areas, about 10 minutes walking time or **450 metres (straightline)** to local natural green space is felt to be appropriate so that local people can gain convenient access by foot. Whilst this latter figure might be higher than proposed by English Nature (Natural England), it tends to be justified by the local research.

Quality: The nature of the space should be determined to reflect local circumstances. However, provision might be expected to include (as appropriate) elements of woodland, wetland, meadow. Provision should also be made for informal public access through recreation corridors. For larger areas, where car borne visits might be anticipated, some parking provision will be required. The larger the area the more valuable sites will tend to be in terms of their potential for enhancing local conservation interest and biodiversity. The aim should be to create areas of accessible natural green space of at least **2 hectares** that are well distributed throughout the urban areas. Wherever possible these sites should be linked which will help to improve wildlife value.

There should be parallel commitments to maintain natural green space through appropriate maintenance techniques reflecting the primary purpose of promoting natural habitats and biodiversity that can also be accessed and enjoyed by local people. Access

by people should not be restricted to narrow corridors, but should allow freedom to wander.

In areas where it may be impossible or inappropriate to provide additional green space consistent with the standard other approaches should be pursued which could include (for example):

- changing the management of marginal space on playing fields and parks to enhance biodiversity
- encouraging living green roofs as part of new development/redevelopment
- encouraging the creation of mixed species hedgerows
- additional use of long grass management regimes
- improvements to watercourses and water bodies
- innovative use of new drainage schemes / Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)
- use of native trees and plants in landscaping new developments.

The above should in any event be principles to be pursued and encouraged at all times.

5.8 Amenity/Informal Green Space

Existing National and Local Policies: There is no national guidance suggesting a standard expressly for the provision of informal green space. The NPFA's Six Acre Standard has proposed that there should be provision of casual or informal playing space within housing areas as part of the overall standard, and this is the only form of amenity open space reflected in the standards of either local plan.

General justification for a local standard: The audit of provision as well as the consultation has identified the importance attached by local people to space close to home, and the focus group meetings in particular suggested that casual informal space is valued by local people. It is unclear from the work undertaken whether local people actually differentiate clearly between what is defined in this report as Amenity/Informal Green Space, and other types of space that might be viewed as important for recreation, play, or visual attraction (which might include parks, natural spaces and other open spaces). The fact that it is difficult sometimes to discern between different forms of open space is understandable given the multifunctional nature of much space.

However, the value of informal green space must be recognised especially within housing areas, where it can provide important local opportunities for play, exercise and visual amenity that are almost immediately accessible. On the other hand open space can be expensive to maintain and it is very important to strike the correct balance between having sufficient space to meet the needs of the community for accessible and attractive space, and having too much which would be impossible to manage properly and therefore a potential liability and source of nuisance. It is important that informal open space provided should be capable of use for at least some forms of recreation activity by the public. The practical definitions of open space provided throughout Section 3 of this report explains the key factors determining recreational utility of space.

Quantity: A minimum level of provision of **0.5 ha per 1000 people** is suggested both as a basis for a contribution from new housing, but also as a minimum target for provision in the study area. The consultation has shown that spaces for informal recreation and for sitting out are used on a frequent and regular basis (see the findings of the household survey). They are flexible spaces and contributions to future space of this kind could be used to develop opportunities for cycle paths and green links, local pocket parks, unequipped very local areas for children's play etc. In terms of existing provision

The space provided should be of an appropriate shape, size and character to allow for meaningful recreational use, and its possible integration with other types of open space opportunity (see under 'Quality' below). The definition of open space provided in Section 1.9 indicates what sort of space would qualify for consideration under this heading, in particular. This definition is sufficiently broad so as not to proscribe imaginative design of such space. For example, contributions towards the provision of informal green space could be used to help create green links/corridors.

This figure falls somewhere between the two current calculated levels of provision of such space in the two local authority areas (see Figures 3.1 and 3.4 in Section 3):

- Christchurch Borough: 0.28 ha per 1000 people.
- East Dorset District: 0.95 ha per 1000 people.

Accessibility: A distance of **450 metres (straightline)**, or about 10 minutes walking time is felt to be appropriate, as such spaces should be within easy reach of home for informal play and recreation opportunities. This travel time/distance coincides with time that most respondents to the household survey said they would be prepared to travel to use such space. However, open space within very close proximity to home may become increasingly important to residents of new high density urban development who may themselves lack access to their own gardens, and would welcome such space both for visual relief and to provide opportunities for children to meet and play close to home. This space might also be combined with provision for other types of space and offers scope to be used very flexibly (see below).

Quality: The nature of the space should be determined to reflect local circumstances although provision might be expected to include grassed areas, tree and shrub planting, paths, litter bins and benches.

5.9 Flexible use of Informal green space

Depending on local circumstances it may be appropriate to use the provision sought under the Informal Green Space standard for additional or improved park space, natural green space, recreation ground space (in rural areas) as there is clearly some interchangability of function. Amenity/Informal Green Space could also be used as a contribution towards the creation of green corridors: 0.5 hectares is sufficient to create a route 10 metres wide and 500 metres long.

Informal green space can provide an extremely valuable play resource to complement equipped provision. Attention in design of new spaces to planting, topography and safety/security will maximise its potential in this regard.

The shape and size of space provided should allow for meaningful and safe recreation. It will not be appropriate for highway verges and other small pieces of roadside space (for example) to be counted towards such provision. However, these smaller spaces can serve another important function in improving the visual environment.

Further guidance on the flexible use of space and contributions is provided at the end of section 3.

5.10 Children and Young People's Equipped Space

Existing National and Local Policies: The NPFA's 'Six-Acre' Standard is widely used throughout the country. The full publication of the standard suggests that the standards can be expressed as 'acres / hectares per 1,000 population' but that they should also include 'frequency / distribution' factors (considered shortly) to ensure accessibility. In practice, 'frequency / distribution' factors determine the location of provision, whilst 'acres / hectares per 1,000 population' has an influence on the 'quantity / size' of provision. Although the Six Acre Standard also provides guidance on the provision for outdoor sport, it also proposes an overall figure of 0.8 ha per 1000 people of children's play space. This global figure includes:

- 'Designated' areas for children and young people containing a range of facilities and an environment that has been designed to provide focused opportunities for outdoor play; and,
- Casual or informal playing space within housing areas.

It is important to note that there is no recommended breakdown of the global (0.8 ha) spatial requirement reflecting the above categories.

The NPFA 'Six-Acre' Standard is essentially designed for application in new large residential developments and requires modification to suit existing urban settlements and rural areas.

The three 'Designated' categories of equipped play area identified in the Six Acre Standard are:

- **LAP - Local Areas for Play** - a small (sometimes unequipped) area of unsupervised open space specifically designated for young children for play activities close to where they live.
- **LEAP - Local Equipped Areas for Play** - an unsupervised play area equipped for children of early school age.
- **NEAP - Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play** - an unsupervised site servicing a substantial residential area, equipped mainly for older children but with opportunities for play for younger children.

The Standard provides guidance on desirable walking distance to these areas. These differ reflecting the varying ages and abilities of the children at which each area is aimed, and are:

Walking time			
<i>Play area type</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Pedestrian Route</i>	<i>Straight line distance</i>
LAP	1 minute	100 metres	60 metres
LEAP	5 minutes	400 metres	240 metres
	(10 minutes)		450 metres)
NEAP	15 minutes	1000 metres	600 metres

The Local Plans policies covering play are a derivation of the play component of the Six Acre Standard.

Issues with the Six Acre Standard: The NPFA guidance has been adopted by many local authorities over the years and its use continues to be widespread. The NPFA standards for equipped children's play provision have been criticised in recent years because they can result in a proliferation of play areas that can be difficult to maintain, as well as setting unrealistic aspirations in urban areas where insufficient land is available to provide facilities, especially higher density development on brownfield sites. An additional problem is that the current NPFA guidance does not cover the needs of most teenagers specifically within the standard, and it is felt that this is a significant problem in the study area (confirmed by many of the comments and findings of the community consultation).

Another fundamental problem with the NPFA standard for children's play is how to interpret it in terms of what type of provision is required per head of population. As has been mentioned, whilst the standard suggests an overall level of children's play provision of 0.8 ha per 1000 people it does not specify what should be the ratio between informal and equipped provision within this overall area.

Although the 2001 version of the Six Acre Standard does provide some guidance upon appropriate thresholds of development for which different levels of the hierarchy should be introduced this is certainly not intended for inclusion in a general standard covering children's play provision. For example, the Six Acre Standard suggests that for communities with 1000 people or more there should be full provision of LAPs, LEAPs, and NEAPs⁶ Whilst this may be appropriate for ensuring that all communities of a reasonable size at least have access to a range of facilities for all age groups, it will not be an appropriate basis for an overall standard as in many settlements of 1000 people or more it would lead to a huge legacy of maintenance. An alternative approach would be to work out a level of per capita provision based on the recommended catchments for LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs, although this would also result in an unfeasibly large and unsustainable level of provision.

General justification for a local standard: It is felt that a modified standard of play provision for the study area should be proposed. This could be a justified derivative of the NPFA guidance on equipped playspace, seeking to address the above problems associated with the Six Acre Standard and the local derivatives. The modified approach reflects the importance attached by local people (through the consultation) to providing better opportunities for teenagers, in particular.

The suggested new standard seeks to achieve a more balanced approach to the needs of children of all ages. It also seeks to be realistic in terms of acknowledging the cost of both providing and maintaining equipped playspace. In overall terms it takes account of:

- Recent changes to the social behaviour of children / youths & their parents /carers

⁶ Six Acre Standard. NPFA (2001) – para 5.62

- Recent trends for parents to be reluctant to allow very young children to play outdoors close to home unaccompanied.
- Recent trends for parents to accompany children to school taking 'toddlers' with them and 'stopping off' at a Play Area near to the school or local shopping centre on the way
- Recognition that older children often take their younger brothers and sisters to a Play Area
- The desire to reflect the need of children of all ages and abilities in providing play opportunities
- The need to provide clear guidance for developers and communities alike as to what should be the target levels of provision

The purpose of the following standard is not to create 'play reservations' and proscribe play elsewhere within the public realm. Obviously children and young people will make use of parks, and natural and informal space. Dedicated play provision can also be located within such spaces. Consideration of outdoor play opportunities should also include use of shared spaces in residential areas and town centres, which raises urban design issues beyond the scope of this report.

Quantity: A minimum level of provision of **0.25ha of activity space per 1000 people** (i.e. excluding any buffer zone space) is suggested both as a basis for a contribution from new housing, but also as a minimum target for provision. Although no precise equivalent calculation can be made this level of provision is less than the amount of equipped and unequipped play space that would be sought under the current local plan standard. No part of the study area currently meets this level of provision. Provision should be divided between the needs of the under 13s and young people, and the nature of the space and equipment required will therefore vary. Detailed guidance should be provided in a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). However 0.125 hectares for each of these age groups would be sufficient to provide high quality equipped space and complementary unequipped space.

This figure compares with the current calculated level of provision of such space in the two local authority areas as follows (see Figures 3.1 and 3.4 on Section 3):

- Christchurch Borough: 0.04 ha per 1000 people
- East Dorset District: 0.06 ha per 1000 people

Accessibility: A distance of **450 metres (straightline)**, or about 10 minutes (often accompanied) walking time is felt to be appropriate for provision aimed at the pre-teen age group and also – where possible – the younger teenage band, as local research has shown this is a preferred distance. However, a straightline distance of **600 metres** (around 15 minutes walking time) could be largely acceptable for older teenagers. The local consultation suggested a general preparedness to travel at least 10 minutes by foot, although it is felt that older teenagers would be prepared to travel a little further.

Quality: Space must comprise a variety of equipped and unequipped play opportunities, and further guidance should be provided in an SPD. However, provision could include the following:

- **For young preschool children:** Small low key games area preferably with play features & 3 items of 'small scale' items of play equipment. Seating for accompanying adults.
- **For other children up to teenage years:** About 5 items of play equipment and a small flat ball games area with kick walls and 'low level' hoops and 'very low key wheel play facility (undulating riding surface with features). Seating for accompanying adults.
- **For young people:** About 5 types of play equipment, Ball Play and Wheeled Play opportunities, and covered seating for teenagers to use as a meeting place.
- **Provision for those with disabilities:** At least some of the larger play areas should contain equipment designed to meet the specific needs of children with disabilities.

Consultation

The standards for young people's provision set out in this report should be applied flexibly and imaginatively, taking into account the views of local residents, potential users and various interests wherever possible. Meaningful consultation will therefore help to make new provision sensitive and appropriate to local circumstances.

Safety

All new Children's' Outdoor Playing Spaces, the equipment and ancillary facilities need to conform to all aspects of EN 1176 & 1177. Items not covered by either standard or exceptions to the standards must be justified and made explicit.

All existing Children's Outdoor Playing Spaces, the equipment and ancillary facilities are to be assessed post annually and post-installation (by an independent RPII Member ~ Register of Playground Inspectors International)⁷ against all aspects of EN 1176 & 1177 applying a Risk Assessment to all non compliance findings.

Items not covered by either standard or exceptions to the standards must be also be Risk Assessed if the independent RPII Member has any safety concerns. Where the Risk Assessment indicates an 'unacceptable' risk the Council will take all such measures that are reasonable & practical to minimise the risk of harm / accident to an 'acceptable' level. If a level of 'acceptability' is not achievable then equipment should be removed or made inaccessible.

⁷ RPII has been established by organisations such as the NPFA and ROSPA as a mechanism for quality checking playground inspectors

Combined provision

It may sometimes be appropriate to provide for all three age groups at the same location separated only by a short distance or by enclosing the separate areas. This might be most appropriate in the case of sites of a more strategic nature, such as in parks and leisure centre grounds in the towns and larger villages.

The benefits are:

- Savings on land take (buffer zone)
- Parents / carers can accompany Toddlers and Juniors to the same Play Area
- Youths and / or Juniors can accompany younger brothers and sisters
- Reduction in the risk of young children playing on items designed for older children as they have their own play equipment at the same Play Area.

Other ideal locations

Other ideal locations for provision could be at local shopping centres, near primary schools and on village greens:

- Facilitates 'stopping off' for parents / carers when accompanying older children to and from school, or whilst shopping
- Facilities on known / familiar routes for children are a safety advantage
- The 'busier' the play area the more 'fun' and 'safe' it is
- Informal surveillance (overlooking) normally more frequent

Achieving the standard in small settlements

The intention should be that these play standards are applied flexibly and with imagination. Many settlements will not be of the size to justify full provision in accordance with the above. However, even a relatively small developer contribution can be invested imaginatively in improving local play opportunities.

For example:

- Individual contributions could be used to improve/upgrade the existing provision, which in a small village is likely to be within convenient distance of the funding development.
- Individual contributions could be married to other council and partner funding to provide new or improved provision.
- Public consultation may show a desire and willingness to consider innovative community based solutions to provision. 'Self help' schemes perhaps involving young people in design and creation, can often prove much cheaper and reflective of true local needs than off-the-shelf installations.

A key issue is how to best provide for the needs of youth in rural locations where it will not generally be feasible to provide facilities on the scale that might be envisaged in the larger settlements. In many ways this is an intractable problem, but in others it may not be so difficult to resolve.

Fundamentally, all young people are asking for is somewhere to meet, play around, and feel independent. Bespoke play equipment and sites may be one way of providing for these needs. But there may be other much cheaper solutions involving for example inexpensive but intelligent landscaping on the edges of village recreation grounds; encouraging young people to become involved in the design and development of home spun facilities, such as cut and fill BMX tracks; planting trees with low branches to encourage climbing etc, and the creation of dens. All these are 'low tech' solutions, but could be of immense local benefit to youngsters. A prerequisite to such initiative is perhaps a change of mindset (on the part of facility managers) in some circumstances and greater tolerance to such projects and activity.

Issues relating to risk

There is growing concern about how safety is being addressed in children's play provision. Fear of litigation is leading many play providers to focus on minimising the risk of injury at the expense of other more fundamental objectives. The effect is to stop children from enjoying a healthy range of play opportunities, limiting their enjoyment and causing potentially damaging consequences for their development.

This approach ignores clear evidence that use of play provision is a comparatively low risk activity for children. Of the two million or so childhood accident cases treated by hospitals each year, fewer than two per cent involve playground equipment. Participation in sports like soccer, widely acknowledged as 'good' for a child's development, involve a greater risk of injury than visiting a playground. Fatalities on playgrounds are very rare – about one per three or four years on average. This compares with, for instance, more than 100 child pedestrian fatalities a year and more than 500 child fatalities from accidents overall.

New provision should balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children safe from harm. The provision should extend the choice and control that children have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it.

5.11 Allotments

Existing National and Local Policies: There are no existing national or local standards or related guidance relating specifically to the provision of allotments. Guidance has been provided through the Local Government Association, but this does not recommend standards of provision, but rather covers ways in which allotments could be promoted and issues to be considered prior to any disposal.

General justification for a local standard: The majority of allotments within the study area appear to be well used; there are, for example, no spare plots in Christchurch and a waiting list for all sites. An analysis of existing provision allotments shows the level:

- Christchurch Borough: 0.18 ha per 100 people
- East Dorset District: 0.14 ha per 100 people

Relatively few people within the community use allotments. However, it is an activity very much linked to stages in life (as is also the case with sport and children's play, for example).

The local consultation did not suggest that allotments were used as regularly, or were as valued in comparison with, say, play space or informal spaces of various kinds. However, there is currently an interest in reducing food miles, organic growing, slow food, composting and recycling green waste. Other than their conventional function allotments can serve as venues for 'community gardens', meeting places, and showcases for recycling. The National Society for Allotment and Leisure Gardeners states that it is seeing an increase in enquiries from people interested in getting an allotment.

With the creation of higher density housing in the future occupants lacking private gardens may look increasingly to allotments to meet a desire to garden and grow their own food. Other than their conventional function allotments can serve as venues for 'community gardens', meeting places, and showcases for recycling. In the near future allotment provision may help to fuel a resurgence in local semi commercial horticulture. Large food retailers are coming under increasing pressure to reduce 'food miles' and buy from domestic local sources. A good level of space for allotments and community gardens could therefore go some way to ensuring produce is fresh, local, and that its production does not have an unacceptable 'carbon footprint'.

Quantity: A minimum level of provision of **0.25 ha per 1000** people is suggested both as a basis for a contribution from new housing, but also a minimum target for provision in the study area. This level of provision is significantly higher than the current level of provision within either local authority. However, it is felt that the trend towards higher density residential development (with probably less private garden space), will increase the demand for alternative spaces to allow cultivation of a wide variety of produce.

Accessibility: A straightline distance of **600metres** (about 15 minutes walktime) should be largely acceptable, where walking is the chosen mode of transport. However, given the need to transport equipment to and from sites it is accepted that users may often need to drive to the site.

Quality: Further guidance should be provided in an SPD, but provision should include the following:

- Well-drained soil which is capable of cultivation to a reasonable standard
- A sunny, open aspect preferably on a southern facing slope
- Limited overhang from trees and buildings either bounding or within the site
- Adequate lockable storage facilities, and a good water supply within the easy walking distance of individual plots
- Provision for composting facilities
- Secure boundary fencing
- Good access within the site both for pedestrians and vehicles
- Good vehicular access into the site and adequate parking and manoeuvring space
- Disabled access
- Toilets.
- Notice boards

5.12 Active Outdoor Sports Space

Existing National and Local Policies: The NPFA's Six Acre Standard proposes that there should be provision of 1.6 ha of outdoor sports space per 1000 people⁸. Within this is 1.2 ha per 1000 provision for pitch sports. In line with this standard the two local plans seek to encourage provision of outdoor sports space at this overall level.

General justification for a local standard: The local consultation suggests that Active Sports Space is used on a regular basis by many people in the community. However, the current standards are very focused on Active Sports Space at the expense of other kinds of space examined through this study. The suggested new standard for Active Sports Space is slightly lower than the NPFA guidance upon which both Councils' existing standards are based. This standard includes the need for space for formal (codified) pitch sports, as well as tennis and bowls. It also includes space for ancillary provision such as parking and changing accommodation.

It does not cover space for activities such as informal kickarounds and recreational running. Such activities are likely to be popular in their own right but can be accommodated by other types of space covered by these standards. In any event users of local authority pitches must accept that they will also have to share their space to some extent with other recreation activities.

Quantity: A minimum level of provision of **1.25 ha per 1000** people is suggested both as a basis for a contribution from new housing, but also a minimum target for provision in the study area. When compared with the suggested standards for other spaces this level of provision seems at first sight to be high, especially when also taking into account what the Citizen's Panel survey concluded about the generally higher frequency/regularity of use of some of these other forms of space. However, codified pitch sport have specific spatial requirements, and these (when married with the above demand estimates for pitches) leads to a clear and required level of provision.

This figure compares with the current calculated level of provision of such space in the two local authority areas as follows (see Figures 3.1 and 3.4 in Section 3):

- Christchurch Borough: 0.58 ha per 1000 people
- East Dorset District: 0.28 ha per 1000 people

The above figures currently exclude provision for pitches within Recreation Grounds and Public Gardens.

As previously emphasised, pitch space will generally be shared with other recreation activities where it is located on local authority or parish council venues.

⁸ The NPFA Six Acre Standard stresses that such provision should exclude golf courses, and should only include those areas where there is genuine community access.

Accessibility: A distance of no more than **600 metres** is desirable for most outdoor sports, from the catchment population, where young people are intended users. However, it is recognised that larger 'strategic' provision might need to be further away and accessed by vehicles (perhaps in involving a 10 to 15 minute drive time), as evidenced by the responses to the household survey. Further guidance should be provided in SPD. The above is considered reasonable taking into account the findings of the local consultation.

Quality: Further guidance should be provided in an SPD, but provision should include changing accommodation, car parking, appropriate drainage and adherence to guidance provided by the governing bodies, Sport England or other established sources of such advice. SPD should also provide guidance in relation to the site design, shared and dual use, and the acceptability or otherwise of contributions to improvements to existing facilities in lieu of new provision.

5.13 Full Size Synthetic Turf Pitches (STPs)

Existing National and Local Policies: There are currently no national or local plan standards relating to this important outdoor sports medium.

General justification for a local standard: STPs are now seen as very important training resources for many sports, and essential for hockey.

Quantity: The current level of provision is 3 full-size floodlit facilities in Christchurch Borough, but only 1 such facility in East Dorset District, or:

- Christchurch Borough: 1 per 15,016 people
- East Dorset Council: 1 per 85,370

Although Sport England does not currently provide guidance on the per capita level of provision for STPs, previous guidance has suggested a level of around 1 STP per 60,000 people. This is generally now well exceeded in many parts of the country, and a commonly held view is that significantly fewer people would be able to support such a facility, and the situation in Christchurch Borough supports this view.

Accessibility: Research conducted by Sport England suggests that users of these surfaces tend to be prepared to travel up to 20 minutes (by car) to use these facilities on a regular basis, although the majority of trips will take significantly less. Local consultation probably supports a shorter drive time of around 15 minutes.

Quality: Further guidance should be provided in an SPD, but should be in accordance with Sport England technical guidance. The SPD should include guidance on the appropriate type of surface and floodlighting as this can vary depending on which sport is anticipated to be the main user.

The application (see **Map 5.2**) of the above would suggest that in quantitative terms East Dorset could benefit from the provision of an additional pitch. In terms of accessibility, the following map shows that an area in the northern part of East Dorset lies outside the catchment of any STP located in the study area. However, this part of the District is sparsely populated. There is also a pitch in Fordingbridge (in New Forest District) that is within easy access of some of this area. If an additional pitch were to be provided in East Dorset it might be better located further south (such as in the vicinity of Ferndown).

The above comments do not necessarily reflect the fact that some of the existing STPs may not be available for use on the terms desired by potential users, or may not have an appropriate surface. In planning for and providing new facilities of this kind (especially when financed by money from developer contributions), it will be important to examine local needs in relation to surface type and management; such factors can greatly affect how attractive the facility will be, and therefore how well used.

5.14 Sports halls and swimming pools

Existing National and Local Policies: There are no existing national or local standards specifically covering the provision of sports halls and swimming pools. However, Sport England do suggest possible levels of provision based on information gained from modelling exercises and leisure centre use from around the country (see below).

General justification for a local standard: The study area's main sports halls and swimming pools are well-used. An estimate of theoretical need using participation figures provided by Sport England suggests that the two local authorities might justify the following provision from within their populations:

- Christchurch Borough: 2.17 pools of at least 4 lanes x 22 metres, and 3.22 4-court sports halls.
- East Dorset District: 4.11 pools of at least 4 lanes x 22 metres, and 6.10 4-court sports halls.

This compares with the current level of provision of such facilities:

Sports halls

- Christchurch Borough: 1 hall per 22,525
- East Dorset District: 1 hall per 42,685

Swimming pools

- Christchurch Borough: 1 pool per 22,525
- East Dorset District: 1 pool per 85,370

This is not to deny the importance of other smaller facilities within the study area. However, some of these other facilities are not necessarily available during the day (as they are frequently on education sites), and because of their often smaller size they are limited in other ways.

It is clear that new development in the study area would increase the demand for sports halls and swimming pools.

On this basis ratios of 1 x 4-court hall per 14,000 people, and 1 x 4-lane x 22 metre pool per 20,000 people are close to the Sport England based ratios of desirable provision. These are better than the current ratios of provision for pools and halls of an appropriate size and management.

The household survey suggested that the majority of people using sports halls and swimming pools would be prepared to travel between 10 and 20 minutes to use these facilities with trips largely being by car. Research conducted by Sport England suggests that users of sports halls and swimming pools tend to be prepared to travel up to 20 minutes (mainly by car) to use these facilities on a regular basis, although the majority of trips will take significantly less. Within the urban areas it will often be convenient (and perhaps easier) to walk or cycle to the nearest facility. In fact the Audit Commission has

developed Performance Indicators aimed at London Councils and other unitary authorities, suggesting a walk time of 20 minutes as a guide.

Quantity: A minimum of a 4-court sports hall per 14,000 people, and 1 x 4-lane swimming pool (25 metre length) per 20,000 people.

In planning and providing for new or improved strategic facilities such as leisure centres it is important to:

- consider the appropriateness of improving existing accessible venues within the study area; and,
- take into account existing venues in neighbouring local authorities, before committing to new facilities.

Accessibility: No more than 15 minutes, but with encouragement for use of non motorised trips and public transport as much as possible. The following maps show that it is, again, the northern part of the East Dorset District that is not well serviced by existing provision within the District. A case might be made for providing a local facility in the Verwood area to meet the needs of outlying communities.

Elsewhere, whilst there is a significant deficit in provision of both types of facility compared with the Sport England guide, it might be advisable to look at improving and/or increasing the capacity of existing venues before new sites are developed.

Quality: Further guidance should be provided in an SPD, but should be in accordance with Sport England technical guidance. However, consideration should also be given to provision of associated facilities that are found within leisure centres including reception areas, refreshment areas, health and fitness suites, and appropriate changing, storage and viewing areas.

5.15 Community buildings and village halls

Existing National and Local Policies: There are no existing national or local standards or related guidance relating specifically to the provision of community buildings and village halls.

General justification for a local standard: There is no 'one size fits all' solution to providing community venues. Generally speaking the larger the local population the bigger and more accommodative a community facility, as larger settlements will tend to generate a greater and more diverse level of activities compared with smaller settlements. However, even small villages can sustain simple and attractive venues. Even small settlements in the study areas (say with a population of less than 500) have well used and managed halls, which can provide for:

- A main hall that can be used for dances, reception, meetings, and sports activities such as carpet bowls and table tennis
- A small meeting/committee room
- Kitchen
- Storage
- Car parking

Quantity: A minimum of a small community venue per 500 people.

Accessibility: 450 metres straightline distance (or about 10 minutes walktime) would be reasonable based on public consultation, although it is accepted that in rural areas it will be difficult to meet this criterion in some areas.

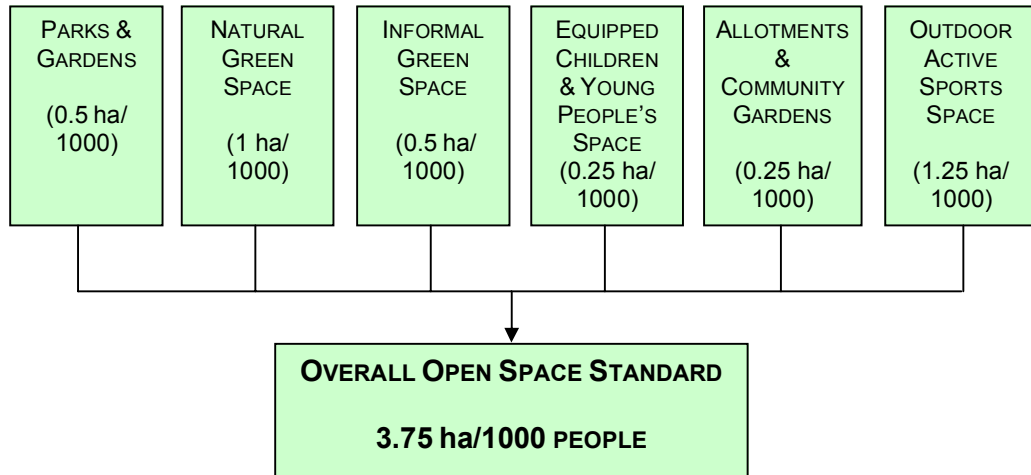
Quality: Further guidance should be provided in an SPD, but provision should include:

- A hall sufficiently large to be used for a variety of recreation and social activities
- A small meeting/committee room
- Kitchen
- Storage
- Toilets
- Provision for disabled access and use
- Car parking

Overall a total floor space of 400 m² could be used as a guide.

As stated at the beginning of this section the standards can be applied and interpreted flexibly to best meet local circumstances. The aim should not be (for example) to create a proliferation of small community venues in areas of growth where fewer larger venues would be more appropriate. Contributions arising from this standard could also be used towards the enlargement/improvement of existing venues where appropriate. However, access is the key factor (especially in rural areas).

5.16 Overall open space standard



5.17 Comparison with existing local plan standards

The quantitative component of the suggested overall spatial standard is higher than the estimated combined standards in either Council's existing Local Plans. The suggested new standards would:

- provide for a better balance of open space, reflecting different local needs
- lead to the provision of new or improved open space of an overall higher specification than likely under the existing standards
- exclude from calculations by definition any space that cannot practically serve as functioning and safe.

5.18 Scenarios

The following are examples to demonstrate how the proposed standards could be applied in two different development scenarios

5.18.1 Scenario A: Urban regeneration site

Characterstics - high density site with 3000 projected residents.

Contributions required:

Recreation Grounds and Public Gardens	1.5ha
Accessible Natural Green Space	3.0ha
Informal Green Space	1.5ha
Children and Young People's Equipped Space	0.75ha
Allotments	0.75ha
Active Sports Space	3.75ha
Total	11.25ha or equivalent

Recreation Grounds and Public Gardens: contributions could be used towards improving access to existing large parks within the agreed catchment. An element of the contribution could also be devoted to provision of very local pocket parks, or strategic venues further away.



- *Parks need not be large, and pocket parks can be highly valued in areas where there is a lack of private garden space.*

Informal and Accessible Natural Green Space: Contributions could be used to upgrade natural habitats of existing open spaces within the agreed catchment. However, they could also be utilised to help create/improve attractive recreation/green corridors.



- *Where circumstances permit, there is no reason why the provision of accessible natural greenspace and other informal space cannot be in linear form, so helping extend the network of green transport routes.*

Children and Young People's Equipped Space: Important that provision is accessible locally for younger accompanied and unaccompanied children. The full quantitative standard will be difficult to achieve, but smaller, better equipped, high capacity features could be provided that may also form part of the street architecture. For example, street sculpture that is designed for young children to clamber on.

Young people could also be provided for by improving/providing facilities in space off site on spaces that satisfy the accessibility standards. However, provision closer to home might include sheltered sitting areas and micro ball courts.

Allotments: Difficult to provide for this perhaps, but contributions could be made to the nearest allotments site for the improvement of facilities. On high density developments communal greenhouses on roof tops could be a solution for people wanting to cultivate but without the garden space.

Outdoor sports space: people will tend to travel a little further to play organised sport. So provision or improvements could be made to existing sites off site where there is spare capacity, and where they satisfy the access component of the standard. On site provision might also take the form of hard surface, high capacity facilities.



- *Hard surface, high capacity games courts- a possible solution to providing sports space in high density development.*

5.18.2 Scenario B: Small urban extension site

Characteristics- moderate density, greenfield on the urban edge with 500 projected residents.

Contributions required:

Recreation Grounds and Public Gardens	0.25ha
Accessible Natural Green Space	0.50ha
Informal Green Space	0.25ha
Children and Young People's Equipped Space	0.125ha
Allotments	0.175ha
Active Sports Space	0.625ha
Total	1.925ha or equivalent

Recreation Grounds and Public Gardens: contributions could be used towards improving access to existing large parks within the agreed catchment. However, pocket parks should be provided on site, where proposed.

Informal and Accessible Natural Green Space: Contributions could be used to upgrade natural habitats of existing open spaces within the agreed catchment. However, they could also be utilised to help create/improve attractive recreation/green corridors to existing open space or other utility destinations. Opportunities to use open space to provide natural play opportunities within the site.



- *Appropriate landscape and planting can help to provide natural play opportunities.*

Children and Young People's Equipped Space: Space should be available for on site provision with residue contributions to improving/providing facilities on existing open spaces off-site that satisfy the accessibility catchments.

Allotments: A small community garden could be justified, but the capacity and proximity of the closest existing allotment could also be examined with the possible aim of improvement.

Outdoor sports space: Development probably too small to justify on site provision for pitch sports, but a smaller mini soccer facility could be considered. Otherwise contributions to improving facilities of nearby sports space.



- *Sometimes developer contributions might be better directed towards improving existing facilities close to proposed new housing rather than providing completely new facilities*

5.19: Summary overview of existing provision across the Christchurch LNAs

5.19.1 Quantity component

Summary of existing levels of provision and suggested standard:

	Hectares per 1000 population						
	LNA pop.	Rec Grounds & Public Gardens	Amenity Greenspace	Natural & Semi-natural Green Space	Active Sports Space	Children & Young People's Space	Allotments
West	14328	1.36	0.19	1.99	0.04	0.04	0.15
East	10912	0.78	0.39	8.17	0.03	0.04	0.12
Central	14111	1.39	0.21	3.44	0.02	0.03	0.02
North	2856	3.22	0.82	3.24	0.0	0.17	0
Total	42207	1.35	0.29	4.16	0.03	0.04	0.09
Suggested Standard		0.5	0.5	1	1.25	0.25	0.25

Note: the total existing level of provision is for the LNA areas only and will thus vary from other figures set out in Sections 3 and 5, which consider all sites within each typology i.e. those outside as well as within the LNAs.

5.19.2 Quality component

The following table summarises the overall quality of open space in each LNA (see Section 6 LNA profiles for more detailed quality assessment):

* poor/not acceptable (less than 65%) ** adequate/reasonable (65 – 74%) *** good (75% and over)

It is difficult to give an overview of the quality of different open space sites across one typology. The qualitative assessments are more a tool for management and how to prioritise improvements. Reference is made to some sites which were rated poorly.

	West	Central	East	North
Recreation Grounds	*	*	*	*
Amenity Green Space	**	***	**	***
Natural Green Space	*	**	*	***
Active Sports Space	*	*	**	-
Space for Children & Young People	**	**	**	**

Quality Assessment by Typology**Recreation Grounds and Public Gardens:**

	General	Specific improvements
West	Moderate/reasonable	Bernards Mead, Jumpers Common, Druitt Gardens and River Way recreation grounds
Central	Moderate/reasonable	2 Riversmeet Arena, Land at Tutton's Well. Mudeford Wood, Friars Cliff, Somerford Bridge and Dorset Road recreation grounds
East	Moderate/reasonable	No suggestions
North	Not acceptable	Burton Hall, Martins Lane and Winkton Fields recreation grounds

Amenity / Informal Greenspace:

	General	Specific improvements
West	Moderate/reasonable	Lands at Rutland Road, Recreation area at Knapp Mill Avenue and Land along Suffolk Avenue.
Central	Good	Land at Hillary Road and Land at The Hawthornes
East	Moderate/reasonable	Land at Latimers Close, Lawn by Saufland House and Land West of The Meadway
North	Good	Land between Farwell Close and Katherine Chance Close, Land at Moorcroft Avenue and Land fronting Avon View Parade

Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspace (includes Green Corridors):

	General	Specific improvements
West	Moderate/reasonable	Old Iford Sports Ground, Land along Dragoon Way & River Stour and River Bank Beach at Quomps
Central	Variable - poor to moderate	Land at Stanpit, rear of former Council depot, Pond at eastern edge Mudeford Wood, Woodland along Marsh Lane, Stanpit Reed Bed, Woodland along Bure Lane at Seaway Avenue / Highcliffe Road, Bure Homage woods.
East	Good	Land at Cornflower Drive, Shelley Copse and wooded areas running east to Nea Meadows
North	Good	Woodland along Stoney Lane, south Burton, Stream and banks between Priory View Road and Salisbury Road

Active Sports Space:

	General	Specific improvements
West	Moderate/reasonable	Iford Bridge Bowling Green and Tennis Courts at Iford Bridge
Central	Poor	Tennis Courts at BAE Systems
East	Good	Very limited accessibility to Hoburne Caravan Park facilities
North	None	

Space for Children and Young People/Teenagers

	General	Specific improvements
West	Variable – moderate to good	Rutland Road, Melbourne Road, and Darwin Avenue play areas
Central	Good	
East	Moderate/reasonable	Bluebell Close, Bellflower Close, Vetch Close and Saffron Drive play areas
North	Poor	Campbell Road and Priory View play areas, Burton Hall BMX track

5.19.3 Accessibility component

As an approximate indication only (see Section 6 LNA profiles for more detailed accessibility assessment):

* poor/not acceptable (less than 65%) ** adequate/reasonable (65 – 74%) *** good (75% and over)

	Recreation Grounds	Amenity Green Space	Natural Green Space	Active Sports Space	Space for Children & Young People
West	*	*	**	*	**
Central	***	*	***	**	*
East	*	**	***	**	*
North	**	**	**	*	*

Note: the total existing level of provision is for the LNA areas only and will thus vary from other figures set out in Section 5, which consider all sites within each typology i.e. those outside as well as within the LNAs.

5.19.3 Assessment of Typologies

Recreation Grounds and Public Gardens

This is the very interesting category, which is grappling with the issue of the multifunctionality of open space. As already detailed, as resources for informal recreation, this category overlaps with amenity green space and natural green space; as a sports facility it overlaps with Active Sports Space.

Recreation Grounds and Public Gardens in Christchurch vary considerably in their scope, from small specialist areas like New Zealand Gardens (public gardens) which are intensively cultivated and managed and sustain heavy use from visitors to the town as well as residents, through other popular tourist areas and linear routes within the Town (Druitt Gardens), to larger traditional 'park' type areas with bandstands etc (Quomps) to larger areas for informal use (River Way Recreation Ground) and open spaces with formal pitch facilities and play areas (Mudford and Highcliffe Recreation Grounds). Because of the interchangeability between this typology and Active Sports Sites and Amenity Open Space, discussion of a catchment area is treated with caution.

However, it is important to consider this as a typology in its own right, so that this mix of formal and informal uses is recognised, enhanced and protected. The management regime needs to take account of this, so that informal casual use can be catered for when the formal facilities are not being used.

Quality

Generally, this typology was not found to be of such good quality as other types. One reason for this is the fact that Recreation Grounds are expected to perform the function of sports facilities while also providing informal recreation opportunities such as dog walking. This duality of use means that surfaces, for example, cannot be maintained at very high standards without the need to restrict casual use.

Accessibility

The research has indicated that it is important to be able to easily travel to a (multifunctional) Recreation Ground within 10 minutes walking time, to be able to take advantage of sports facilities, grassed areas, play equipment etc. Accessibility varies across the Borough, only reaching a good standard in the North LNA.

It is considered that within each of the LNAs, the priority should be to improve Recreation Grounds and enhance their value for all members of the community.

Quantity

The standard for Recreation Grounds is proposed at 0.5ha/000, for 'Link Space' within a recreation ground, only. It is therefore not possible to provide direct comparison between this standard and the existing level of provision, as measurements are generally only available for complete sites. Taking all the LNAs together, existing provision of recreation grounds is equivalent to 1.25ha/000.

Amenity Green Space**Quality**

These are normally small areas and the majority of sites offer more in terms of visual amenity rather recreational use. The quality across the Borough is variable, as one might expect. However, it is often these small areas of land which are walked passed and looked over most often and where many people notice when litter bins are overflowing, dog bins are full and there are few amenities such as seats.

Accessibility

To some extent, accessibility to natural greenspace, recreation grounds and amenity green space overlap where informal recreation is concerned. However, with amenity open space, their value is as small green areas interspersed with housing and there are several parts of Christchurch where this does not occur. There is fairly good coverage within the East and Central LNAs, poor coverage in the West LNA and in the North LNA, only coverage around a central band across Burton. However, the quality and size of the sites also needs to be taken into account.

Quantity

As stated, the importance of linking all 3 aspects of standards of provision together is illustrated by the fact that some LNAs may have good coverage of amenity green space (e.g.) but in fact have a relatively low level of provision in hectarage terms. This may mean sites are very small and that to enhance their value, more need to be provided and/or their facilities improved (seats, trees etc). The West LNA has the lowest amount of amenity open space per person. Across all four LNAs the figure is 0.29 ha/000 against a suggested standard of 0.5ha/000.

Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace**Quality**

Quality of natural greenspace is extremely important to local people and there have been comments about the need to control dogs and dog fouling and to have enough litter bins etc This raises the issue around to what extent access is controlled and/or attempts made to deflect use away from sensitive areas (St Catherine's Hill). Nevertheless, it is the natural environment – including the coastline and beaches – which is one of the most highly prized aspects of living in Christchurch and people hope to be able to enjoy them and to see them well maintained.

Accessibility

Accessibility to natural green space in the East LNA is good, with a large bulk of the natural areas actually within the urban fabric. Within the West LNA, natural green space is not so accessible from the built up areas, lying as it does along the rivers Stour and Avon. It is limited in the North LNA, although fairly accessible to areas along the Avon via a valuable green corridor through the middle of the settlement. In the Central LNA, natural greenspace lies along the coastline and in the far north east corner, with a central band associated with the Mude River and the tree/woodland strip further south along Bure Lane. Somerford is noteworthy in being one of the very few areas of Christchurch lying outside the 600m catchment.

Quantity

The proposed standard is exceeded – by a large degree in many cases – by all of the LNAs, but the range is large – from 2.0ha/000 in the West LNA to 8.2ha/000 in the East LNA (across all four LNAs it is 4.16ha/000). The proposed standard is 1.00ha/000, and this will not be met by many of the smaller built up neighbourhoods within Christchurch.

Active Sports Space (including facilities at Recreation Grounds)**Quality**

Generally the standard across the borough is reasonable. For sport sites, certain standards and criteria should be met and this will need to be explored in Supplementary Planning Documents.

Accessibility

Given that many people will drive, there is fairly good accessibility across the borough to pitches, but a need for more tennis courts on public sites.

Quantity

Consideration of pitch provision within Christchurch needs to recognise that the two main sites lie outside the LNAs covered in this study. Within the LNAs, there are pitches only at Wingfield and Highcliffe (Christchurch East), in the Central LNA at Somerford Bridge Recreation Ground (privately owned and home to Mudeford Pheonix Girls), Mudeford Wood Recreation Ground (1 junior pitch), Dorset Road and in the west, at Barrack Road. The most pitches on any one site are two; apart from Winkton Fields in the North LNA which has 8-9 pitches of varying sizes, but with limited access and security of tenure.

Much demand is met outside the LNAs but within the Borough at two sites:

- Bournemouth Sports Club, in the far west, which covers a site of some 63 acres and includes: 3 grass and 2 artificial cricket squares, 7 – 10 football pitches, 4 floodlit STPs, 4 rugby and mini pitches, a gym, squash courts, a rifle range and an archery area. It is home to Bournemouth's main Rugby Club, Hockey Club, Table Tennis Club and Squash Clubs, Bournemouth Sports AFC and the Bournemouth Cricket Academy, as well as many other local football and other sports clubs. There is an issue here regarding the potential loss of part of the Bournemouth Sports Club facilities to the new waste management processing plant.
- Hurn Bridge Sports Club, also outside the LNA but within Christchurch Borough, is home to Christchurch FC, but does not host other teams as it has difficulty accommodating all its matches on its one pitch (its juniors play on a variety of sites). It is also the home of Christchurch CC with a superb pitch, and the Dorset Indoor Cricket Centre.
- In addition, demand from football teams in the Christchurch area is also met just outside the Borough boundary – near to Bournemouth Sports Club - at Parley Sports Club, within East Dorset District Council (in the Ferndown and West Parley LNA).

Thus demand for pitch facilities is being met (a) outside the LNAs but within Christchurch Borough and (b) outside the Borough. (Pitch areas within the Borough but outside the LNAs have been taken into account in the figures presented in Section 3). This study has concluded however that additional accessible pitches are required to meet the needs of Christchurch teams. Cricket appears to be adequately catered for in terms of quantity, although, as with football grounds and changing facilities, quality is more of an issue, particularly as all pitches within the LNAs, with the exception of the BAE Systems ground at Somerford Bridge, are on public recreation ground sites.

Opportunities for addressing pitch deficiencies within the Borough are however fairly limited: centrally, the only site available is the Arena; other sites include Stanpit Recreation Ground; the Salisbury Road (Burton) playing pitches, expanding the facilities at Hurn Bridge and/or opportunities for further developments at Iford Bridge, although its location to the far west of the Borough and the constraints on development from planning and river flooding points of view are significant.

The shortages of floodlit training facilities for pitch sports (both indoor and outdoor) have also been highlighted. A hierarchy of provision, with certain grounds capable of meeting facility requirements from the higher leagues, also needs to be developed.

Space for Children and Young People

Quality

Issues over quality are of importance with regard to children's play space, because of health and safety issues, the cost of maintenance and the fact that these facilities are noticed and commented on by many residents. The facilities where improvements are required often tend to be teenage facilities – shelters and skate parks, where usage is high and vandalism can occur. Many of the play areas within Christchurch are small and relatively limited in the range of equipment on offer (LAPs); this is especially true of the standalone facilities. Larger areas – LEAPs and NEAPs – tend to be at Recreation Ground sites.

Accessibility

Accessibility to children's play areas is important and this does vary across the borough. Here it is not just distance which is important, but also time and the barriers to access such as main roads which will make unaccompanied trips difficult. The West LNA is fairly well served, except in the north. Provision in the North LNA is probably adequate for its size. The Central area is not well served to the south of Grange School or to the south of Somerford Road, but the proximity of Steamer Point which is visited by children from all over the Borough compensates for this. In the East LNA, there is a lack of equipped play areas in the centre and northern parts.

Quantity

It is possible to arrive at a proposed standard in quantitative terms for space for children and young people, but in truth, it is accessibility and quality (or 'fitness for purpose') which are the key markers for this provision. The areas of land involved in play provision are so small (a shelter for teenagers, for example) that a hectare per thousand standard is rendered almost meaningless.

All LNAs are below the proposed standard of 0.25ha; this is not an over generous standard, but across the four LNAs, the existing level of provision is only one sixth of this (0.04ha/000).

It is the areas where both accessibility and quantity are below the proposed standards which should be the priority for new provision.

Everyone wants spaces for children and young people, but not near to where they live. In this respect, utilising natural greenspace in imaginative ways for play, as set out in Section 5, may prove more fruitful.

Built Facilities

As discussed within the Local Need Area profiles, there are two dedicated indoor sports facilities within Christchurch – both within Christchurch Central: the Mudeford Wood Community Centre (local catchment) and Two Riversmeet Leisure Centre (strategic facility and local catchment). Two Riversmeet comprises a 25m pool and a training pool, fitness suite, a Cardio suite, 4 squash courts and a main sports hall.

There are proposals around developing use of Two Riversmeet to extend the gym and convert squash courts into multi activity rooms. Competition from the Littledown Centre just across the boundary in Bournemouth to the west is strong, and these proposals may assist in transferring demand.

Principal built sports facility issues – most of which are referred to in Section 3 in the overview of provision – include to address:

- Shortages of Synthetic Turf Pitches
- Need for extension of facilities at Two Riversmeet Leisure Centre
- Unmet demand for health and fitness/gym facilities within Christchurch
- Unmet demand for five-a-side football and lack of outdoor facilities
- Competition from indoor facilities outside the Borough, notably the Littledown Centre
- No large dedicated sports halls (with or without community use) at any schools within Christchurch. Limited opportunities for increasing dual use to school sports facilities, but opportunities for joint provision (sports hall and/or STPs)

With regard to the latter point, it is a strong tenet of the LNA profiles that the secondary schools in Christchurch are located in areas where they can make a big contribution to open space and sporting requirements and help to address deficiencies. There are particular opportunities:

- None of the secondary schools in Christchurch – Highcliffe, Twynham or Grange have sports halls.
- The Grange are a hub school for sport in the area and they have expressed a need to have a full size artificial pitch, there are no third generation pitches in the surrounding area.
- Twynham has poor pitches and no Astroturf pitch. Has a small (2 badminton court) hall
- Some community use of existing halls and pitches; possible opportunities for enhanced community use? (e.g. Highcliffe School gym and pitch)
- Primary schools: some opportunities for greater community use of existing facilities
- No public multi use games areas; school sites may be optimum locations.

5.19: Summary overview of existing provision across the East Dorset LNAs

5.19.1 Quantity component

Below sorted according to population size:

	Hectares per 1000 population						
	LNA pop.	Rec Grounds & Public Gardens	Amenity Green Space	Natural & Semi-natural Green Space	Active Sports Space	Children & Young People's Space	Allotments
Ferndown & West Parley	16664	0.64	0.65	23.64	0.03	0.06	0
Verwood	12090	0.87	1.54	3.75	0.03	0.03	0
Corfe Mullen	10147	1.11	1.88	13.6	0.24	0.04	0.1
West Moors	7198	1.09	0.88	27.78	0.06	0.03	0
Colehill	7000	0.12	0.17	16.40	0.14	0.05	0
St Leonards & St Ives	6672	0.36	0.31	45.10	0.31	0.03	0
Wimborne	6418	0.41	0.28	0.74	1.23	0.18	0.76
Alderholt	3113	1.18	0.82	4.39	0.04	0.07	0.26
Sturminster Marshall	1895	1.26	1.79	0	0	0.02	0
Three Legged Cross	1490	0.86	1.41	9.16	1.47	0.11	0
Sixpenny Handley	1175	1.33	0.56	0	1.19	0.09	0
Cranborne	779	2.71	0.18	2.59	2.90	0.37	1.19
TOTAL	74,640	0.76	0.92	16.43	0.28	0.06	0.10
Suggested Standard		0.5	0.5	1	1.25	0.25	0.25

5.19.2 Quality component

It is difficult to give an overview of the quality of different open space sites across one typology. The qualitative assessments are more a tool for management and how to prioritise improvements. Reference is made to some sites which were rated particularly poorly.

Active Sports Facilities:

	General	Specific Improvements
Alderholt	Reasonable	No significant issues
Colehill	No sites assessed	
Corfe Mullen	Good	
Cranborne	Very good	
Ferndown & West Parley	Reasonable	
Sixpenny Handley	Excellent	
St Leonards & St Ives	Good	
Sturminster Marshall	None	
Three Legged Cross	Poor (1 site)	Magpies FC ground
Verwood	Reasonable	
West Moors	Reasonable	
Wimborne	Good	Leigh Park Playing Fields (RFC)

Space for Children and Young People:

	General	Specific Improvements
Alderholt	Good	Skate park
Colehill	Limited	Olivers Park
Corfe Mullen	Good	Basketball Court at Recreation Ground
Cranborne	Very Good (1 Site)	
Ferndown & West Parley	Good	KGV skate park & playground
Sixpenny Handley	Good	
St Leonards & St Ives	Average (1 site)	Braeside Recreation Ground
Sturminster Marshall	Play area excellent	Teenage shelter Churchill Close
Three Legged Cross	Variable	Skate ramp at Recreation Ground
Verwood	Very good	Potterne Park
West Moors	Poor	Shaftesbury Road and Fryers Playing Field
Wimborne	Very poor	Basketball Court and Skate Ramp at Leigh Park

Amenity / Informal Green Space:

	General	Specific Improvements
Alderholt	Reasonable	Churchill Close & Oak Road
Colehill	Good	Cutlers Place South, Bridal Way East Lap & Cutlers Place
Corfe Mullen	Variable	Roman Road, Lockyers Road, Coventry Way, Rushcombe Way
Cranborne	N/A	
Ferndown & West Parley	Good	Medway Road, Fitzpain Road, Redwood Drive
Sixpenny Handley	Good (1 site only)	
St Leonards & St Ives	Reasonable	Bushmead Drive, Glenives Close, Fernlea Close
Sturminster Marshall	Reasonable	Bartons Ground
Three Legged Cross	Good	Bay Close, Fryers Road LAP
Verwood	Good	Paddock Grove amenity space, LAP to North of 19 Hainault Drive and south of 1 Taylor Way, Monmouth Drive amenity space
West Moors	Reasonable	West Moors Scout Hall LAP, Alder Bed / Pennington Copse amenity space, Morelands Rise LAP
Wimborne	Excellent (2 sites)	

Natural & Semi Natural Green Space (includes Green Corridors):

	General	Specific Improvements
Alderholt	Poor (only 1 site assessed)	Bonfire Hill
Colehill	Good	Leigh Road LNR and Woodland South of Middlehill Road
Corfe Mullen	Reasonable	Upton Heath and Corfe Hill LNR
Cranborne	None assessed	
Ferndown & West Parley	Reasonable	Ford Lane LNR and Uddens Hill
Sixpenny Handley	None assessed	
St Leonards & St Ives	Good	Leybrook Common woodland
Sturminster Marshall	None	

Three Legged Cross	Reasonable	
Verwood	Good	Hillside Road, Ebblake Bog LNR, Dewlands Wood and Dewlands Park
West Moors	Reasonable	
Wimborne	Poor	Leigh Common LNR and Riverside Industrial Park

Recreation Ground and Public Gardens:

	General	Specific Improvements
Alderholt	Not adequate	Alderholt recreation ground
Colehill	Not adequate	Olivers Park
Corfe Mullen	Good	
Cranborne	Excellent	
Ferndown & West Parley	Reasonable	Ford Lane
Sixpenny Handley	Reasonable	
St Leonards & St Ives	Reasonable	
Sturminster Marshall	Reasonable	
Three Legged Cross	Poor (only 1 site assessed)	
Verwood	Not adequate	Potterne Park Recreation Ground
West Moors	Reasonable	
Wimborne	Very Good	Valognes Park

5.19.3 Accessibility component

The following table summarises the overall quality of open space in each LNA (see Section 6 LNA profiles for more detailed quality assessment):

* poor/not acceptable (less than 65%) ** adequate/reasonable (65 – 74%) *** good (75% and over)

LNA	Recreation Grounds	Amenity Green Space	Nat & Semi Nat Green Space	Active Sports Space	Space for Children & YP
Aldersholt	*	***	***	**	**
Colehill	*	**	***	*	**
Corfe Mullen	*	***	***	*	**
Cranborne	***	***	***	***	***
Ferndown & West Parley	*	**	***	*	*
Sixpenny Handley	***	***	*	***	***
St Leonards & St Ives	**	**	***	**	*
Sturminster Marshall	**	***	*	***	**
Three Legged Cross	**	**	***	***	**
Verwood	*	***	***	**	*
West Moors	*	**	***	**	*
Wimborne	*	***	**	***	**

Note: the total existing level of provision is for the LNA areas only and will thus vary from other figures set out in Section 5, which consider all sites within each typology i.e. those outside as well as within the LNAs.

5.19.4 Assessment of typologies

Active Sports Space (including facilities at Recreation Grounds)

Quality

Reasonable, but varies across the district. For sport sites, certain standards and criteria should be met and this will need to be explored in SPD.

Accessibility

There is a 15 minute walktime catchment set for active sports sites – 600m – which means that one central sports site within a small, focused settlement will mean that the standard is met – e.g. Cranborne, Sixpenny Handley, Sturminster Marshall and Three Legged Cross. In Wimborne there are a number of sports sites which means in accessibility terms, the town is well covered. However, this is not the case for Colehill, where there are no formal sports facilities within the town and residents have to travel to Wimborne or Ferndown or other areas.

Much of the LNAs of Corfe Mullen and Ferndown are not within the 600m catchment, mainly because facilities are concentrated in one location and the size and shape of the LNA, and transport routes within it, make it difficult to access the facilities from throughout the Area. In the case of Corfe Mullen however, there are sites to the east of the LNA in Poole which may satisfy some demand. Access to sports facilities within St Leonards and St Ives, Verwood and West Moors is generally reasonable, mainly because there are two or more locations where sports facilities are sited.

Quantity

	LNA population	Existing Active Sports Space (ha/1000)
Alderholt	3313	0.04
Colehill	7000	0.14
Corfe Mullen	10147	0.24
Cranborne	779	2.90
Ferndown & West Parley	16664	0.03**
Sixpenny Handley	1175	1.19
St Leonards & St Ives	6672	0.31
Sturminster Marshall	1895	0.00
Three Legged Cross	1490	1.47
Verwood	12090	0.03
West Moors	7198	0.06
Wimborne	6418	1.23
TOTAL (all 12 LNAs)	74640	0.28
Suggested Standard		1.25

**With the addition of the pitches at Ferndown Leisure Centre, the existing level of provision within Ferndown and West Parley rises to around 1.03ha/000.

Taking all 12 LNAs together, the existing level of provision is 0.83ha/000. These existing levels of provision are not the same as those computed earlier in Section 5, as the latter covers sites throughout the whole district and not just sites within the designated LNAs.

The Survey work suggests that more pitch provision is required in the Wimborne/Colehill area and Ferndown area, in particular.

The individual profiles also suggest possible locations for multi-use games areas; tennis courts are a widely requested facility which could be accommodated on a multi use surface. The provision of new synthetic turf pitches has also been considered in Section 5.

Space for Children and Young People**Quality**

Issues over quality are of importance with regard to children's play space, because of health and safety issues, the cost of maintenance and the fact that these facilities are noticed and commented on by many residents. The facilities where improvements are required often tend to be teenage facilities – shelters and skateparks, where usage is high and vandalism can occur. Generally, the quality across East Dorset was found to be good – excellent at Sturminster Marshall and Cranborne (which have just the one play area) each. Play areas in West Moors were the lowest rated.

Accessibility

Accessibility to children's play areas is important and this does vary across the district. Generally the smaller settlements are fairly well covered - but there are significant gaps in a number of the larger LNAs, notably Ferndown and West Parley, West Moors and St Leonards & St Ives. In some of these settlements, main roads also makes access more difficult.

Quantity

It is possible to arrive at a proposed standard in quantitative terms for space for children and young people, but in truth, it is accessibility and quality (or 'fitness for purpose') which are the key markers for this provision. The areas of land involved in play provision are so small (a shelter for teenagers, for example) that a hectare per thousand standard is rendered almost meaningless.

All LNAs are below the proposed standard of 0.25ha, apart from Cranborne; this is not an over generous standard, but some LNAs have current provision less than one fifth of this. It is the areas where both accessibility and quantity are below the proposed standards which should be the priority for new provision:

- Ferndown and West Parley
- West Moors (poor quality at existing)
- Colehill
- Wimborne
- St Leonards and St Ives and south Corfe Mullen would also seem to be a priority

It is spaces for children and young people that everyone wants, but not near to where they live. In this respect, utilising natural greenspace in imaginative ways for play, as set out previously in Section 5, may prove more fruitful.

Amenity Green Space**Quality**

These are normally small areas and the majority of sites offer more in terms of visual amenity rather recreational use. The quality across the District is variable, as one might expect. However, it is often these small areas of land which are walked passed and looked at most often and where many people notice when litter bins are overflowing, dog bins are full and there are few amenities such as seats.

Accessibility

To some extent, accessibility to natural greenspace, recreation grounds and amenity green space overlap where informal recreation is concerned. However, with amenity open space we are looking for small green areas interspersed with housing and there are several parts of East Dorset where this does not occur, notably west Colehill and central Ferndown.

Quantity

	LNA pop.	Amenity Green Space
Corfe Mullen	10147	1.88
Sturminster Marshall	1895	1.79
Verwood	12090	1.54
Three Legged Cross	1490	1.41
West Moors	7198	0.88
Alderholt	3113	0.82
Ferndown & West Parley	16664	0.65
Sixpenny Handley	1175	0.56
St Leonards & St Ives	6672	0.31
Wimborne	6418	0.28
Cranborne	779	0.18
Colehill	7000	0.17
TOTAL	74,640	0.92
Suggested Standard		0.5

Again, the importance of linking all 3 aspects of standards of provision together is illustrated by the fact that some LNAs may have good coverage of amenity green space (e.g. Wimborne) but in fact have a relatively low level of provision in hectare terms. This may mean sites are very small and that to enhance their value, more needs to be provided and/or their facilities improved (seats, trees etc).

If all the LNAs are taken together, the existing level of provision of Amenity Open Space is 0.92ha/000.

Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace

This has been commented on previously in Section 5. Special care needs to be taken in interpreting these findings, as many people may not make a distinction between natural greenspace and access to the wider countryside. There are significant areas of natural greenspace around the LNAs which may be very accessible to people living within them, but have not been taken into the calculations for the LNAs.

Quality

Quality of natural greenspace is extremely important to local people and there have been comments about the need to control dogs and dog fouling and to have enough litter bins etc

Accessibility

Because there is so much of it, and the catchment radius is quite large, accessibility to Natural Greenspace across the LNAs is very good. Ferndown and West Parley, West Moors and St Leonards in particular have large areas within the LNAs. Wimborne is less well served by natural greenspace, as the areas involved are small and there are none within the west of the LNA. No natural greenspace was recorded in Sturminster Marshall

and Sixpenny Handley LNAs; however they are both surrounded by countryside and Sixpenny Handley by the AONB.

Quantity

The proposed standard is exceeded – by a large degree in many cases – by nine out of the 12 LNAs. If all the LNAs are taken together, the existing level of provision of Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace is 16.43ha/000. However, Wimborne has less than 1ha/000 of natural and semi natural greenspace within its LNA, which given its relatively poor level of amenity open space too, would point towards the need for greater informal recreation opportunities. Land alongside the River Stour offers scope to meet this need.

Recreation Grounds and Public Gardens

This is the very interesting category, which is grappling with the issue of the multifunctionality of open space. As already detailed, as resources for informal recreation, this category overlaps with amenity green space and natural green space; as a sports facility it overlaps with Active Sports Space. However, it is important to consider this as a typology in its own right, so that this mix of formal and informal uses is recognised, enhanced and protected. The management regime needs to take account of this, so that informal casual use can be catered for when the formal facilities are not being used.

Quality

Generally, this typology was not found to be of such good quality as other types. One reason for this is the fact that Recreation Grounds contain many different types of facility, any one of which (play area etc) may be of poor quality and thus depress the Recreation Ground's scoring overall. In addition, Recreation Grounds sustain a high level of use and wear and tear on their facilities can be great.

Accessibility

The research has indicated that it is important to be able to easily travel to a (multifunctional) Recreation Ground within 10 minutes walking time, to be able to take advantage of sports facilities, grassed areas, play equipment etc. This typology is the poorest in accessibility terms; only 3 of the 10 largest parishes have 'reasonable' accessibility from all their built up areas; and for Ferndown, Corfe Mullen, West Moors and Colehill especially, coverage is poor. There are also relatively few multifunctional Recreation Grounds in each settlement, so provision is concentrated on a few sites. It is considered that within each of the LNAs, the priority should be to improve Recreation Grounds and enhance their value for all members of the community.

Quantity

	LNA pop.	Recreation Grounds & Public Gardens
Cranborne	779	2.71
Sixpenny Handley	1175	1.33
Sturminster Marshall	1895	1.26
Alderholt	3113	1.18
Corfe Mullen	10147	1.11
West Moors	7198	1.09
Verwood	12090	0.87
Three Legged Cross	1490	0.86
Ferndown & West Parley	16664	0.64
Wimborne	6418	0.41
St Leonards & St Ives	6672	0.36
Colehill	7000	0.12
TOTAL	74,640	0.76
Suggested Standard		0.5

The standard for Recreation Grounds is proposed at 0.5ha/000, for 'Link Space' within a recreation ground, only. It is therefore not possible to provide direct comparison between this standard and the existing level of provision, as measurements are generally only available for complete sites. Taking all the LNAs together, existing provision of recreation grounds is equivalent to 0.76/000.

St Leonards and St Ives and Colehill are significantly less than the proposed standard, and Wimborne only slightly above it; given the other shortfalls in these LNAs, attention should be given to developing the multifunctional use of open space for informal and formal recreation.

Built Facilities

As discussed within the Local Need Area profiles, there are three dedicated indoor sports facilities within East Dorset:

Queen Elizabeth Sports Centre (dual use), Pamphill, Wimborne
Ferndown Leisure Centre (dual use), Ferndown
Verwood Leisure Centre

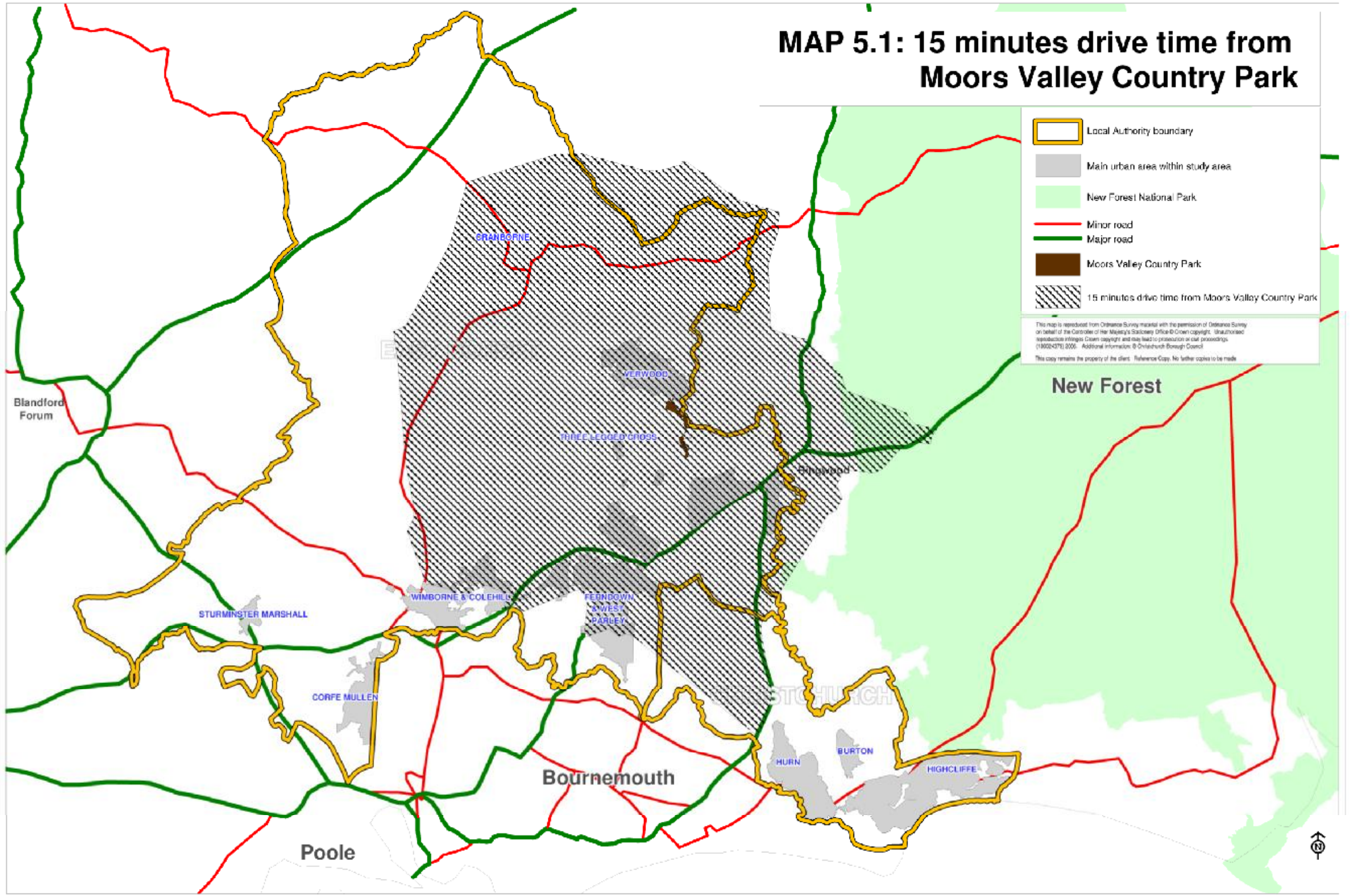
Some key issues in relation to these sites have been identified as:








- Verwood Leisure Centre – cannot meet demand in particular for five-a-side, climbing, indoor netball and cricket. Changing rooms are sub standard and need upgrading
- Queen Elizabeth Centre: limited capacity to meet needs of pitch sport clubs for higher quality facilities; underuse of STP?
- Ferndown Leisure Centre – issues over concurrent use and programming of community use during the school day; demand for STP

It has been a strong tenet of the LNA profiles that schools are often located in areas where wider community use of their facilities could make an important contribution to meeting shortfalls, particularly for playing fields, mugas and for play areas at rural primary schools.

The strategic issues identified above have been referred to previously in Section 3 in the overview of provision.

MAP 5.1: 15 minutes drive time from Moors Valley Country Park



-  Local Authority boundary
-  Main urban area within study area
-  New Forest National Park
-  Minor road
-  Major road
-  Moors Valley Country Park
-  15 minutes drive time from Moors Valley Country Park

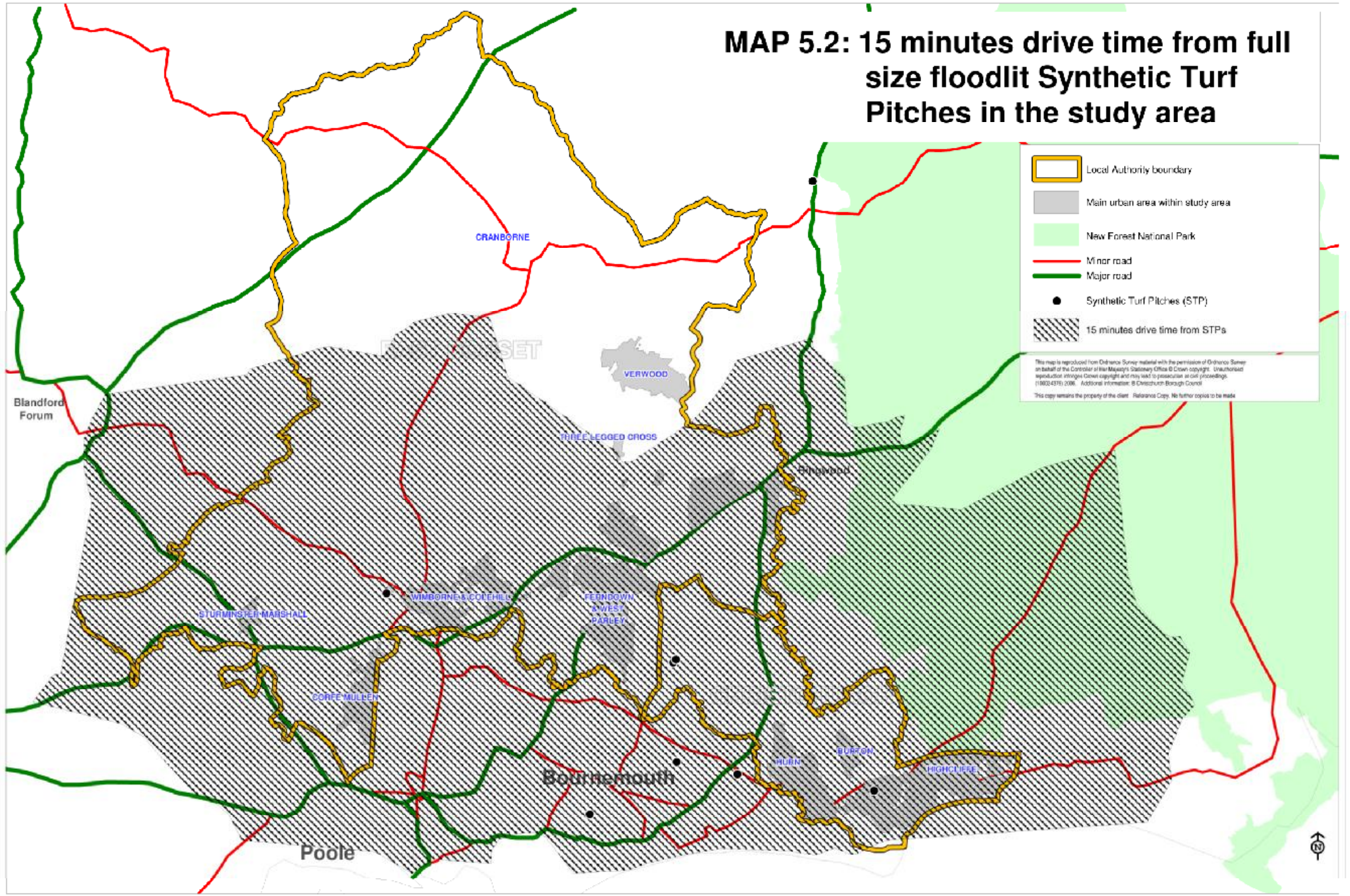
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New Forest

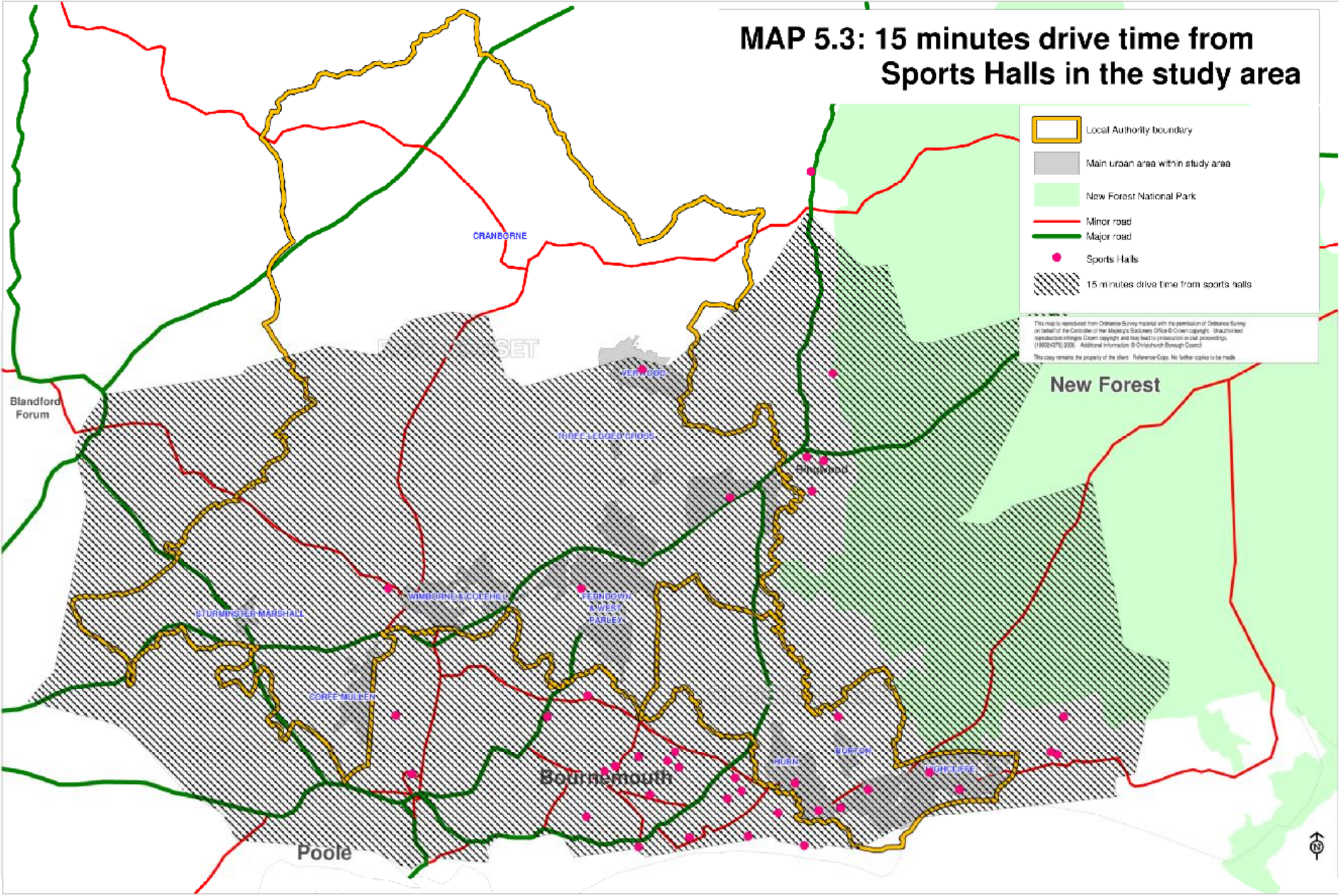
STURMINSTER MARSHALL



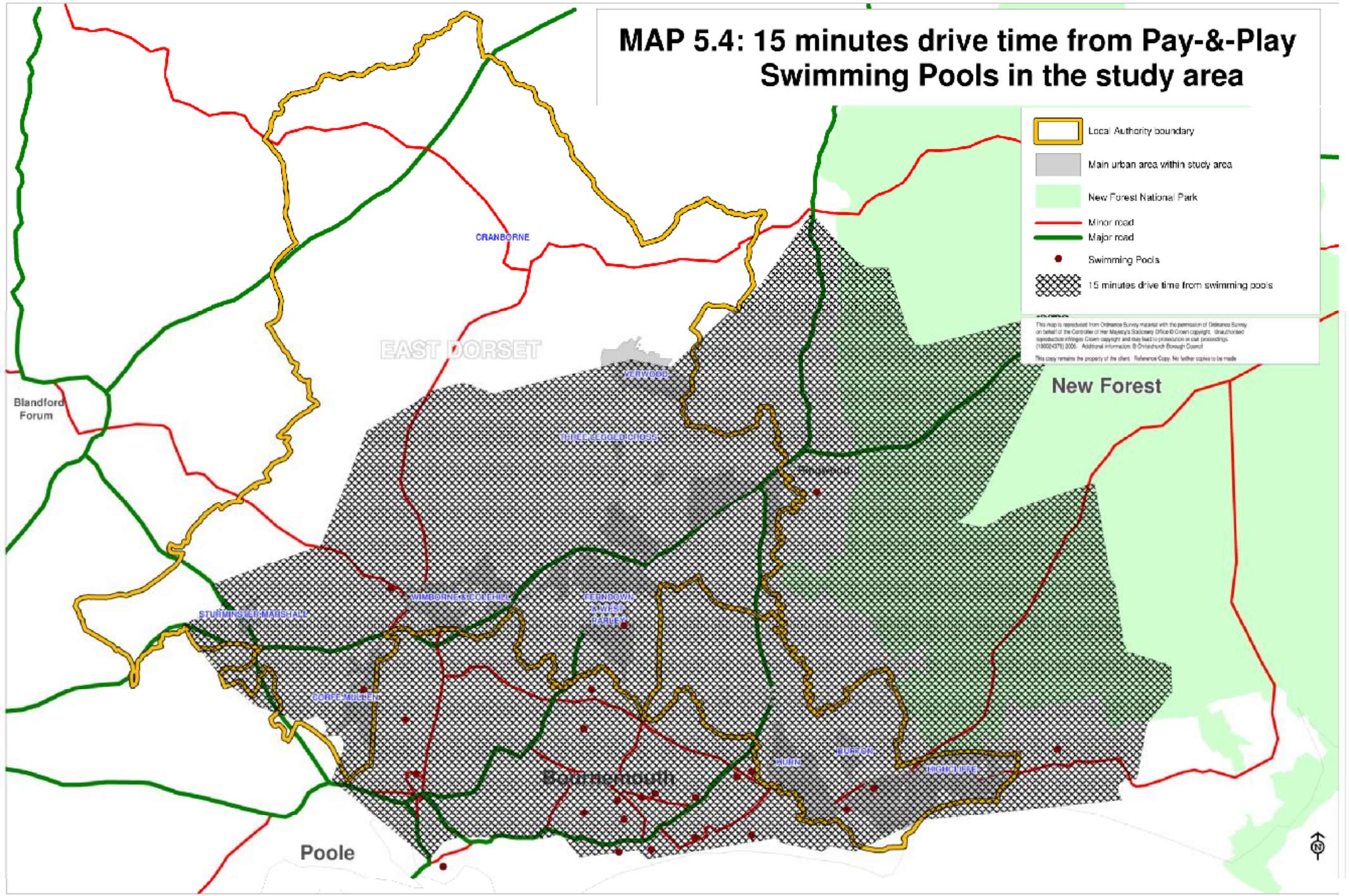
MAP 5.2: 15 minutes drive time from full size floodlit Synthetic Turf Pitches in the study area



MAP 5.3: 15 minutes drive time from Sports Halls in the study area



MAP 5.4: 15 minutes drive time from Pay-&-Play Swimming Pools in the study area



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6 AREA PROFILES

This section contains a series of standalone profiles on each of the Local Needs Areas that have been identified in this report.

