



Wolverhampton Open Space Strategy and Action Plan 2024 - 2039

City of Wolverhampton Council

Final report

Prepared by LUC

September 2024

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Wolverhampton has a strong heritage of open space provision, dating back to the Victorian era. Historic sites in Wolverhampton include West Park, one of the most intact examples of a Victorian park in England and Wolverhampton's premier open space. These assets are still being protected and enhanced today, including the Heritage Lottery funded restoration at Hickman Park and 'The Splash Pad' children's play area at East Park. In addition, new parks, playgrounds, natural spaces and amenity greenspaces act as important open spaces for local communities. The canals and waterways in Wolverhampton provide other important open space provision, both for providing access to nature and active travel routes, including at Smestow Valley.

1.2 City of Wolverhampton Council commissioned LUC to prepare a new Open Space Strategy and Action Plan for the city. This work comprises a comprehensive update of previous work undertaken by Wolverhampton. Wolverhampton's current Open Space Strategy and Action Plan was prepared in 2018 and was itself a review and update to the Open Space Audit and Needs Assessment (OSANA) undertaken in 2008 and subsequent review in 2012, 2014 and 2016. This strategy document is informed by an up-to-date desk-based study, site audits and community engagement. Recommendations and revised standards are informed by changes in open space and play provision since the previous update. This includes open spaces that may have been developed and new open spaces and play spaces that have been identified. The document should be read alongside the Wolverhampton Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy, 2022, and the Wolverhampton Built Facilities Strategy, 2024, some of whose actions are of wider relevance to the city's open spaces.

1.3 City of Wolverhampton Council is working on the emerging Wolverhampton Local Plan (WLP). The WLP will replace the Black Country Core Strategy for Wolverhampton, plus parts of several other Development Plan documents for the city, including housing and employment site allocations within some of the city's Area Action Plans (AAPs).

1.4 There is a need to ensure a new Open Space Strategy and Action Plan for Wolverhampton recognises and reflects new national policy drivers and guidance. A new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and associated guidance has been adopted since the publication of the previous Strategy update and review of standards. National planning policy requires that up-to-date assessments of open space need are undertaken to support the development of local policies and plans. Studies should determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is required ‘which plans should then seek to accommodate’.

1.5 The Governments 25-Year Environment Plan (25 YEP 2018), parts of which have been given a statutory footing through the 2021 Environment Bill, gives additional weight to the importance of open space and wider environment. The 25 YEP recognises the links between access to open space and the health and well-being of local communities: *‘We want to establish strategic, flexible and locally tailored approaches that recognise the relationship between the quality of the environment and development.’*

1.6 Natural England has also published the National Green Infrastructure (GI) Framework, which proposes National Green Infrastructure Standards, and is intended to help local authorities meet NPPF requirements relating to Green Infrastructure.

1.7 A new Open Space Strategy and Action Plan for Wolverhampton has been informed by an assessment of current open space provision, current and future local needs, a range of policy drivers and local strategic priorities. This document:

- Identifies the quantity and type of open space and play space in Wolverhampton.
- Provides an assessment of the quality, value and accessibility of publicly accessible open space in Wolverhampton.
- Provides an overview of a range of open space needs in the city, informed by a desk study and community consultation and engagement.

- Sets out open space standards with regards to quantity, quality, value and accessibility, to inform future planning requirements.
- Provides an overarching Vision, Strategic Objectives and an Action Plan and recommendations for future open space requirements and enhancement.

1.8 The City of Wolverhampton is a Metropolitan Borough in the West Midlands Metropolitan Area. The study area covers the whole of the city, an area of around 69 km². Wolverhampton is one of four Metropolitan Boroughs of the Black Country along with Dudley, Sandwell and Walsall. Wolverhampton adjoins South Staffordshire District to the west and north, Dudley and Sandwell to the south and Walsall to the east. See **Figure 1.1**.

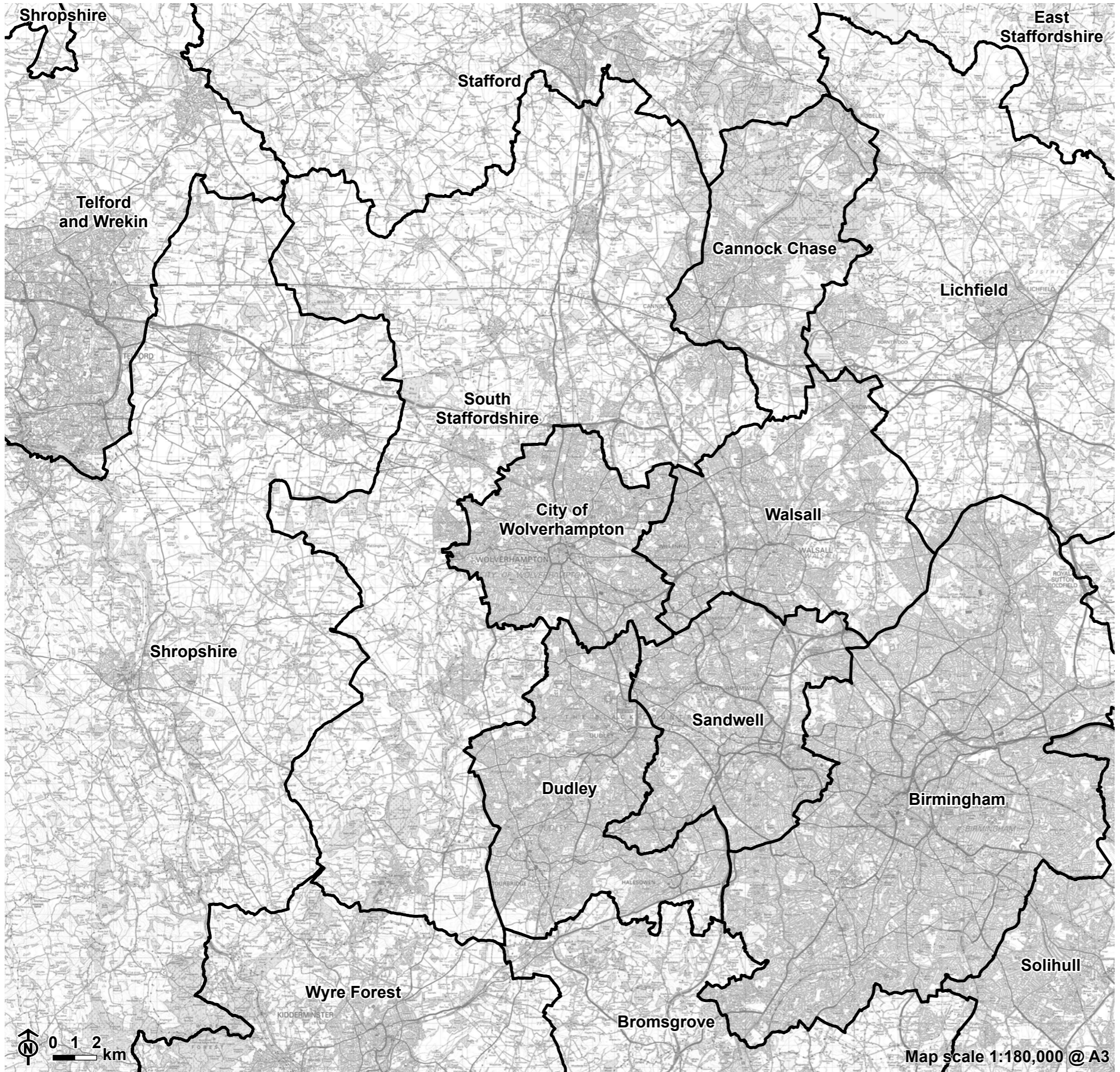


Figure 1.1: Study area

Local Authority boundary

Methodology

1.9 The methodology for the assessment of open space and development of a strategy reflects the requirements in the NPPF and recognised good practice guidance including Green Flag Award guidelines.

- **Step One: Understand the supply.**
A review of open space was undertaken to update Wolverhampton's existing data. Open spaces have been identified and categorised according to a set of typologies that reflect primary function and characteristics.
- **Step Two: Review strategic context.**
A desk review was undertaken to understand wider strategic priorities, policy drivers and the existing management approach to open space.
- **Step Three: Identify local needs.**
This step was comprised of two key areas of work:
 - A desk-based review of local needs indicators to understand wider needs for open space based on existing data. This includes health issues and needs, environmental context, population, demographic data and deprivation. Much of this data has been mapped to understand potential spatial priorities and needs.
 - Consultation and engagement comprising an online survey, direct communication and in-person workshops.
- **Step Four: Quality and value audits.**
A large sample audit of open spaces and play spaces within Wolverhampton has been undertaken. The audit approach was informed by Green Flag Award guidance. Site audit data provides numeric scores for each site, indicating their performance against several key themes.
- **Step Five: Analysis and applying standards.**
Open space data and results from site audits have been used to undertake

analysis relating to open space provision and develop a set of open space standards. Analysis and development of standards broadly focus on:

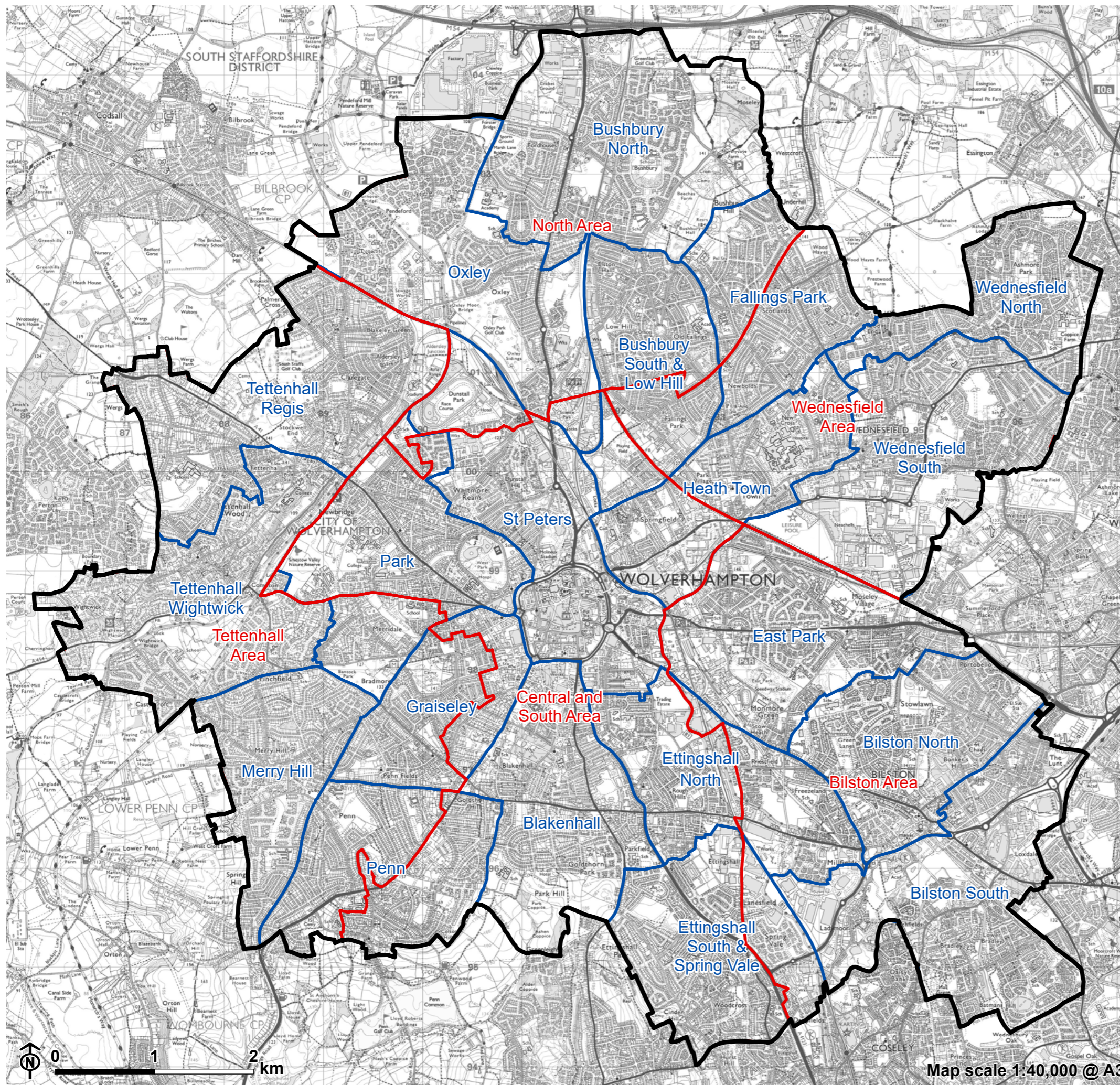
- Quantity: the amount and types of open space within Wolverhampton, including assessment of the current and future quantity of open space per resident.
 - Quality and value: the performance of open space against recognised quality and value standards for each type of open space.
 - Accessibility: how far residents should need to travel to reach open space and play space; identifying areas that are deficient in good, local access to open space.
- Step Six: Developing the Strategy and Action Plan.
The Strategy and Action Plan is guided by an overarching Vision and strategic Aims. The Strategy and Action Plan comprise a set of recommendation and projects to guide open space management and development up to 2039 and has been informed by the previous steps.

Analysis areas

1.10 For the purposes of the Open Space Strategy, the study area is divided into five analysis areas, in line with previous Open Space Strategies and Wolverhampton's Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy. The boundary between the Central and South Analysis Area and Wednesfield Analysis Areas has been amended for this report and the revised boundaries are shown in **Figure 1.2**.

Figure 1.2: Analysis areas

- Wolverhampton boundary
- Analysis Area
- Ward boundary (As of May 2023)

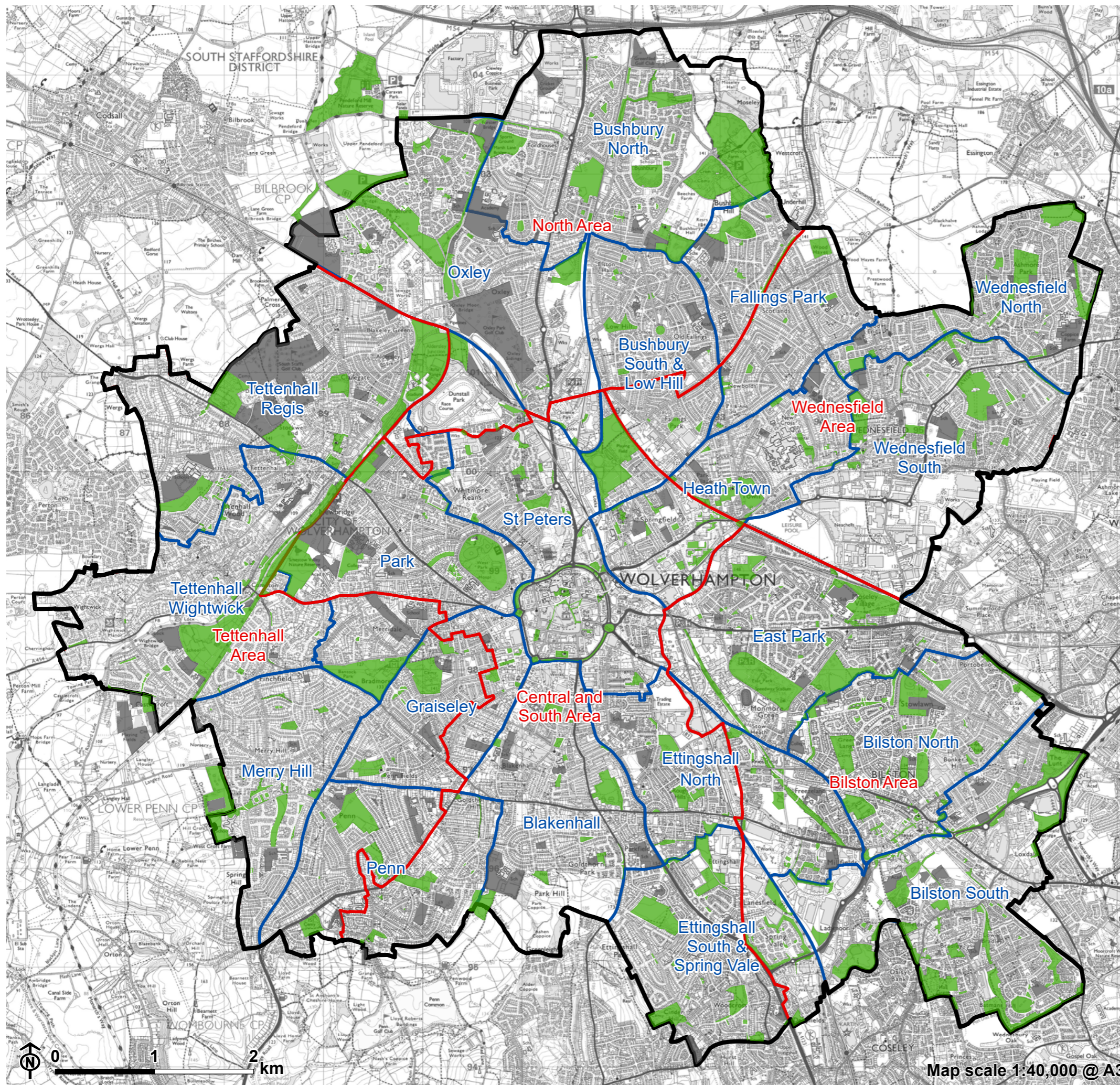


Summary of open space provision

1.11 Open space and play space within the city have been identified and mapped. Key data has been gathered for each site within a geographic information system database (GIS). Sites have been categorised according to a series of site typologies and access categories. Publicly accessible open space that has been identified in Wolverhampton is shown on **Figure 1.3**.

1.12 Further detail on categorising and mapping of open spaces and play spaces as part of the development of the Open Space Strategy, and of the quantity of each type of open space, is set out in **Chapter 3**.

Figure 1.3: Publicly accessible open space



- Wolverhampton boundary
- Analysis Area
- Ward boundary (As of May 2023)
- Open Space**
- Freely accessible to public
- Restricted access or no access

Chapter 2

Strategic context

2.1 The following section summarises the strategic context for open space and considers:

- Policy context
- Population and demographics
- Environmental context

Policy context

1.1 A range of policies and strategies act as key drivers for the development of an Open Space Strategy for Wolverhampton. They inform the methodology and provide wider context to the benefits of taking a strategic approach.

National

2.2 **A Green Future: Our 25 Year Environment Plan to Improve the Environment (2018)** [See reference 1] sets out goals for protecting threatened species, improving natural habitats, promoting cleaner air and water in rural landscapes and cities, and modifying land use, forestry, agriculture, and fishing to better protect the environment. The plan outlines several actions that relate to delivering social benefits through the provision of greenspace. Chapter six is dedicated to the importance of connecting people with the environment. This can improve health and wellbeing. The Plan emphasises the role of greenspaces in providing these health and wellbeing benefits, as well as increasing the economic value of housing. The unequal distribution of urban greenspace is also noted.

2.3 Within policy goal 6 *‘enhancing beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment’*, there is a target to *‘Make sure that there are high quality, accessible, natural spaces close to where people live and work, particularly in urban areas, and encouraging more people to spend time in them to benefit their health and wellbeing’*.

National Planning Policy Framework

2.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023) **[See reference 2]** provides government planning policies for England. The NPPF needs to be considered in planning decisions, and when preparing a development plan. Any planning decision-making and policies must also be reflective of international and statutory obligations.

- Paragraph 8 of the NPPF recognises the need for the planning system to achieve sustainable development by prioritising key economic, social, and environmental objectives. The NPPF highlights social objectives, and the role open spaces have in achieving them, stating that *‘strong, vibrant and healthy communities’* can be supported by *‘fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe spaces, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being.’*
- Paragraph 102 of the NPPF states that *‘Access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and wellbeing of communities and can deliver wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change.’* This clause requires that planning policies and decisions are based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities, including quantitative and qualitative deficits and surpluses. Information from assessments should determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is required *‘which plans should then seek to accommodate’*.
- Paragraph 103 states that: *‘Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:*

- *an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or*
 - *the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or*
 - *the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use...'*
- The NPPF also provides a mechanism by which local authorities can protect some open spaces through Local Green Space designations (Paragraph 106). These areas should be managed by policies which are consistent with those for Green Belt.

2.5 The NPPF is supported by Planning Practice Guidance which provides further detail on the application of policies. Planning Practice Guidance of most relevance to the development of the strategy includes:

- Natural Environment
- Open space, sports and recreation facilities, public rights of way and local green space

Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework

1.1 The Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework 2023 (NEGIF) [See [reference 3](#)] acts in support of the government's commitments to its 25 Year Environment Plan. The framework comprises; 15 principles of Green Infrastructure (GI); headline GI Standards; a GI design guide; GI process journeys; case studies; an on-line GI mapping database and user guide; and a monitoring and evaluation plan.

'Green Infrastructure (GI) is a network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of

delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity.'

(National Planning Policy Framework, 2023)

2.6 The framework has developed voluntary Green Infrastructure Standards, to support local authorities in meeting national and local planning policy. The standards distinguish between those recommended for major new developments and those for area wide application. Of most relevance for the development of the Open Space Strategy and Action Plan are the Accessible Greenspace Standards, which comprise:

■ Size and Proximity criteria (accessibility):

The headline accessibility criteria are intended to ensure access to green and blue spaces close to home. This is defined as being within the access buffer of at least one doorstep OR local space, AND a neighbourhood space. Access buffers for different sizes of greenspace are shown in **Table 2.1** below.

■ Capacity criteria (quantity):

Local authorities have at least three hectares of publicly accessible greenspace per 1,000 population and there is no net loss or reduction in capacity of accessible greenspace per 1,000 population at an area-wide scale. Local authorities specify capacity targets for all major residential development informed by a local accessible greenspace baseline, and taking into account local needs, opportunities and constraints. The NEGIF also provides an Urban Nature Recovery Standard which proposes local authorities *'provide 1 hectare of Local Nature Reserve (LNR) per 1,000 population (for nature conservation and quiet enjoyment)*.

■ Quality criteria:

Accessible greenspace meets the Green Flag Award criteria and best practice in accessibility for all (e.g. *By All Reasonable Means: Least restrictive access to the outdoors* – The Sensory Trust, 2020).

Table 2.1: Natural England access to Greenspace buffers

Hierarchy	Minimum size (ha)	Buffer size (m)
Doorstep	0.5	200
Local	2.0	300
Neighbourhood	10.0	1,000
Wider neighbourhood	20.0	2,000
District	100.0	5,000
Sub-regional	500.0	10,000

Sub-Regional

Black Country Core Strategy (2011)

2.7 The Black Country Core Strategy was adopted in 2011. [\[See reference 4\]](#) It addresses strategic priorities for the Black Country and replaced several policies and allocations in the Wolverhampton Unitary Development Plan. It also provided the strategic framework for the three Area Action Plans (AAPs) (see below). The Core Strategy highlights the need for development proposals to recognise the value and function of open space in the Black Country.

2.8 Policy ENV6: Open Space, Sport and Recreation is of most relevance to this strategy. This highlights the importance of providing open space and ensuring it is providing a range of benefits for the Black Country, including enhancing the sense of place, reflecting local heritage, enhancing health and wellbeing, and strengthening the green network. It highlights the need to create more open spaces, which are multifunctional and accessible for all.

2.9 The following policies are also of relevance to open space planning and management:

- CSP3: Environmental Infrastructure
- SCPS4: Place-Making
- ENV1: Nature Conservation
- ENV2: Historic Character and Local Distinctiveness
- ENV3: Design Quality
- ENV4: Canals
- ENV5: Flood Risk

2.10 During 2016-2022, the four Black Country authorities (Wolverhampton, Dudley, Sandwell and Walsall) worked together to review the Black Country Core Strategy and replace this with a new strategic plan, the Black Country Plan, which would also include detailed site allocations for housing and employment development across the Black Country. In autumn 2022 it was decided not to take forward the Black Country Plan and for the four Black Country authorities to instead pursue separate strategic plans. Allocations of housing and employment land for Wolverhampton will now be addressed through the emerging Wolverhampton Local Plan. Until the emerging Wolverhampton Local Plan is in place the existing Black Country Core Strategy remains the relevant strategic plan for Wolverhampton, supported by policies in the Area Action Plans and the saved policies in the Wolverhampton Unitary Development Plan.

West Midlands Natural Environment Plan 2021-2026

2.11 Wolverhampton is a constituent member of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) which was established in 2016. The WMCA overarching objective is to build 'a better connected, more prosperous, fairer, greener and healthier West Midlands'.

2.12 The West Midlands Natural Environment Plan 2021-2026 [See reference 5] was produced by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA). The Plan covers a broad range of natural environment projects, focusing on tree and hedgerow planting, improving access to green space for all communities and developing wildlife corridors. As part of this the Plan contains a commitment to support organisations to deliver projects that enhance access to green space, supported by community grant programmes. One of the Plan's aims is to improve the accessibility of high-quality green space within a 300m walk from the home. The Plan will also support in the delivery of the national Nature Recovery Network, a commitment by the government to improve the connectivity of wildlife rich areas, enhance landscapes, and support access to nature for health and wellbeing. This will be achieved through a West Midlands Nature Recovery Strategy and Natural Capital Investment Plan.

2.13 The City of Wolverhampton Council will continue to work closely with the WMCA to deliver a better connected, more prosperous, fairer, greener and healthier West Midlands.

Local

Our City: Our Plan (2024/25)

2.14 Our City: Our Plan [See reference 6] is the City of Wolverhampton Council's strategic framework for improving outcomes for local people and delivering levelling up ambitions, co-produced with over 4,500 local people and stakeholders. It sets out how the City of Wolverhampton Council will work with their partners and communities to build a more prosperous and inclusive Wolverhampton where everyone can share in the opportunities and success of our city. The plan is structured around six key priorities. Provision of open space in Wolverhampton can help to achieve these priorities by offering spaces for communities to come together and support good mental and physical health.

2.15 There are six key priorities with associated outcomes and objectives. Those most relevant to the Open Space Strategy are:

- Strong families where children grow up well and achieve their full potential.
 - High quality open space can contribute to the outcome '*Children and young people grow up happy with good physical, social, mental health and wellbeing*'.
- Healthy, inclusive communities.
 - High quality open space can contribute to the outcomes '*help people live happier more active lives*' and '*Inclusive, welcoming communities where people feel safe and look out for each other*'.
- Good homes in well-connected neighbourhoods.
 - High quality open space can contribute to the outcome '*Clean, green neighbourhoods and public space*'.
- Thriving economy in all parts of the city.
 - High quality open space can contribute to the outcome '*Vibrant high streets with quality culture and leisure offer*'.

2.16 The six overarching priorities are supported by four cross cutting principles:

- Climate Conscious
- Driven by Digital
- Fair and Equal
- Wolverhampton Pound

Our Climate Commitment

2.17 Our Climate Commitment is the City Council's commitment to action following its declaration of a Climate Emergency in July 2019. The Council pledged to make all council activities net carbon zero by 2028, and to ensure all

strategic decisions and budgets are in line with the shift to net carbon zero. The commitments that are set out fall into three fields: Council, City and Community.

2.18 Key actions that are most relevant to the development of a new Open Space Strategy include the following under Community:

- Develop tree planting programme within the city.
- Support community groups to get funding and support to deliver 'green' projects.

Good Growth Strategy

2.19 The council have recently published the Good Growth Strategy [See reference 7]. The strategy outlines the council's proposed approach to economic development and how the council will work alongside partners to support the local economy to grow. The strategy is based on three interconnected themes of Place, Productivity and People and a central principle of 'good growth'.

2.20 The "Place" element of the strategy focuses on supporting the development of sustainable communities and workplaces, delivering inclusive low carbon transport network, and securing the potential of the city and town centres. Quality open spaces are crucial to achieving our priorities for Place.

Wolverhampton Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2023 – 2028)

2.21 The city's Health and Wellbeing Strategy [See reference 8] aims to create an environment where local people can live longer, healthier, and more active lives, and where every child in the city has the best start in life. One of its three high-level ambitions is Getting Wolverhampton Moving More including the priorities of creating both an Active City and Active Spaces and Places. Making

the most of the city's parks and open spaces is a key means of achieving these priorities.

Wolverhampton Development Plan

2.22 Wolverhampton's current Development Plan documents are:

- Black Country Core Strategy (included under Sub-Regional policy review)
- Saved Unitary Development Plan and Policies Map
- Area Action Plans
- Neighbourhood Plans
- Supplementary Planning Documents and Development Briefs

2.23 The City of Wolverhampton Council has approved a new Local Development Scheme which sets out a programme and timetable to adopt a Wolverhampton Local Plan. In preparation for the Local Plan, the council has asked developers, landowners, and others to submit the details of potential sites suitable for employment development or housing in the future. The review of the Black Country Core Strategy will be completed through the emerging Wolverhampton Local Plan which will include all the strategic planning policies for Wolverhampton and will replace:

- The Black Country Core Strategy for the Wolverhampton area; and
- Housing and Employment site allocations included in the Bilston Corridor Area Action Plan (AAP), Stafford Road Corridor APP, and parts of the City Centre AAP which do not fall within the Strategic Centre Boundary.

2.24 A review of the Wolverhampton City Centre Action Plan is also required to provide up to date development allocations and policies for the part of the AAP area which is not covered in detail by the emerging Wolverhampton Local Plan.

Wolverhampton Unitary Development Plan (2006)

2.25 The Unitary Development Plan (UDP) [See reference 9] was adopted in 2006. The most relevant saved policies are:

- R3: Protection of Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities
- R4: Development adjacent to Open Spaces
- R5: Sports Grounds
- R6: The Greenway Network
- R7: Open Space Requirements for New Developments
- R8: Dual-Use of Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities
- R9: New Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities
- R10: Floodlighting and Synthetic Sports Pitches
- H8: Open Space, Sport and Recreation Requirements for New Housing Development

Area Action Plans

2.26 The council's three Area Action Plans (AAPs) form a component of Wolverhampton's Local Plan and are intended to guide the transformation of specific geographic areas which are anticipated to see significant change up to 2026. They provide detailed planning policies at the local level. On adoption they replaced some allocations and policies in the UDP. Review and replacement of parts of the AAPs will be undertaken as part of the development of Wolverhampton's emerging Local Plan (as set out above). The three AAPs are:

- City Centre AAP (2015-2026) [See reference 10], which notes the lack of open space as a key challenge associated with city centre living.

- Stafford Road Corridor AAP (2013-2026) [See reference 11], which highlights the importance of existing open space, including canal corridors, as well as the need for new open space within development.
- Bilston Corridor AAP (2013-2026) (including Bilson Neighbourhood Plan) [See reference 12], which identifies that the quality of open space in the area is mixed, and improvements in open space quality as part of development is important.

Neighbourhood Plans

2.27 Neighbourhood planning was introduced as part of the Localism Act 2011 and provides an opportunity for communities to improve their neighbourhoods, based on shared visions. Three Neighbourhood Plans have been developed in Wolverhampton:

- Bilston Neighbourhood Plan 2014 – 2026 (part of the Bilson Corridor AAP above).
- Tettenhall Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2026 [See reference 13] includes Policy TNP14 which seeks to protect and improve Designated Open Spaces and highlights sites at Penk Rise and Wolverhampton Environment Centre.
- Heathfield Park Neighbourhood Plan (including Heath Town Masterplan) 2014-2026 [See reference 14] includes several policies aimed at promoting the character and public realm of the neighbourhood, which can be supported by high quality open spaces. In addition, there are the following specific policies Policy 22: Protect and Improve Open Spaces and Policy 23: Heath Town Park ‘Community Heart’

Supplementary Planning Document: Open Space, Sport, and Recreation (2014)

2.28 This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) [See reference 15] sets out the current standards and planning approach for open space in Wolverhampton. Standards are based on work undertaken as part of the 2008 Open Space Audit and Needs Assessment and subsequent Open Space Strategy and Action Plan. The document also explains local plan policies for open space protection regarding new developments and sets out the current costs for open space and play provision, and their maintenance, to inform developer contribution negotiations.

- **Protection of Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities.** Proposals to develop existing open space, sport and recreation facilities will be assessed against UDP policies R3 and R5. The Open Space Strategy and Action Plan, together with any more up to date information in open space provision, will be used to determine whether a particular open space is surplus to requirements.
- **Open Space, Sport and Recreation Requirements for New Housing Developments.** As a starting point for determining the amount of contribution required, the following standards (which are set out in Policy H8 and Appendix 2 of the UDP) will apply:
 - 26m² recreational open space per resident (in the form of a single open space of 2,500 m² minimum).
 - One Local Equipped Area of Play for every 1,000 residents.
 - One multi-ball games area for every 2,000 residents.

2.29 Further detail is provided on requirements for larger schemes (40+ homes) and site-specific considerations regarding the provision of amenity open space and facilities for children and young people. The SPD sets out that the above standards are considered a starting point, and local needs will determine requirements for each scheme. This may include off site contributions to

address quality issues in adjacent sites or measures to improve easy access to existing facilities.

- **Biodiversity, Sustainable Drainage and Access.** New open space should be carefully designed to contribute to the retention and enhancement of biodiversity in line with Core Strategy policies ENV1 and ENV6. Policies relating to air quality (ENV8) and surface water drainage (ENV5) are also cross referenced.

2.30 City wide open space standards are also set out in the SPD (appendix 2) although these have been adjusted as part of subsequent updates to Wolverhampton's Open Space Strategy and Action Plan.

City of Wolverhampton Open Space Strategy and Action Plan update (2018)

2.31 The existing City of Wolverhampton Open Space Strategy and Action Plan (OSSAP) [See reference 16] sets out a strategic vision for the management, improvement and development of open spaces in Wolverhampton. This report will provide an update to the existing 2018 Strategy.

2.32 The 2018 OSSAP sets out city wide open space standards with regard to quantity, quality, value and accessibility. The OSSAP categorises sites within the following typologies:

- Parks
- Natural green space
- Provision for children
- Provision for young people
- Amenity green space
- Allotments
- Civic spaces

■ Outdoor sports facilities

2.33 Table 2.2 sets out the current quantity standards within the 2018 OSSAP. For the purposes of analysis, the 2018 OSSAP divides Wolverhampton into five analysis areas. This allows the application of quantity standards (using ONS population data) to understand areas that fall above or below the quantity standard and identify areas which have a deficiency in open space generally, or specific typology.

2.34 Taking all open space typologies into account, two analysis areas were shown to exceed the 4.38 hectare (ha) / 1,000 standard; Bilston analysis area (0.75ha / 1,000 above the standard) and North analysis area (0.21ha / 1,000 above the standard). Wednesfield analysis area was level with the quantity standard, and the remaining two analysis areas fell below (Central and South, and Tettenhall).

2.35 When applying the standards for each typology the performance in terms of quantity provision is more varied per analysis area, with all typologies below the quantity standard in more than one analysis area. However, all typologies except allotments were found to slightly exceed the quantity standard across the whole city (not broken down by analysis area).

Table 2.2: 2018 OSSAP: Quantity standards

Typology	Hectares (ha) per 1,000 population
Parks	0.99
Natural green space	1.25
Provision for children	0.017
Provision for young people	0.017
Amenity green space	0.51
Allotments	0.14

Typology	Hectares (ha) per 1,000 population
Civic spaces	0.005
Outdoor sports facilities	1.19
Total standard (ha / 1,000)	4.38

2.36 Table 2.3 sets out the current accessibility standards per typology.

Table 2.3: 2018 OSSAP: Accessibility standards

Typology	Accessibility standard (minutes walk)
Parks	District-20 Neighbourhood-10 Pocket-10
Natural green space	15
Provision for children	10
Provision for young people	20
Amenity green space	10
Allotments	15

2.37 The 2018 OSSAP assessed sites in terms of their quality (site condition and maintenance of features) and value (the level of features and facilities and offer for the local community). Sites were subject to audit and scored against a number of criteria. Sites were assessed against a threshold or benchmark standard which found that:

- Most sites either scored adequate (46%) or high (44%) for quality, with only a small proportion of sites (9%) receiving a low quality score. The majority of sites that scored low on quality fell within amenity green space or natural green space typologies.

- The majority of sites were assessed as being high value. The majority of sites that scored low on value fell within amenity green space or natural green space typologies.

2.38 The Strategy and Action Plan comprises a vision, aims and objectives, including objectives specific to individual typology. An Open Space Action Plan (set out by typology and analysis area) provides a set of actions and proposals for specific open spaces.

2.39 The current 2018 OSSAP vision is:

'By 2026 Wolverhampton will have a vibrant and diverse range of quality parks and open spaces, well distributed across the City. Sites will reflect local needs and historical and natural characteristics as well as the overall needs of the City. The spaces will form a network which maximises opportunities for everyone to interact with their local community and area whilst also attracting people into the City.'

2.40 Objectives are included under four key aims:

- Aim 1: Provide new open spaces to meet current and future needs that are designed to attract people to the city.
- Aim 2: Focus on providing a network of strategic sites, which are high quality and meet the needs of local communities.
- Aim 3: Provide a diverse natural environment helping to support and protect wildlife habitats, which are well connected and accessible to all.
- Aim 4: Improve and widen access to recreation opportunities, increasing participation in sport and physical activity and helping to improve peoples' health and well-being.

City of Wolverhampton Council Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy and Action Plan (2022)

2.41 The existing Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy (PPOSS) provides a strategic framework for the maintenance and improvement of Wolverhampton's existing playing pitches and accompanying ancillary facilities up to 2039 [See reference 17]. As per the 2018 OSSAP the area was split into five analysis areas.

2.42 The PPOSS is comprised of several documents:

- The Black Country PPOSS Overarching Strategic Framework (2022) - the overarching Strategic Framework for the Black Country authorities, bringing together the findings from the individual PPOSS for each of Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton [See reference 18]. The purpose of the document is to address sub-regional issues, guide relevant planning policy and ensure cross boundary and collaborative working.
- Wolverhampton Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Assessment (2022) – the assessment acts as the baseline for the PPOSS, assessing the supply and demand for outdoor sports facilities and playing pitches, including the quality, quantity and usage of these facilities [See reference 19].
- Wolverhampton Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy and Action Plan (2022).

2.43 Site assessment and an assessment of supply and demand informed the development of a vision, aims and an action plan. The vision set out in the Strategy and Action Plan is to: *'Provide a network of good quality outdoor sports provision to increase participation and promote a healthier lifestyle for all participants.'*

2.44 Several key recommendations that are most relevant to publicly accessible open spaces are summarised below:

- Football – grass pitches

- 18 pitches across 11 sites are overplayed, amounting to 23 match equivalent sessions per week. Improving the quality of this provision, through increased maintenance and drainage will increase capacity at these sites, reducing shortfall now and in the future.
- Consider pitch re-configuration where capacity of one pitch type can be used to reduce shortfalls of another, and where it can better accommodate demand. Consider creation of additional pitches at sites where the space allows and if the demand exists.
- Prioritise maintenance of poor or standard quality pitches (e.g. Prouds Lane Playing Fields, Bantock Park, Claregate Park and Windsor Avenue Playing Fields). Improve changing facilities where required (e.g. Bee Lane Playing Field and Northwood Park).
- Other recommendations include: re-instating lapsed and disused pitches; utilising the Local Football Facility Plans (LFFP) for grass pitch/facility investment; securing tenure for unsecure sites; transferring play from overplayed sites to alternative sites with spare capacity; and gaining access to sites not currently available for community use.
- Third Generation Turf (3G) pitches
 - Priority should be placed on the creation of new 3G pitches to meet the identified shortfalls for football training demand.
 - Meeting the 3G pitch shortfall for training will also help alleviate grass pitch shortfalls and quality issues, providing that the transfer of play is pursued as and when more pitches are established.
 - In addition, it is important to sustain the current pitch stock to ensure that the existing shortfalls are not exacerbated.
- Cricket pitches
 - The audit of community available grass wicket cricket squares identifies five as good quality, seven as standard quality and one as poor quality (at Claregate Park).
 - Protect provision. Improve changing facilities where required.

- Rugby union – grass pitches
 - Protect the pitches at Wolverhampton Rugby Club (WRC). Continue to develop strong relationships between WRC and local schools.
 - Improve pitch quality to reduce overplay, foremostly through improved maintenance and drainage at WRC.
- Tennis courts
 - Current demand is being met and future demand can be met at club sites. Protect existing quantity of courts.
 - Improve park courts as a priority to create a year round recreational tennis option to meet local demand (e.g. East Park, Claregate Park). Explore options to further improve the recreational tennis offer via utilisation of technology provided by the LTA (e.g. Clubspark).
- Netball
 - Protect quantity of courts.
 - Seek to improve poor quality courts across Wolverhampton.
- Bowls
 - Three sites are operating above the recommended capacity threshold.
 - Retain existing quantity of in use greens and, as a minimum, sustain quality.
 - Support clubs with plans to increase membership so that growth can be maximised.
- Athletics
 - Provision for athletics remains sufficient on the basis that quality improvements are undertaken when needed in the future.
 - Continue to increase participation both within affiliated clubs and the wider running market, signposting potential club members from the likes of Parkrun events and other health initiatives.

■ Cycling

- Focus is needed on ensuring that the general infrastructure in the authority remains sufficient to accommodate requirements.

2.45 Other sports that are considered in the strategy include water sports, golf, rugby league and hockey, all with no notable issues identified with regard to supply.

Population and demographics

2.46 Wolverhampton has a population of 263,700 according to the 2021 Census, ranking 64th out of 309 English local authority areas [See reference 20]. This represents a population increase of 5.7% between 2011 and 2021, lower than the national average for England (6.6%) and the average for the West Midlands (6.2%). This increase is also lower than population increases shown for nearby areas such as Sandwell (11%), but a greater increase compared to Walsall (5.5%), Dudley (3.4%) and South Staffordshire (2.2%) [See reference 21].

2.47 Wolverhampton is a predominantly urban area, with a population density of 3,798 residents per km². Population density is highest north-west of the city centre around Waterloo Road (the northern section of the Central and South Analysis Area) at over 9000 residents per km². Population density is lowest in the northwest of Tettenhall analysis area at just under 2500 residents per km² [See reference 22]. This compares to an average of 434 residents per km² across England as a whole. Wolverhampton has the third highest population density of the 30 local authority areas in the West Midlands, after Birmingham and Sandwell [See reference 23]. Population density is shown in **Figure 2.1**.

2.48 The average median age in Wolverhampton is 38 years, which is lower than the average for the West Midlands and England (both 40 years) [See reference 24]. Additionally, 21% of the population are under 16, compared to 16.5% over 65 [See reference 25]. Between 2021, Wolverhampton saw an

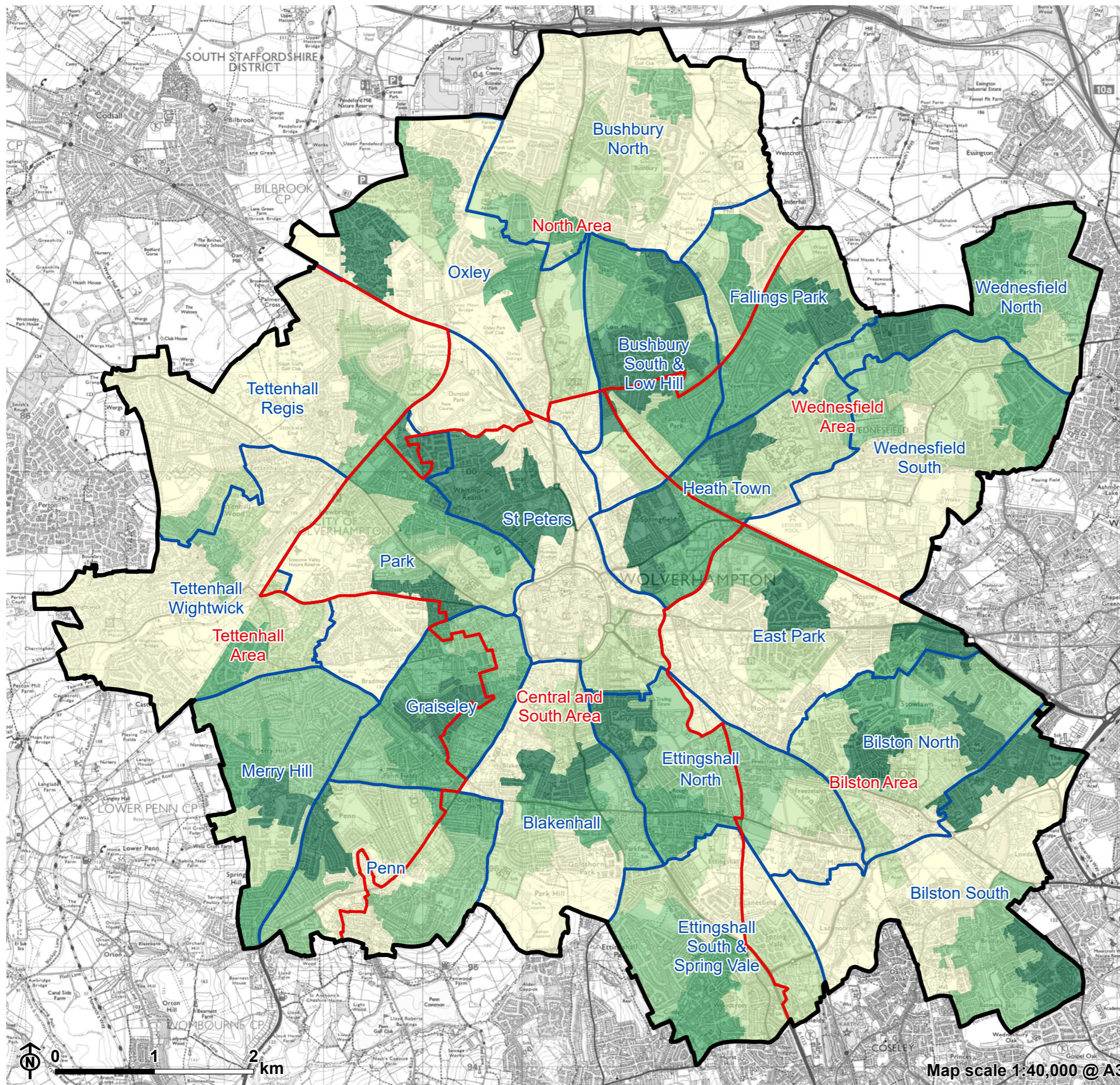
increase in 12.5% for the population under 15, which was the largest population increase across the age brackets (There was a 3.7% increase in 15-64 years olds and a 6.6% increase in people aged 65 and over). The increase in under 15s was more than double than the national average of just 5% [\[See reference 26\]](#).

2.49 However, despite the younger than average population, Wolverhampton has also shown an increase of 6.6% of people who are aged 65 and over, lower than the national average of a 20.1% increase in this age group. [\[See reference 27\]](#).

2.50 61% of people in Wolverhampton identify as 'white', compared to 68% in 2011. This was followed by 21% identifying as 'Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh', 9% as 'Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African', and 5% of people identifying their ethnicity as 'Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups' [\[See reference 28\]](#). Wolverhampton has a diverse population when compared to surrounding boroughs, such as Dudley (90% white), and Walsall (78.9% white), and when compared to England as a whole (81.7% white) [\[See reference 29\]](#).

2.51 The majority of residents identified as one of the UK identities (56% British only, followed by 16% English only were the most common). 14% of residents identified only as a non-UK identify and 1.6% had identified as a non-UK identity and a UK identity. [\[See reference 30\]](#).

Figure 2.1: Population density



- Wolverhampton boundary
 - Analysis Area
 - Ward boundary (As of May 2023)
- Population density (Quantile categories)**
- 0 - 2953 people per ha
 - 2953 - 4179 people per ha
 - 4179 - 4840 people per ha
 - 4840 - 5824 people per ha
 - 5824 - 12348 people per ha

Environmental context

Geography and geology

2.52 Wolverhampton lies upon the Midlands Plateau, 163m or 535 ft above sea level, and is predominantly based upon a slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils [See reference 31]. It is one of the four boroughs comprising the Black Country part of the West Midlands conurbation lying to the west of Birmingham. To the north and west of Wolverhampton lies the Staffordshire and Shropshire countryside. The Black Country's complex geology is dominated by the South Staffordshire Coalfield which, along with reserves of iron, limestone, clay and other minerals, led to it being at the forefront of the industrial revolution [See reference 32].

Blue network

2.53 The main watercourses within the city include Waterhead Brook (a tributary to the River Penk) in the north of the city, and Smestow Brook (a tributary to the River Stour) in the southwest. In addition, there are a number of canals, including the Birmingham Canal, aligned northwest to southeast through the city, Wyrley and Essington Canal in the east, and Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal, in the west [See reference 33]. See **Figure 2.2**.

Biodiversity

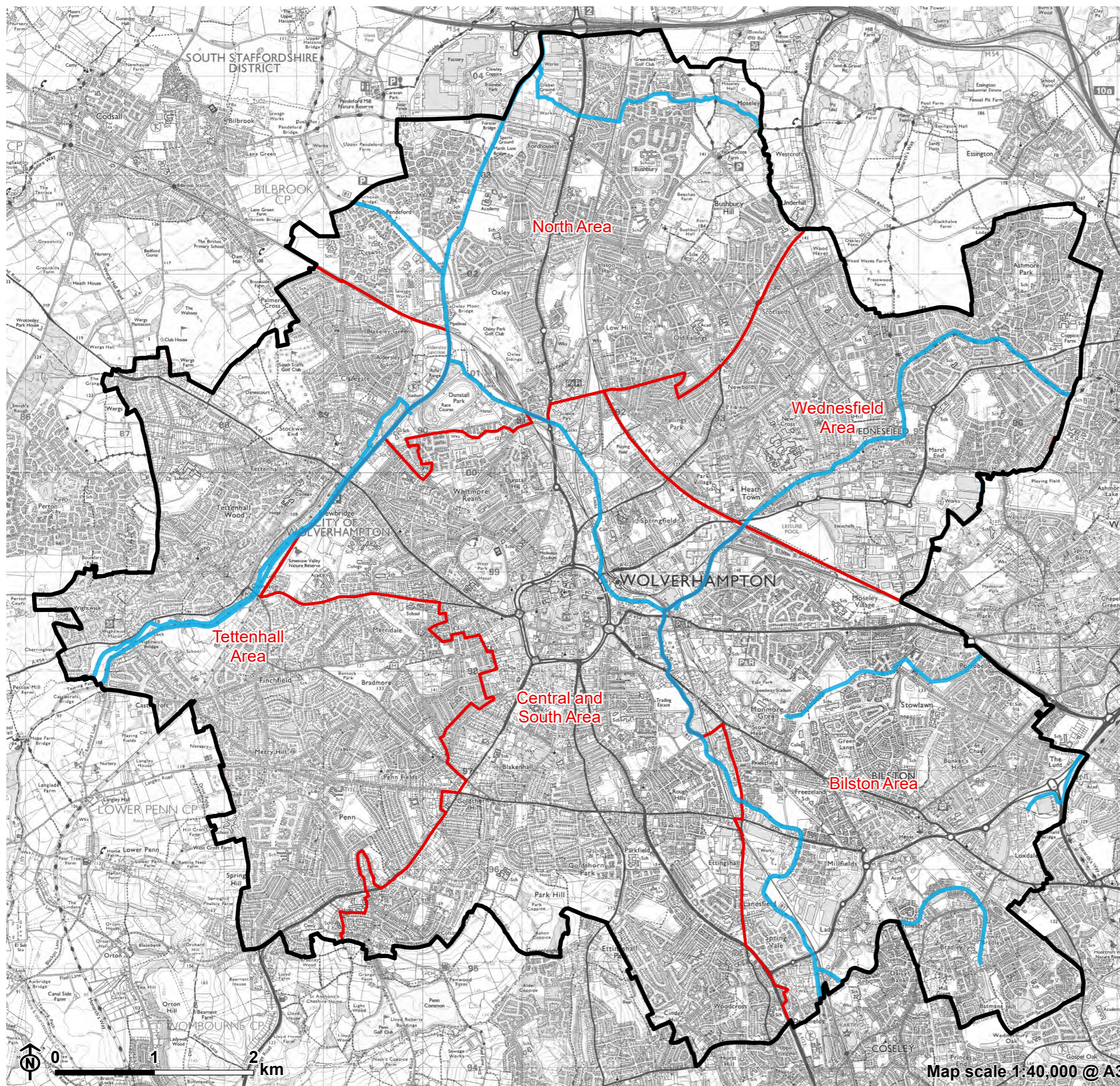
2.54 Despite the dominance of built form and urban development across Wolverhampton, there are a number of locally designated ecological sites, many of which occur within publicly accessible open spaces.

2.55 These sites include Sites of Importance to Nature Conservation (SINC) and Sites of Local Importance to Nature Conservation (SLINC). They incorporate a variety of habitats including woodland, various grassland habitats and water bodies. SINC sites are found along the canals and at a number of open spaces, including:

- Northcote Farm Country Park;
- Bushbury Hill;
- Peascroft Wood;
- Ladymoor Pool;
- Beacon Hill Cemetery;
- The Gorge Nature Reserve;
- Coppice Road Wood; and
- Smestow Valley Park.





2.56 Smestow Valley Local Nature Reserve (LNR), a key site in the city covering over 50 hectares, is designated due to its mosaic of habitats and variety of bird species, including buzzard, snipe, reed bunting and lesser spotted woodpecker. Other notable species such as the great crested newt, Daubenton's bats, otters, and badgers have also been found in and around the LNR. Wolverhampton's second LNR is the Wyrley and Essington Canal, with the LNR designation running across the boundary into the Walsall Council area, along with the canal. See **Figure 2.3**.

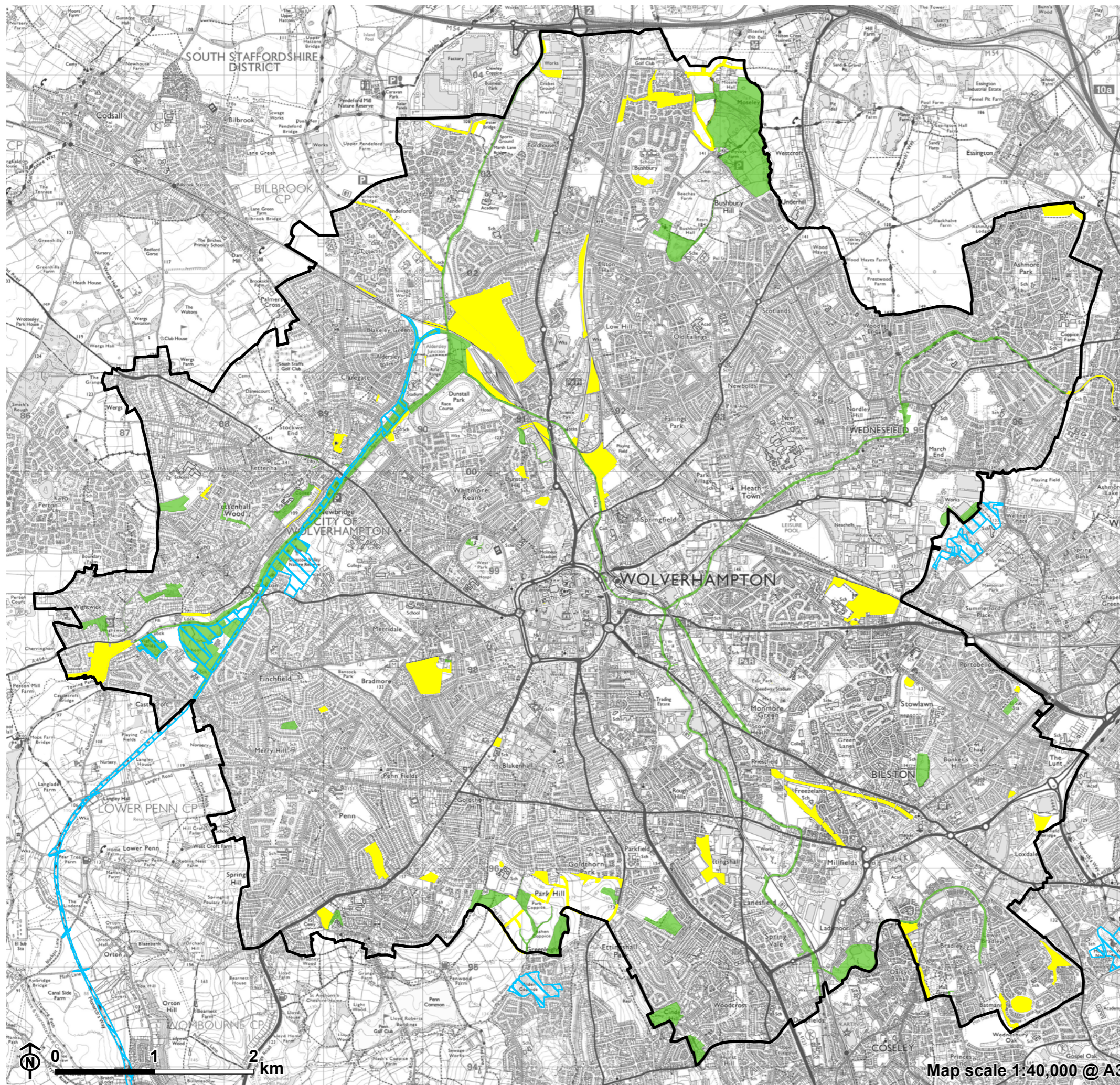
Figure 2.2: Environmental context: Blue network



- Wolverhampton boundary
- Analysis Area
- River or canal

**Figure 2.3: Environmental context:
Biodiversity (designated sites)**

-  Wolverhampton boundary
-  Local Nature Reserve
-  Site of Local Importance to Nature Conservation (SLINC)
-  Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC)



Heritage and landscape

2.57 In 2020, the Black Country was designated as a UNESCO Global Geopark in recognition of the international importance of its natural and cultural heritage. Forming part of the Geopark, Wolverhampton is home to several Geo-sites which are recognised for their special natural and historic features. Geo-sites within Wolverhampton that are also identified as open spaces include:

- Northcote Farm
- West Park
- Bantock Park
- Smestow Valley
- The Gorge

2.58 Heritage designations identified within Wolverhampton include almost 400 listed buildings and a number of locally listed buildings. There are two listed Parks and Gardens, including West Park (Grade II* listed) (publicly accessibly) and Wightwick Manor (Grade II) (owned by the National Trust, entry fee applicable). There are also two scheduled monuments in Wolverhampton which include a Saxon cross shaft in St Peter's Churchyard.

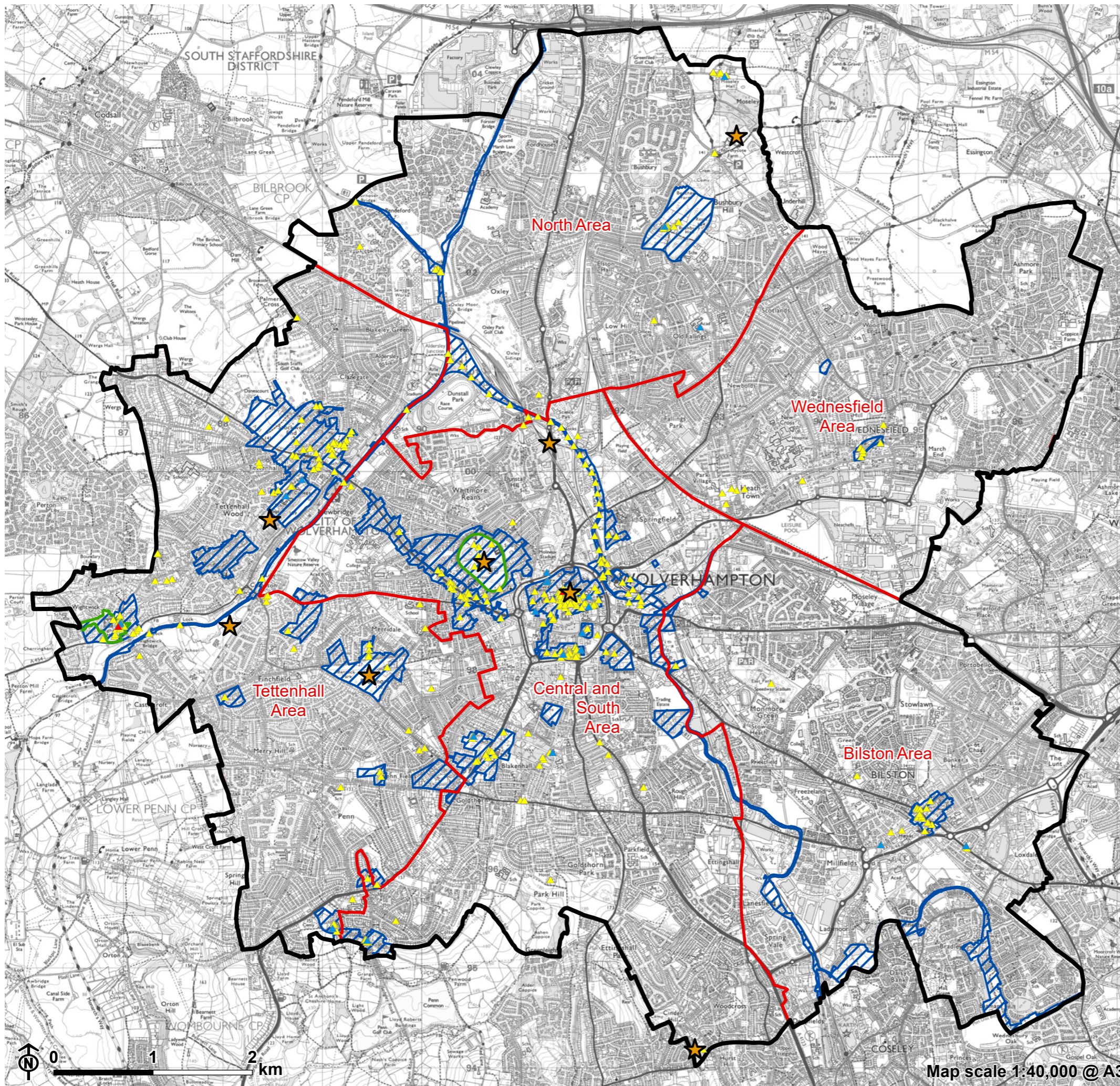
2.59 City of Wolverhampton Council has also identified 31 Conservation Areas within their boundary. Several of these are focussed around parks and natural features, including:

- Park Conservation Area, incorporating West Park and the Victorian villa suburbs surrounding;
- Tettenhall Greens Conservation Area, with roots as a Saxon settlement centred around two village greens;
- Bushbury Hill Conservation Area, including the 16th century village centre of Bushbury, Northcote Farm, and the open space between;

- Bantock House Conservation Area and Wightwick Bank Conservation Area, which both include old houses and their grounds; and
- Wolverhampton Locks Conservation Area, Staffs/Worcs & Shropshire Union Canal Conservation Area and Bilston Canal Corridor Conservation Area, which follow the linear routes of the canals **[See reference 34]**.

2.60 See **Figure 2.4** which provides an overview of heritage designations in Wolverhampton.

Figure 2.4: Environmental context: Heritage designations



- Wolverhampton boundary
- Analysis Area
- Listed Building (by grade)
 - I
 - II*
 - II
- Registered Parks and Gardens
- Conservation Area
- Geopark site

Key considerations: Strategic context

- A range of national and local policy and guidance provides a rationale for the preparation of the Strategy and Action Plan, in particular to ensure the protection, enhancement and provision of open space is accounted for within the emerging Wolverhampton Local Plan.
- The existing standards for quantity of open space are based on data which is now out of date. All standards (quantity, quality, accessibility) will need to be reviewed, considering changes to the quantity of open space, any identified needs and new national guidance.
- Wolverhampton has a relatively young population compared to the national average, whilst also experiencing a recent increase in the number of over 65s. Open spaces across Wolverhampton will need to accommodate the needs of younger and older users across the city.
- Wolverhampton has an ethnically diverse population when compared to surrounding boroughs and England as a whole.
- Open space has an important heritage value within Wolverhampton, contributing to the setting of several conservation areas. A number of open spaces are integral to the Geopark network. The industrial heritage of the region is particularly prominent in the form of the canal network, which forms the basis of green and blue spines throughout the region.
- Open space in Wolverhampton plays an important role in supporting a range of environmental functions and many public open spaces and the canal network are subject to ecological designations due to their biodiversity value.

Chapter 3

Quantity assessment

3.1 The following section sets out:

- The processes that have been undertaken to update the open space data covering the study area.
- The categorisation of open spaces by typology.
- The development and application of an open space hierarchy.
- The current provision of open space and play space within the study area. This includes the quantity of open space by typology, size and access category; across the study area as a whole and within each analysis area.
- Current and future provision of open space and play space per 1,000 residents.
- The quantity standards that have been set.

Reviewing and updating baseline data

3.2 In order for an assessment of open space provision to be robust, it is essential that analysis is underpinned by accurate spatial data. Some areas within the study area have been subject to change and development since the existing open space data set was compiled. The existing data has been verified and updated to reflect current open space provision as accurately as possible.

3.3 Open spaces that are known to have been lost or modified through infrastructure works or other development were adjusted as required. Local data was scrutinised to ensure that open space with restricted access (e.g. open space within school sites) was only indicated for reference and not included in any analysis of freely accessible public open space. Other open access data was also referred to (such as Ordnance Survey Public Greenspace) to ensure

all relevant sites were considered for inclusion. Draft and final versions of the open space data set were reviewed with City of Wolverhampton Council officers utilising local knowledge of the sites.

Verifying and updating site boundaries

3.4 Each site was reviewed for boundary accuracy and checked against Ordnance Survey mapping and aerial imagery where appropriate. Boundary data for sites that were included in the onsite audit was sense checked on the ground.

Developing a site database

3.5 The following information has been collected for each site included in the open space data set:

- Site name
- Unique ID number
- Access information (sites have been included in one of the following categories):
 - Freely publicly accessible
 - Freely publicly accessible: opening hours
 - Restricted access: members / tenants only (e.g. allotments)
- Typology (more information provided below)
- Secondary typology (more information provided below)

Categorisation of sites by typology

3.6 Each site has been assigned a primary typology based on key characteristics and functionality. The types of open space identified in Wolverhampton are set out and described below.

- **Parks:** Fully accessible opportunities for informal recreation and play, organised sports and other activities. More multi-functional than other open space with a range of habitats and facilities for visitors, offering space for quiet relaxation and a range of amenities. Parks may also contain equipped children's play, teenage facilities and/or outdoor sports facilities.
- **Natural green space:** A primary function of providing access to nature, wildlife conservation, management for biodiversity and environmental education.
- **Amenity green space:** Opportunities for informal activities close to where people live or work. Amenity green space provides a less formal green space experience than park sites, generally with fewer amenities and facilities, and lower biodiversity value than parks or natural green space.
- **Provision for children:** Equipped facilities providing varied opportunities for play, sport and recreation for children of different ages.
- **Provision for young people and other recreation:** Equipped facilities providing varied opportunities for play, sport and recreation for teenagers and young adults. This may comprise facilities such as Multi-Use Games Areas, wheels parks, BMX tracks and basketball areas.
- **Civic spaces:** Areas of open space, generally more closely integrated into to the built environment than other typologies. Civic spaces are generally located around key community hubs and areas of activity, providing landscaped areas to meet, sit, benefit from shade and experience areas of quiet within the built environment. These spaces generally have less extensive areas of vegetation, such as areas of grass, and focus more on hard landscaping with trees and other planting incorporated within it.
- **Cemeteries:** Burial space and areas for quiet contemplation and reflection. Cemeteries may also include a range of habitats and offer

similar opportunities for access to nature and sitting and relaxing as other types of open space.

- **Outdoor sport facilities and recreation grounds:** Outdoor grass, artificial pitches and areas for outdoor organised sport. Publicly accessible sites may also include areas for informal recreation including sports, walking and dog walking.
- **Allotments:** Opportunities for the community to grow their own produce.
- **Greenways:** Greenways are multi-functional corridors which provide: traffic-free routes for active travel; wildlife habitat and corridors; recreational routes; and climate change adaption through urban cooling. They include the city's canal and redundant rail corridors. Many are relatively short but others are, by their nature, longer distance. A schedule of Greenways within Wolverhampton is included in **Appendix F**.

Approach to mapping multifunctional sites

3.7 As set out above, for the purposes of this study all contiguous, individual open spaces have been assigned a 'primary typology'. However, open space can perform a range of functions and it is important that this is reflected in the analysis. 'Secondary typologies' that occur within wider sites have been identified and captured through mapping the boundary of these areas within the data set. Secondary typologies generally comprise provision for children (equipped play areas) and provision for young people and other recreation (e.g. Multi Use Games Areas and wheels parks). These areas are mainly identified and defined by a boundary fence or an appropriate area that delineates the extent of a play space / feature. Greenways are a strategic designation which sits above the primary and secondary typologies.

3.8 When calculating total quantities of provision for children and young people, this will include both 'standalone' equipped play facilities, as well as those occurring within a wider site.

3.9 When categorising sites within an appropriate size hierarchy and applying accessibility catchments, the total site area (including any secondary typology areas) is used.

3.10 The open space data therefore comprises two key 'layers':

- Primary typology layer, which will encompass once parcel of land (polygon) that will cover the full area of the site up to the site boundary.
- Secondary typology layer. Where applicable this will comprise individual parcels of land (multiple polygons) that in combination will match the total area of the corresponding primary typology layer but will detail the component parts by typology.

Developing a hierarchy

3.11 In order to provide opportunities for more detailed analysis of the open space data with regard to quality, value and accessibility, a detailed site hierarchy has been applied to the sites.

3.12 The 2018 Open Space Audit and Needs Assessment (OSANA) data set includes a form of site hierarchy for parks. This hierarchy, comprising town and district parks, neighbourhood parks and pocket parks, is understood to have been informed by the management approach for parks within Wolverhampton at the time of the study.

3.13 An adjusted and updated open space hierarchy has been adopted for the purposes of the updated strategy. This draws on the recently published Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework. This approach recognises that open spaces of different sizes would be expected to provide a different 'offer' for users and likely accommodate a varying level and range of facilities. For instance, site users will be more likely to travel further to reach a larger site that has the capacity to provide a more significant and varied 'offer' (i.e. more features and facilities), than a small area of open space with few or no facilities.

3.14 The adopted hierarchy has been applied to the typologies listed below:

- Parks
- Natural green space
- Amenity green space
- Civic spaces
- Outdoor sport facilities

3.15 Allotments and cemeteries are not included within the site hierarchy. A site hierarchy is not deemed appropriate for these typologies as they are considered to provide the same offer and draw regardless of size and is not appropriate for the primary purpose of management.

3.16 Sites to be included within a site hierarchy will be grouped as follows according to their size, see **Table 3.1**.

Table 3.1: Wolverhampton site hierarchy

Site hierarchy	Guideline size bands
District (city-wide) open space	20 hectares (ha) -100ha
Town open space	10ha - 20ha
Neighbourhood open space	2ha – 10ha
Doorstep open space	0.5ha – 2ha

3.17 It should be noted that within Wolverhampton the size bands are considered as guidelines. Several sites have been categorised within the hierarchy based on an understanding of how the sites function and their draw from a wider area and not primarily from site size.

3.18 It is recognised that within more densely developed parts of Wolverhampton there may be limited opportunities to provide new open space,

including new open space which may fall within the doorstep category. A pocket park category will also be adopted in Wolverhampton, as a subset of doorstep open space, which will have a target size of 0.25ha to 0.5ha. Pocket parks may provide a suitable alternative where larger open spaces cannot be provided, such as in the city centre and Canalside Quarter. In such locations pocket parks are intended to serve residents of new high density housing and visitors as well as help to support city centre biodiversity and climate adaptation.

Current open space provision

3.19 Following the assignment of primary typology and hierarchy, an assessment can be made of the current quantity of open space and play space within the study area. To better understand the relative provision of open space across Wolverhampton, analysis of public open space per 1,000 residents is also undertaken later in the chapter.

3.20 A few open spaces that are managed by City of Wolverhampton Council are outside (or partially outside) of the city boundary. The following tables only include the quantity (area) of sites that are within the Wolverhampton boundary. Sites outside of the city boundary, but managed by City of Wolverhampton Council, are included in the accessibility analysis and quality and value analysis.

3.21 For the purposes of comparing variation in open space provision across the study area, open space provision is also set out per analysis area (See **Figure 1.2** showing analysis areas).

3.22 **Table 3.2** shows the quantity (area in hectares (ha)) and count (number of individual sites) identified as part of the study. The table below includes all open space regardless of the level of public access.

3.23 The table below shows provision for children and provision for young people and other recreation where they occur as a primary typology (a standalone site). Where these typologies occur as a secondary typology, they

are included within the area calculation of the wider site. Separate analysis of the quantity of secondary and primary typologies of these two categories is considered later in the chapter.

3.24 It should be noted that totals shown in tables in this chapter are not always exact to one decimal place. This is due to rounding.

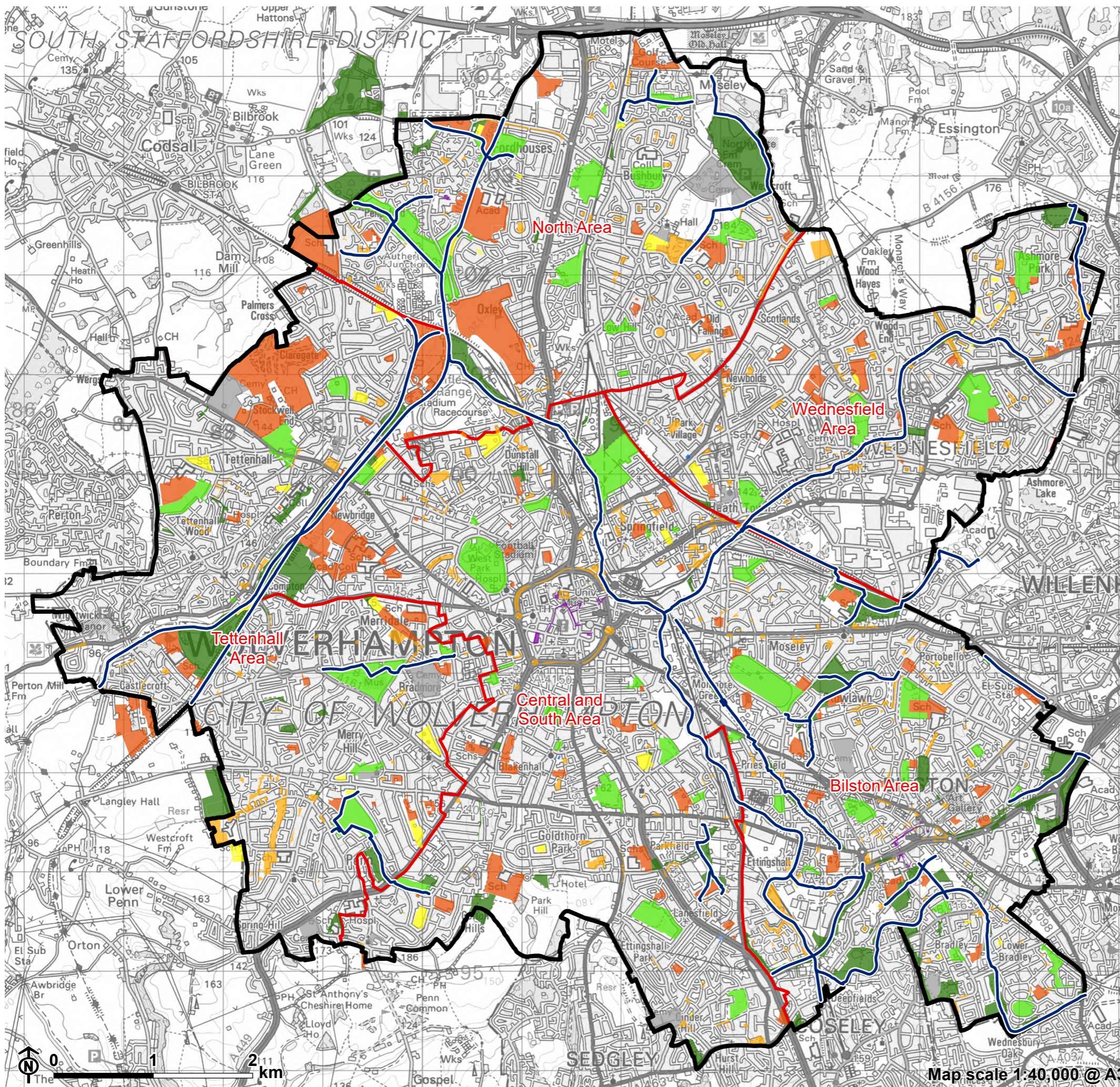
Table 3.2: Quantity of all open space by primary typology and hierarchy (all access categories including sites with restricted access)

Primary typology and hierarchy	Area (ha)	Count (no of sites)
District parks	56.0	3
Town parks	90.6	8
Neighbourhood parks	130.7	28
Doorstep parks	15.9	19
Parks (total)	293.2	58
District natural green space	91.7	2
Town natural green space	38.1	3
Neighbourhood natural green space	88.0	22
Doorstep natural green space	37.3	55
Natural green space (total)	255.1	82
Amenity green space (total)	133.2	359
Provision for children (as a primary typology) (total)	0.3	4

Primary typology and hierarchy	Area (ha)	Count (no of sites)
Provision for young people and other recreation (as a primary typology) (total)	0.2	2
Civic spaces (total)	3.8	14
Cemeteries (total)	65.7	19
Outdoor sports facilities and recreation grounds (total)	342.6	133
Allotments (total)	35.4	38
Total (including sites with restricted access)	1,129.6	709

3.25 Open spaces identified as part of the study and their primary typology are shown on **Figure 3.1**.

Figure 3.1: All open space by primary typology



- Wolverhampton boundary
- Analysis Area
- Open space**
- Allotments
- Amenity green space
- Civic space
- Natural green space
- Outdoor sports facilities and recreation grounds
- Parks
- Provision for children
- Provision for young people and other recreation
- Cemeteries
- Existing and proposed greenways



Map scale 1:40,000 @ A3

Quantity of open space by access category

3.26 Sites have also been grouped into several access categories:

- Freely publicly accessible
- Freely publicly accessible: opening hours
- Restricted access: members / tenants only (e.g. allotments).

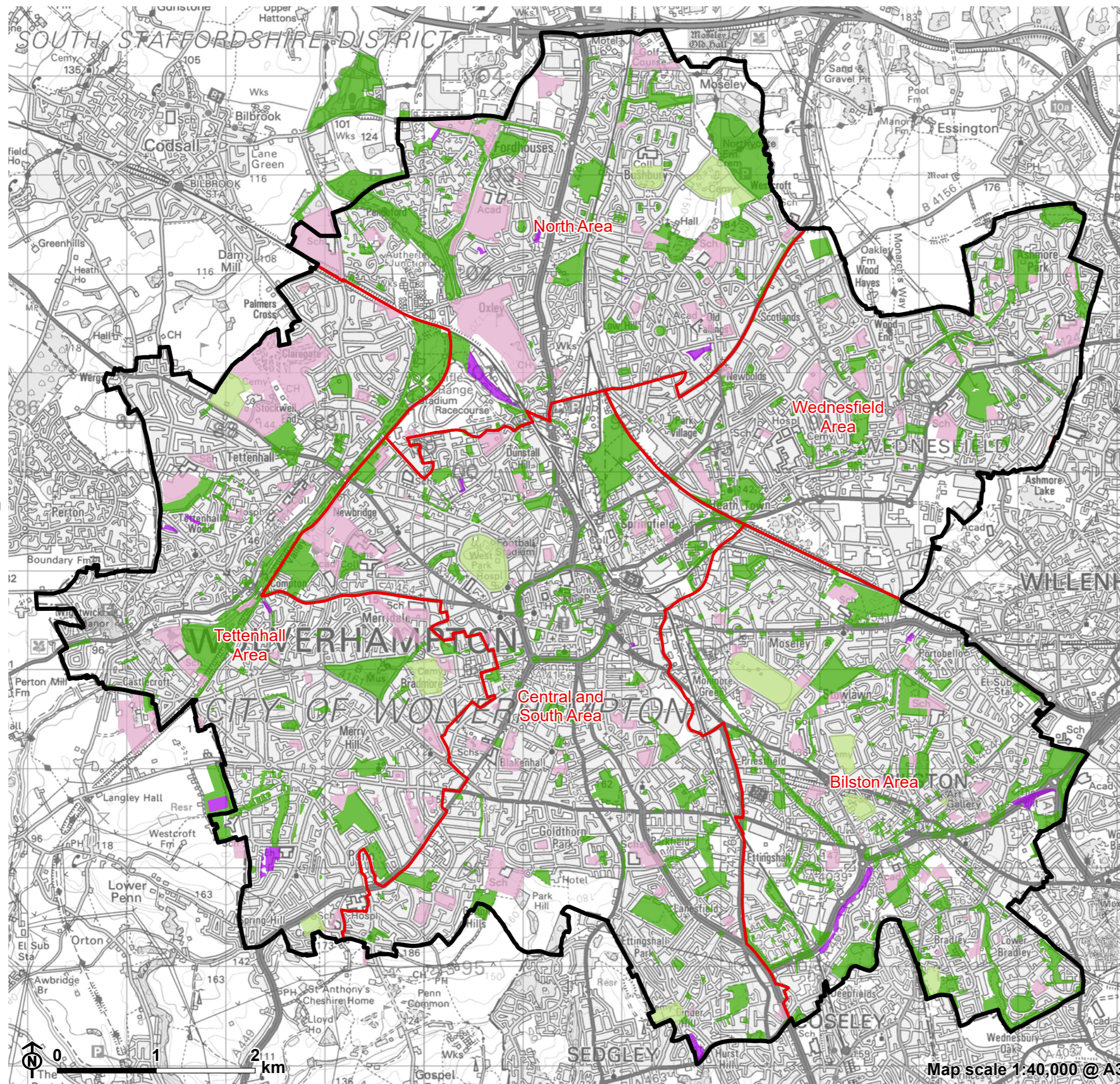
3.27 Table 3.3 sets out the quantity of open space based on the level of public access. The table below shows the majority of open space is either 'freely publicly accessible' or 'freely publicly accessible: opening hours' (773 ha). 356.6 ha is categorised as 'restricted access'. The majority of open space categorised as 'restricted access: members / tenants only' falls within outdoor sports facilities and recreation grounds. **Figure 3.2** shows open spaces identified as part of the study and their access category.

Table 3.3: Quantity of open space (primary typology) categorised by the level of public access

Primary typology	Freely publicly accessible (ha)	Freely publicly accessible: opening hours (ha)	Restricted access: members / tenants only (e.g. allotments / tenant only areas) (ha)	Total (ha)
Parks (total)	242.8	50.3	0.0	293.2
Natural green space (total)	246.6	0.0	8.5	255.1
Amenity green space (total)	129.8	0.3	3.1	129.8
Provision for children (total)	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.3
Provision for young people and other recreation (total)	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.2
Civic spaces (total)	3.8	0.0	0.0	3.8
Cemeteries (total)	11.8	53.9	0.0	65.7
Outdoor sports facilities and recreation grounds (total)	33.3	0.0	309.4	342.6
Allotments (total)	0.0	0.0	35.4	35.4

Primary typology	Freely publicly accessible (ha)	Freely publicly accessible: opening hours (ha)	Restricted access: members / tenants only (e.g. allotments / tenant only areas) (ha)	Total (ha)
Total (ha)	668.5	104.5	356.6	1,129.6

Figure 3.2: All open space by access category



- Wolverhampton boundary
- Analysis Area
- Open space**
 - Freely accessible to public
 - Freely accessible to public (closed at night)
 - Restricted access: members/tenants/students only
 - No public access

Open space by analysis area

3.28 Table 3.4 below sets out the quantity (ha) of each typology by analysis area, focussing on publicly accessible open space. The total quantity of open space (including restricted access open space) is shown for comparison.

3.29 Comparison by analysis area indicates that Tettenhall Analysis Area has the largest amount of open space overall (including sites with restricted access), at 279.7 ha. However, a notable amount of this is restricted access open space and when this area is removed the total area of freely publicly accessible open space in Tettenhall Analysis Area is 172 ha.

3.30 Bilston Analysis Area has the largest quantity of publicly accessible open space (201.9 ha) when compared to other analysis areas. Wednesfield Analysis Area has the smallest quantity of publicly accessible open space (78.2 ha) and also the smallest quantity overall when restricted access sites are included (112.6 ha).

3.31 For comparison, **Table 3.4** shows the quantity of open space identified as part of the 2018 Wolverhampton Open Space Strategy and Action Plan Update. Some variation can be seen between the 2018 figures and the current study. The 2018 strategy does not provide detail on restricted access sites; however, it can be assumed that the 2018 figures are an assessment of all open space regardless of the level of public access.

3.32 Differences in the total areas (per typology and analysis areas) between the current study and 2018 data can be attributed to:

- Differences in the open space typologies used (e.g. some sites categorised as 'Green Corridors' in the 2018 Strategy have been incorporated into other typologies – largely natural green space).
- Slight changes to the boundaries of the analysis areas being incorporated into the current study.

- Sites being subject to a change in typology, as a result of changes in management practices or design.
- The removal of some smaller sites from the data set that were identified as not providing a recognisable recreational or open space offer (e.g. some small roadside verges).
- The addition of some additional types of open space to the data set (e.g. additional civic spaces that have been created as part of regeneration schemes).
- The loss or addition of some open spaces as a result of development.
- The removal of several areas of open space from the data set that were found to have no public access.

3.33 It should be noted that the figures in **Table 3.4** do not include any Wolverhampton owned and managed sites that are outside the city boundary (e.g. Pendeford Mill Nature Reserve).

Table 3.4: Publicly accessible open space by typology and analysis area (ha)

Primary typology	Bilston	Central and South	North	Tettenhall	Wednesfield	Wolverhampton (publicly accessible)	Wolverhampton (including sites with restricted access)	Wolverhampton Total in 2018 Open space Strategy Update
Parks (total)	54.1	80.1	74.8	50.5	33.7	293.2	293.2	254.1
Natural green space (total)	105.3	35.0	40.6	53.9	11.8	246.6	255.1	319.6
Amenity green space (total)	28.5	30.7	21.5	22.8	26.6	130.1	133.2	129.5
Provision for children (total)	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.3	0.3	4.5*
Provision for young people and other recreation (total)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	4.4*
Civic spaces (total)	1.1	2.4	0.2	0.0	0.0	3.8	3.8	1.2
Cemeteries (total)	10.3	7.1	18.1	26.0	4.3	65.7	65.7	62.8
Outdoor sports facilities and recreation grounds (total)	2.5	10.2	0.0	18.7	1.8	33.3	342.6	303.3**
Total publicly accessible	201.9	165.7	155.2	172.0	78.2	773	-	-
Allotments (total)	0.8	11.3	5.1	14.4	3.9	0	35.4	35.4
Total (including sites with restricted access)	235.8	240.9	260.6	279.7	112.6	-	1,129.6	1,119.9***

Primary typology	Bilston	Central and South	North	Tettenhall	Wednesfield	Wolverhampton (publicly accessible)	Wolverhampton (including sites with restricted access)	Wolverhampton Total in 2018 Open space Strategy Update
Total in 2018 Open Space Strategy	243.6	246.0	232.7	233.9	163.8	-	-	1,119.9***

*Play considered in detail below – 2018 figure provided for comparison. In this study the majority of provision for children and young people is included as a secondary typology within other areas.

**Noted in 2018 report as ‘without golf courses’; golf courses are included here.

***Total figure for 2018 Open Space Strategy also includes 5.1 ha of green corridors which have been re-categorised in the current study (largely as natural green space).

Play quantity analysis

3.34 Table 3.5 below provides a breakdown of provision for children and provision for young people and other recreation where they occur either as a primary or secondary typology.

3.35 Just under 7 hectares (ha) of provision for children and provision for young people has been recorded across the study area. 3.7 ha of provision for children has been recorded over 64 sites, and 3.3 ha of provision for young people and other recreation has been recorded over 76 sites.

Table 3.5: Quantity of each play type

Play type	Area (ha)	Count (no. of sites)
Provision for children	3.7	64
Provision for young people & other recreation	3.3	76
Grand Total	6.9	140

3.36 Table 3.6 below shows the number of different types of provision for young people and other recreation across the study area. The most common types are Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs), followed by outdoor gyms. Overall, six different types of features were recorded as falling within this category.

Table 3.6: Type and count of provision for young people and other recreation

Type of provision for young people and other recreation	Count
MUGA (Multi Use Games Area)	30
Outdoor gym	26
Wheels park / skate park	6
BMX track	2
Basketball hoop / court	10
Teen shelter	2
Total	76

Quantity of play by analysis area

3.37 Table 3.7 provides an overview of the quantity of provision for children and provision for young people and other recreation by analysis area. There is notable variation in the quantity (area) of this type of provision across the study area. This ranges from 2.7 ha in the Central and South Analysis Area to 0.7 ha in Tettenhall Analysis Area. Further detail on the relative provision of open space and play between analysis areas is provided through analysis of ha per 1,000 residents, set out below.

Table 3.7: Quantity of play type by analysis area

Play type	Bilston	Central and South	North	Tettenhall	Wednesfield	Total
Provision for children (ha)	0.7	1.5	0.4	0.5	0.6	3.7
Provision for young people and other recreation (ha)	0.6	1.2	0.5	0.2	0.8	3.3
Grand Total (ha)	1.3	2.7	0.9	0.7	1.4	6.9

Developing quantity standards

3.38 In order to provide an understanding of relative open space provision across the study area and to set an appropriate open space standard, quantity provision per 1,000 residents has been assessed. Information from this process can be used to compare quantity provision per resident between analysis areas and to compare provision in Wolverhampton to recognised national standards. Available population projections can be used to assess the amount of additional open space which may need to be provided in the future to maintain existing provision or meet quantity standards.

Population data

3.39 Table 3.8 below shows the current population per analysis area. Current population figures are derived from Office for National Statistics (ONS) 2021 Census data. As analysis areas do not directly align with population areas (Output Areas), an estimate has been derived from the percentage of analysis area that intersects with the population Output Area.

3.40 Future population is derived from ONS (Mid-2018) projections up to 2042. (2021 Census derived population projections were not available at the time of writing). These projections indicate that there will be a 12% increase in population across the city over the Wolverhampton Local Plan period, which is likely to result in an increased pressure on existing open space and facilities. Estimated future projected population up to 2042 per analysis area is shown for information. This has been derived from application of the 2021 population proportions per analysis area to the 2042 projected population for the whole of Wolverhampton.

Table 3.8: Summary of population data (number of residents)

Analysis area	2021 population	Future projected population (2042)
Bilston	49,008	54,779
Central and South	75,152	84,025
North	43,620	48,764
Tettenhall	53,378	59,673
Wednesfield	42,372	47,379
Wolverhampton	263,729	294,826

3.41 The following tables use the 2021 population data shown in **Table 3.8** for current (2023) open space quantity analysis and the Wolverhampton 2042 projected population data for estimated future open space quantity analysis.

Quantity of open space per 1,000 residents

3.42 Table 3.9 below shows the quantity of open space (ha) per 1,000 residents by analysis area for 2023 and up to 2042. This analysis only includes sites that are categorised as:

- Freely publicly accessible
- Freely publicly accessible with opening hours

3.43 Whilst a quantity standard for cemeteries will not be proposed, it is worth noting the potential for such sites to offer space for quiet contemplation, relaxation, walking and similar functions to other types of open space (for instance where there is limited easy access to parks). Therefore, there is value in understanding the overall contribution of this type of open space in Wolverhampton. Quantity requirements for cemeteries should be determined through other specific assessments of need, not covered within this Strategy.

3.44 It should also be noted that publicly accessible outdoor sports facilities and recreation grounds have been included in the following analysis to reflect the fact that many publicly accessible sites within this category provide informal opportunities for recreation. Provision of, and need for, playing pitches and sports facilities has been assessed as part of Wolverhampton's Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy, following Sport England guidance. The following analysis does not include outdoor sports facilities which are not publicly accessible, of which there are many (i.e. within school grounds).

3.45 Table 3.9 indicates that there is 2.93 ha of publicly accessible open space per 1,000 residents overall in Wolverhampton (2023). Parks, natural green space and amenity green space, in combination, account for most open space provision in all analysis areas. Due to the expected increase in the population, total publicly accessible open space provision is expected to decrease to 2.62 ha per 1,000 by 2042, a reduction of approximately 0.31 ha per 1,000 residents.

3.46 The current quantity of total publicly accessible open space varies significantly between analysis areas, ranging from 4.12 ha per 1,000 in Bilston

Analysis Area to 1.85 ha per 1,000 in Wednesfield Analysis Area. The Central and South Analysis Area also has notably less provision than other analysis areas at 2.2 ha per 1,000.

3.47 Parks account for most open space provision per 1,000 residents when compared to other typologies at 1.11 ha per 1,000 residents (city wide). Wednesfield Analysis Area has significantly less provision of parks than other analysis areas at 0.79 ha per 1,000 residents. The quantity of natural and semi natural greenspace also varies significantly between analysis areas, ranging from 2.15 ha per 1,000 residents in Bilston Analysis Area down to only 0.28 ha per 1,000 in Wednesfield Analysis Area and 0.47 ha per 1,000 in Central and South Analysis Area. The quantity of amenity green space per 1,000 residents is relatively even across the analysis areas.

3.48 Separate quantity analysis has been undertaken for provision for children, and provision for young people and other recreation. Allotment provision per 1,000 population is also considered separately.

Table 3.9: Public open space (ha) per 1,000 residents by analysis area (2023 and 2042)
Change up to 2042 shown in red text

Primary typology	Bilston	Central and South	North	Tettenhall	Wednesfield	Wolverhampton (city wide)
Parks 2023	1.10	1.07	1.71	0.95	0.79	1.11
Parks 2042	0.99 -0.12	0.95 -0.11	1.53 -0.18	0.85 -0.10	0.71 -0.08	0.99 -0.12
Natural green space 2023	2.15	0.47	0.93	1.01	0.28	0.94
Natural green space 2042	1.92 -0.23	0.42 -0.05	0.83 -0.10	0.90 -0.11	0.25 -0.03	0.84 -0.10
Amenity green space 2023	0.58	0.41	0.49	0.43	0.63	0.49
Amenity green space 2042	0.52 -0.06	0.37 -0.04	0.44 -0.05	0.38 -0.05	0.56 -0.07	0.44 -0.05

Primary typology	Bilston	Central and South	North	Tettenhall	Wednesfield	Wolverhampton (city wide)
Civic spaces 2023	0.02	0.03	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.014
Civic spaces 2042	0.02 -0.002	0.03 -0.003	0.005 -0.001	0.00 0.00	0.00 0.00	0.01 -0.002
Cemeteries 2023	0.21	0.09	0.42	0.49	0.10	0.2
Cemeteries 2042	0.19 -0.022	0.08 -0.010	0.37 -0.044	0.44 -0.051	0.09 -0.011	0.22 -0.026
Outdoor sports facilities and recreation grounds 2023	0.05	0.14	0.00	0.35	0.04	0.13
Outdoor sports facilities and recreation grounds 2042	0.05 -0.005	0.12 -0.014	0.00 0.00	0.31 -0.037	0.04 -0.005	0.11 -0.013
Total 2023	4.12	2.20	3.56	3.22	1.85	2.93
Total 2042	3.69 -0.43	1.97 -0.23	3.18 -0.38	2.88 -0.34	1.65 -0.20	2.62 -0.31

Quantity of play space (per 1,000 population)

3.49 Table 3.10 sets out the quantity of provision for children and provision for young people and other recreation per 1,000 residents. Average provision for children is 0.014 ha per 1,000 across Wolverhampton. Provision for young people and other recreation is slightly less at 0.012 per 1,000. Combined provision equates to 0.026 ha per 1,000 residents.

3.50 Total provision per analysis area ranges from 0.012 ha per 1,000 (Tettenhall Analysis Area) up to 0.035 ha per 1,000 (Central and South Analysis Area). It should be noted that whilst the Central and South Analysis Area has the largest total quantity of provision for children and young people (2.7 ha), the significantly higher population and density of development in this analysis area brings the provision per 1,000 residents (at 0.035 ha per 1,000) more in line with Wednesfield Analysis Area, which has a significantly lower quantity overall (1.4 ha total quantity and 0.033 ha per 1,000).

3.51 Overall provision is expected to decrease up to 2042 as a result of population growth. The projected estimates indicate that if no additional provision came forward, overall quantity per 1,000 residents will likely be around 0.024 ha per 1,000 in 2042, a reduction of around 0.003 ha per 1,000.

**Table 3.10: Current quantity (ha) of provision for children and provision for young people and other recreation per 1,000 residents by analysis area (2023 and 2042)
Change up to 2042 shown in red text**

Play type	Bilston	Central and South	North	Tettenhall	Wednesfield	Wolverhampton (city wide)
Provision for children 2023	0.014	0.019	0.010	0.009	0.014	0.014
Provision for children 2042	0.013 -0.002	0.017 -0.002	0.009 -0.001	0.008 -0.001	0.012 -0.001	0.012 -0.001
Provision for young people and other recreation 2023	0.013	0.016	0.011	0.003	0.019	0.012

Play type	Bilston	Central and South	North	Tettenhall	Wednesfield	Wolverhampton (city wide)
Provision for young people and other recreation 2042	0.011 -0.001	0.014 -0.002	0.010 -0.001	0.003 0.000	0.017 -0.002	0.011 -0.001
Total 2023	0.027	0.035	0.021	0.012	0.033	0.026
Total 2042	0.024 -0.003	0.032 -0.004	0.019 -0.002	0.011 -0.001	0.029 -0.003	0.024 -0.003

Allotments

3.52 Table 3.11 shows the current provision of allotments per 1,000 residents as 0.13 ha per 1,000 residents for Wolverhampton as a whole. Provision per 1,000 residents varies significantly between analysis areas; Bilston Analysis Area currently has 0.02 ha per 1,000 residents compared to 0.27 ha per 1,000 for Tettenhall Analysis Area. Allotment provision is expected to decrease as a result of population growth up to 2042 to 0.12 ha per 1,000 residents, a reduction of around 0.014 ha per 1,000 residents.

Table 3.11: Quantity (ha) of allotments per 1,000 residents by analysis area (2023 and 2042)
Change up to 2042 shown in red text

Typology	Bilston	Central and South	North	Tettenhall	Wednesfield	Wolverhampton (city wide)
Allotments 2023	0.02	0.15	0.12	0.27	0.09	0.13
Allotments 2042	0.01 -0.002	0.13 -0.016	0.10 -0.012	0.24 -0.029	0.08 -0.010	0.12 -0.014

Revised quantity standards for Wolverhampton

3.53 Wolverhampton’s existing 2018 Open Space Strategy and Action Plan (OSSAP) sets out quantity standards based on the provision (ha per 1,000) identified across the city at the time. This study has identified the need to consider the level of public access afforded at each site and has amended open space data (based on loss of open space, new open space, typology changes and further detail added on public access). **Table 3.12** below provides a summary of the standards for ha per 1,000 population, as set out in the 2018 Strategy, alongside existing quantities identified as part of the current study. Changes have arisen due to an increase in the population and updates to the open space data (most notably as a result of more detailed public access data).

3.54 It is noticeable that there has been an increase in the provision of parks across Wolverhampton. This is as a result of the creation of new sites and the reclassification of several site typologies as a result of enhancement schemes.

Table 3.12: 2018 quantity standards compared to current public open space provision

Typology	2018 OSSAP quantity standards (ha / 1,000 population)	2023 existing quantity (ha / 1,000 population)
Parks	0.99	1.11
Natural green space	1.25	0.94
Amenity green space	0.51	0.49
Civic spaces	0.005	0.014
Provision for children	0.017	0.014
Provision for young people	0.017	0.012

Typology	2018 OSSAP quantity standards (ha / 1,000 population)	2023 existing quantity (ha / 1,000 population)
Cemeteries	No data	0.25
Outdoor sports facilities & recreation grounds	1.19	0.13*
Allotments	0.14	0.13

*This does not represent a significant loss of outdoor sports facilities but exclusion of sites that are not freely publicly accessible as part of the current study. Wolverhampton’s Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy and Action Plan now provides the key document identifying current and future needs for outdoor sports provision, including playing pitches.

3.55 As set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, policies relating to the provision of open space must be based on robust and up to date assessments which recognise local needs. The development of a new standard also provides the opportunity to consider new national guidance and proposed standards. The Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework (NEGIF) Headline (Accessible Greenspace) Standards sets out guidelines for ‘capacity’ or quantity standards both area wide and for major developments.

3.56 At an area wide scale, the NEGIF proposes local authorities should aim to provide three ha of publicly accessible greenspace per 1,000 population (one of the accessible greenspace standards). The guidance goes on to say that there should be no net loss or reduction per 1,000 population at an area wide scale. Capacity (quantity) targets for new development should be specified by local authorities, informed by a local baseline and take account of needs, opportunities and constraints. The proposed NEGIF standard does not discuss standards for different typologies of open space.

3.57 There also is the opportunity to recognise the NEGIF Nature Recovery Standard which addresses the need to access to nature (*‘for nature conservation and quiet enjoyment’*). This standard proposes one ha of Local

Nature Reserve (LNR) per 1,000 population. Whilst not all natural green spaces within Wolverhampton will be capable of designation as LNRs, this standard provides a useful benchmark for natural green space provision, and a basis for both enhancing the designated site network and providing easy access to nature.

3.58 The current provision of publicly accessible open space in Wolverhampton is 2.96 ha per 1,000 head of population (including play provision and excluding allotments as sites with restricted access). Wolverhampton therefore performs reasonably well against the proposed NEGIF Accessible Greenspace standards. Natural greenspace provided, at 0.94 ha per 1,000 residents, is just under the proposed (NEGIF) nature recovery standard of 1 ha per 1,000 in terms of access to nature conservation sites - recognising that not all natural green spaces are capable of designation as Local Nature Reserves.

Summary of revised quantity standards

3.59 The following quantity standards have been developed for Wolverhampton (**Table 3.13**). The standards are achievable for the Wolverhampton context and will ensure that current levels of freely publicly accessible open space are maintained over time with 'no net loss' of capacity. The revised standards set minimum quantities that should be provided for each typology. The proposed standard for the overall provision of open space is slightly higher than the sum of the individual standards for each typology to bring Wolverhampton's standards in line with the recommendations set out in the Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework.

3.60 The retained standard for natural green space is higher than current publicly accessible natural green space provision in line with new national guidance and the existing (2018) standard for natural green space in Wolverhampton. The quantity standard for allotments is informed by the current provision and will ensure no net loss; it can be applied to identify where there are likely shortfalls. However, the need for additional allotments should be informed by local demand and further ongoing assessment, including waiting list data.

3.61 It is recommended that new development is required to provide 3 ha of public open space per 1,000 residents overall (excluding playing pitches and allotments). Revised standards by typology provides a benchmark for the mix of different types of open space that may need to be provided as part of new development. However, the types of open space required should be determined on a case-by-case basis and be informed by local need, location and design.

3.62 No standard has been set for outdoor sports facilities and recreation grounds as playing pitch needs are identified and set out within Wolverhampton’s Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy. No standard has been set for Greenways which are strategic routes linking sites.

3.63 The revised quantity standards have been ‘applied’ to understand to what extent each analysis area in Wolverhampton falls above and below the quantity standards (see tables below and **Chapter 8**).

Table 3.13: Revised standards: Public Open Space

Typology	Quantity standard (ha / 1,000 residents)
Parks	1.11
Natural green space	1.25
Amenity green space	0.49
Civic space	0.014
Provision for children	0.014
Provision for young people and other recreation	0.012
Recommended target accessible public open space standard (overall)	3.0
Allotments	0.13

Application of quantity standards

3.64 Table 3.14 provides an overview of the application of the quantity standards that have been set, per typology and analysis area. The table shows analysis for 2023 and expected quantity per 1,000 population up to 2042. The green cells meet or exceed the quantity standard, the pink cells do not meet the quantity standard. It should be noted that in some instances areas may only fall short of the standards by a small amount. A summary of the performance of all analysis areas against the standards is also set out in **Chapter 8** (Analysis Area Profiles).

3.65 Table 3.14 shows the shortfalls per typology; however, it should be recognised that at a local level some types of open space should be viewed together as they may perform a similar function. For example, shortfalls in amenity greenspace can likely be mitigated by sufficient provision of other typologies such as parks, natural green space and civic space.

3.66 The overall 3ha standard is the requirement for new development which will ensure open space needs are met into the future. The quantity standards per typology provide an indication of the mix of different typologies which may be required. However, the type, functionality and mix of open space should also be informed by the local context and high quality design standards.

3.67 The table below indicates that Bilston Analysis Area and North Analysis Area both currently (2023) exceed the overall quantity standard of 3ha per 1,000. All other analysis areas are currently below the overall quantity standard. The North Analysis Area is above the overall quantity standard primarily due to being significantly above the standard for parks.

3.68 Central and South Analysis Area falls short of the quantity standards for parks, natural greenspace and amenity green space, but meets the other standards per typology. Tettenhall does not meet the standards that have been set for any typology. However, it has a higher quantity of open space overall when compared to Central and South Analysis Area and Wednesfield Analysis

Area. All areas fall short compared to the natural greenspace quantity standard except Bilston Analysis Area, which is significantly above this standard.

3.69 Some areas that are currently (2023) above the quantity standard are due to fall below the quantity standard up to 2042 because of an increase in the population. For instance, Bilston and Wednesfield Analysis Areas currently meet the standard for provision for children but will likely fall short of the quantity standard for this typology by 2042 if there is not an increase in the quantity of play provision.

3.70 Table 3.15 provides an overview of the application of the quantity standards for allotments. The table shows that Central and South Analysis Area and Tettenhall Analysis Area is above the quantity standard for allotments, all other areas are below the quantity standard. Bilston has the lowest quantity of allotments per 1,000 residents when compared to other analysis areas.

Table 3.14: Application of quantity standards

Primary typology	Quantity standard (ha / 1,000)	Bilston	Central and South	North	Tettenhall	Wednesfield	Wolverhampton (city wide)
Parks 2023	1.11	1.10	1.07	1.71	0.95	0.79	1.11
Parks 2042	1.11	0.99	0.95	1.53	0.85	0.71	0.99
Natural green space 2023	1.25	2.15	0.47	0.93	1.01	0.28	0.94
Natural green space 2042	1.25	1.92	0.42	0.83	0.90	0.25	0.84
Amenity green space 2023	0.49	0.58	0.41	0.49	0.43	0.63	0.49
Amenity green space 2042	0.49	0.52	0.37	0.44	0.38	0.56	0.44

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Primary typology	Quantity standard (ha / 1,000)	Bilston	Central and South	North	Tettenhall	Wednesfield	Wolverhampton (city wide)
Civic spaces 2023	0.014	0.02	0.03	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.014
Civic spaces 2042	0.014	0.02	0.03	0.005	0.00	0.00	0.01
Provision for children 23	0.014	0.014	0.019	0.010	0.009	0.014	0.014
Provision for children 42	0.014	0.013	0.017	0.009	0.008	0.012	0.012
Provision for young people and other recreation 23	0.012	0.013	0.016	0.011	0.003	0.019	0.012
Provision for young people and other recreation 42	0.012	0.011	0.014	0.010	0.003	0.017	0.011
Total 2023	3.0	3.89	2.01	3.16	2.40	1.73	2.58
Total 2042	3.0	3.48	1.80	2.83	2.14	1.55	2.31

-

Table 3.15: Application of quantity standards: Allotments

Typology	Quantity standard (ha / 1,000)	Bilston	Central and South	North	Tettenhall	Wednesfield	Wolverhampton (city wide)
Allotments 2023	0.13	0.02	0.15	0.12	0.27	0.09	0.13
Allotments 2042	0.13	0.01	0.13	0.10	0.24	0.08	0.12

Chapter 4

Quality and value assessment

4.1 The following chapter summarises the results of the quality and value assessment. A large sample of 290 open spaces and 140 equipped playgrounds and other recreation features were subject to a quality and value audit based on the Green Flag award criteria. This section:

- Sets out the audit approach.
- Proposes benchmark standards to assess the ‘performance’ of different types of open space in Wolverhampton.
- Summarises the findings for different types of open space and play (including by area).

4.2 Sites were selected for audit to ensure a representative sample of sites with sufficient geographic spread across the study area. All play areas identified (provision for children, young people and other recreation) were subject to an on-site audit. **Table 4.1** provide an overview of the number of sites for each typology included as part of the sample audit.

Table 4.1: Summary of sites subject to quality and value audit

Typology	Total number of sites	Total publicly accessible *	Total no sites included in sample audit*	% of typology audited (publicly accessible sites)
Parks	58	58	57	98%
Natural green space	82	78	78	100%
Amenity green space	359	354	120	33%

Typology	Total number of sites	Total publicly accessible *	Total no sites included in sample audit*	% of typology audited (publicly accessible sites)
Provision for Children	64	64	64	100%
Provision for Young people	76	76	76	100%
Civic space	14	14	12	93%
Cemeteries	19	18	18	95%
Outdoor sports facilities and recreation grounds	133	9	5	4%
Allotments	38	0	0	0%

*Freely publicly accessible at all times with no restrictions, or sites with opening hours (e.g. open dawn to dusk) within Wolverhampton.

Quality and value assessment

4.3 The audit form used is based on Green Flag Award criteria and sites were audited against a numeric scoring system. The audit form is accompanied by scoring guidance to ensure a consistent approach to scoring sites on qualitative aspects. The intention is that the audit that has been undertaken can be easily repeated to understand any changes in the quality/value of provision over time. The full audit form is included in **Appendix A**.

4.4 The Green Flag Award is a recognised benchmark standard for open space management in the UK and internationally. Detailed criteria have been adopted that are suitable for the local context. Criteria have either been defined as relating to:

- 'Value' (the presence of various features and facilities, and value to the local community); or
- Quality' (aspects relating to management and the condition of features and facilities).

4.5 The utility of considering quality and value separately is usefully set out within the (now superseded) Planning Practice Guidance 17 (PPG 17) Companion Guide which states '*quality and value are fundamentally different and can be completely unrelated*'. For example, an open space may be of high quality (by virtue of being well maintained and in good condition), but if it is not accessible or does not have the level of facilities that would be expected of the type of site, it may be of low value. Conversely an open space could have an appropriate range and level of facilities (high value), but the condition of the site or standards of maintenance could still fall short (low quality).

4.6 The audit form comprises both a desk assessment, which considers any designations that apply to a site, listed features within a site and other characteristics which contribute to the value of the site, and an assessment on site.

Desk assessment

4.7 A desk assessment has been carried out remotely for each sample site within a Geographical Information System database. The content of the desk assessment can be seen in the audit pro forma included separately. Desk based criteria comprise:

- National designations (Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monument, Site of Special Scientific Interest, Register of Historic Parks and Gardens, National Nature Reserve).
- Regional designations (Regionally Important Geological Site).
- Local designations (Conservation Area, Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation, Local Nature Reserve, Locally Important Geological Site).

- Access (National/Regional Trails, Sustrans Routes).
- Other (e.g. Ancient Woodland).

Site Assessment

4.8 An overview of the Green Flag themes considered as part of the audit is set out below:

1. **A Welcoming Place:** Welcoming, good and safe access, signage, equal access for all.
2. **Healthy, Safe and Secure:** Safe equipment and facilities, personal security, dog fouling, appropriate provision of facilities, quality of facilities.
3. **Well Maintained and Clean:** Litter and waste management, grounds maintenance and horticulture, building and infrastructure maintenance.
4. **Environmental Management:** Environmental sustainability, waste minimisation, arboriculture and woodland management.
5. **Biodiversity, Landscape and Heritage:** Conservation of nature features, wild flora and fauna, conservation of landscape features, conservation of buildings and structures.
6. **Community Involvement:** Community involvement in management and development including outreach work, appropriate provision for the community.
7. **Marketing and Communication:** Marketing and promotion, provision of appropriate information, provision of appropriate educational interpretation/information.

4.9 Using the Green Flag Themes as a framework for the audits, sites have been scored against a set of sub criteria. Sub criteria relating to quality are scored on a scale of one to five, as set out below:

- 1 = Very Poor
- 2 = Poor
- 3 = Fair
- 4 = Good
- 5 = Very Good

4.10 This assessment was then transposed through a scoring system into a total quality score for individual sites.

4.11 Value scores are assigned to several aspects including: the level of public access (e.g. freely accessible or with opening hours); the presence of facilities (e.g. value scores are added for play features or seating); use by the local community (evidence of recreation, community engagement or events); value for conservation; and environmental benefits. This assessment was then transposed through a scoring system into a total value score for individual sites.

4.12 Individual audit forms can also be scrutinised to understand how scoring against each sub criterion feeds into the total quality and value score for each site.

Developing Quality and Value Benchmark Standards

4.13 The purpose of undertaking the site audits is to provide a strategic assessment of the quality and value of sites and a picture of deficiencies in access to high quality/value sites. To this end, the scores can be used as part of a quality and value benchmarking process. Quality and value benchmark standards can be used to assess existing open space and play provision

strategically, across the study area. The 'performance' of open spaces and play spaces can be 'tested' against the benchmark scores, highlighting where they 'sit' in relation to an agreed standard. This process can help to identify current needs for improvement and prioritise investment and enhancement in a strategic way.

4.14 Quality and value standards have been developed for each typology and level of the size hierarchy (where appropriate), which ensures that sites are compared 'like for like' with sites that would be expected to provide a similar 'offer' and level of facilities. The quality and value standards provide numeric benchmark scores that represents what should be considered an acceptable good quality / high value site.

4.15 Whilst all sites are scored on all criteria during the audit, it should be noted that all criteria are not relevant for all sites. However, the benchmarks that sites are compared against reflect this, ensuring that sites are only tested against a standard that is realistically achievable and appropriate for the type and size of site being considered.

4.16 Benchmark standards have been developed to reflect the range, type and quality of features, facilities and characteristics that would be expected of each type and size of site. For example, a civic space or amenity site would not be expected to have the same range of features or facilities as a park. Even within one typology, a good quality and value doorstep park would not be expected to have the same range of features and facilities as a district park, hence it would be expected that doorstep parks would have a lower numeric standard for a high quality / high value site.

4.17 Development of quality and value standards has taken account of:

- What can reasonably be expected from open space and play space within the area, and the levels of maintenance that should be expected for the type of facilities and landscape features present.
- Recognised national standards for parks, open space and play (such as Green Flag Award guidance).

- A review of the quality and value scores of sites surveyed by typology and each level of the hierarchy to understand the average scores achieved against the audit form.
- A high-level comparison of the site audit results against data that has been collated through consultation, such as levels of satisfaction (e.g. whether sites are likely to be achieving the standards expected by residents).

Quality and Value Standards: Open Space

4.18 Table 4.2 below sets out the numeric benchmark standards for quality and value. The benchmark standards have been ‘applied’ to the sites that have been subject to an audit as part of the study. It should be noted that sites achieving, exceeding or falling short of the benchmark standards may only do so by one or two audit scores and there is variation to what extent sites meet or fall short of the standard. Individual audit forms should be scrutinised to explore site scores for individual sites and criteria. Quality and value standards have been developed by typology and each level of the size hierarchy. Where a level of the size hierarchy is not represented within a typology, no benchmark standard has been set. Quality and value standards are not set for outdoor sports facilities and recreation grounds and cemeteries. Quality standards and required improvements for outdoor sports provision have been assessed as part of Wolverhampton’s Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy.

Table 4.2: Quality and Value Standards: Open Space

Typology / hierarchy	Quality standard*	Value standard*
Parks		
District	90	95
Town	74	57
Neighbourhood	51	38

Typology / hierarchy	Quality standard*	Value standard*
Doorstep	43	30
Natural green space		
District	65	45
Town	35	28
Neighbourhood	30	21
Doorstep	25	17
Amenity green space		
Neighbourhood	33	15
Doorstep	33	15
Civic space		
Doorstep	35	20
Outdoor sports facilities & recreation grounds		
No benchmark set - standards for outdoor sports addressed as part of Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy.	-	-
Cemeteries		
No benchmark set.	-	-

*The quality and value standards provide numeric benchmark scores that represent what is considered an acceptable good quality / high value site, using the audit form included in **Appendix A**.

Quality and Value Standards: Provision for children

4.19 For the purposes of assessing the quality and value of provision for children in Wolverhampton, play areas have been grouped into several categories. Categorisation of play space reflects the fact that formal play spaces will often cater for different age groups. For example, some play spaces will contain age-appropriate equipment for children under five years and will not offer sufficient challenge and the range of equipment and facilities required for older age groups.

- Local Areas for Play (LAPs): Sites which likely only provide an engaging play offer for children under the age of five.
- Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs): Sites which likely provide an engaging play offer for children up to the age of eleven.
- Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs): Sites which likely provide an engaging play offer for those up to and above the age of eleven.
- If a play site has a very limited offer for younger children but has some provision for children over eleven, the site may be categorised as a LEAP. Sites categorised as NEAPs should have a play offer for all three age groups mentioned.

4.20 Quality and value standards are set out for different types of children’s play provision in **Table 4.3**.

Table 4.3: Quality and Value Standards: Provision for children

Play type	Quality standard*	Value standard
Local Area for Play (LAP)	4	12

Play type	Quality standard*	Value standard
Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP)	4	17
Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP)	4	21

*Quality standards for play relate to the overall quality and condition of the play equipment and features provided within the play area. The overall condition of play features must achieve a 4 or 5 (good or very good) to meet the quality and value standard.

Application of quality and value standards

4.21 As noted above, the sites can be tested against the benchmarks to indicate where they ‘sit’ against the established standard for quality and value. Sites are then identified as falling into one of four categories set out below. These categories can provide a broad indication of the type of management approach that may be needed across any given area or site.

Higher Quality/Higher Value (+ +)

4.22 These sites represent the best open spaces within the study area, offering the greatest value to local communities. Future management should seek to maintain the standards to ensure sites continue to meet the needs of the communities they serve.

4.23 These sites would likely not be considered a priority in terms of future enhancement, however, improvements and enhancement to these sites may still be appropriate.

Higher Quality/Lower Value (+ -)

4.24 The audit found these sites to be achieving a sufficient standard for quality, most likely with sufficient levels of maintenance. Features, facilities and habitats are likely to be in good condition, or a good state of repair. Value for these sites falls short of what should be expected of the typology and level of the hierarchy. For instance, through a lack of suitable features, facilities, opportunities for informal recreation and environmental functions.

4.25 These sites should be prioritised for future works to enhance the sites' value, for instance through the appropriate provision of features and facilities and implementing design interventions.

Lower Quality/Higher Value (- +)

4.26 These spaces meet or exceed the standard for value but fall short on the quality standard. These sites will most likely contain the features, facilities and attributes that is expected of the type and size of open space, but their condition may be poor and the site may be failing to achieve the expected standards of maintenance and management. Hard landscape features may be tired, broken, or beyond their useful life.

4.27 These sites provide most opportunity for 'quick wins' of improving open space provision through enhanced management and maintenance and repair of equipment.

Lower Quality/Lower Value (- -)

4.28 These sites do not meet the quality standard or value standard. This may relate to poor condition of features, facilities and maintenance. These sites will likely not have the appropriate range of features and facilities, and could achieve more in terms of environmental functionality.

4.29 Enhancing both the quality and value of these sites should be considered a priority, particularly in areas which suffer from a deficiency in access to, or quantity of, multifunctional publicly accessible open space.

Quality and value performance colour coding

4.30 A colour coding system has been applied to these categories as part of strategic mapping exercises to understand any spatial patterns of the performance of sites; this can be cross referenced with other data to identify priority areas for enhancement.

Symbol and Colour Coding	Description
+ +	Higher quality/Higher value
+ -	Higher quality/Lower value
- +	Lower quality/Higher value
- -	Lower quality/Lower value

4.31 The categorisation of sites is intended to inform strategic planning and management of open space. The exact nature of any required enhancements will need to be determined on a site-by-site basis. Reference can also be made to individual audit forms to better understand how sites may be underperforming. Several sites were subject to enhancement programmes at the time of the audit and there are potential future opportunities for enhancement in the coming years (e.g. Smestow Valley Heritage Lottery Fund project). Therefore, it should be noted that scores for quality and value of sites will change over the coming years.

4.32 The performance of all individual sites against the benchmarks is set out by typology in **Appendix D**. Quality and value of sites has also been cross referenced with spatial needs mapping to identify likely priority sites for enhancement, summarised within the Analysis Area Profiles (**Chapter 8**) and in **Appendix D**. This should be referred to during the development of

enhancement and investment programmes. It is intended that this information should provide a starting point for detailed open space requirements when new development is coming forward.

Application of Benchmark Standards to Open Space

1.2 Table 4.4 provides a high level summary of the overall performance of the audited open space sites in each typology and hierarchy against the quality and value standards. Overall, 63% of audited sites achieve or exceed the benchmarks. The remaining 37% fall short either on quality, value, or both quality and value. 14% of sites overall have been assessed as not meeting both the quality standard and value standards.

4.33 72% of parks achieve or exceed the quality benchmark. 56% of parks achieve or exceed both quality and value. 16% are below both quality and value. 53% of natural green spaces achieve or exceed the quality and value benchmarks. Natural green spaces make up the largest proportion of sites categorised as below both quality and value (27% of audited natural green space sites). 74% of amenity green spaces are achieving the quality and value standards. All civic spaces achieve or exceed the quality benchmark standard, with 58% achieving or exceeding both quality and value. The remaining civic spaces are categorised as 'above quality, below value'.

Table 4.4: Quality and Value performance - summary of all audited open space sites

Typology / hierarchy	Higher Quality/ Higher Value	Higher Quality/ Lower Value	Lower Quality/ Higher Value	Lower Quality/ Lower Value	Total no audited sites by typology & hierarchy	Example higher quality site	Example higher value site
Park							
District park	1	0	0	0	1	East Park	East Park
Town park	5	0	3	2	10	Bantock Park	Phoenix Park
Neighbourhood park	16	5	2	4	27	Ward Street Neighbourhood Park	Goodyear Park
Doorstep park	10	3	3	3	19	Tumbler Grove Open Space	Showell Park
Total audited parks	32	8	8	9	57		
% audited parks	56%	16%	12%	16%	100%		
Natural green space							
District natural green space	2				2	Northycote Farm	Smestow Valley Park

Typology / hierarchy	Higher Quality/ Higher Value	Higher Quality/ Lower Value	Lower Quality/ Higher Value	Lower Quality/ Lower Value	Total no audited sites by typology & hierarchy	Example higher quality site	Example higher value site
Town natural green space	10		6	6	22	Stowheath Lane Open Space	Pendeford Mill
Neighbourhood natural green space	2			4	6	Woodlands Walk	Ladymoor Pool
Doorstep natural green space	27	3	7	11	48	Jennie Lee Open Space	Coppice Woodland
Total audited natural green spaces	41	3	13	21	78		
% audited natural green spaces	53%	4%	17%	27%	100%		
Amenity green space							
Neighbourhood amenity green space	4		3		7	Coppice Farm Open Space	Warstones Green
Doorstep amenity green space	85	9	12	7	113	Upper Green	Broad Street Canal Open Space
Total audited amenity green spaces	89	9	15	7	120		
% audited amenity green spaces	74%	8%	13%	6%	100%		
Civic space							
Doorstep civic space	7	5			12	Victoria Street Pedestrian Area	Dudley Street Pedestrian Zone
Total audited civic spaces	7	5	0	0	12		

Typology / hierarchy	Higher Quality/ Higher Value	Higher Quality/ Lower Value	Lower Quality/ Higher Value	Lower Quality/ Lower Value	Total no audited sites by typology & hierarchy	Example higher quality site	Example higher value site
% audited civic spaces	58%	42%	0%	0%	100%		
Cemeteries							
Total audited cemeteries (no benchmark set)	-	-	-	-	18	-	-
Outdoor sports facilities & recreation grounds							
Total audited outdoor sports facilities and recreation grounds (no benchmark set)	-	-	-	-	5	-	-
Total no. audited sites (with Q/V standards set) by category	169	25	36	37	290		
% of audited sites (with Q/V standards set) by category	63%	10%	13%	14%			

4.34 Table 4.5 below provides a high level summary of the quality and value performance of all sites per analysis area.

4.35 The Wednesfield Analysis Area has the highest percentage of sites that are above both quality and value (78%), and the smallest percentage below both quality and value (6%). This is followed by the North Analysis Area and Central and South Analysis Area, both with 67% of sites above quality and value. Bilston Analysis Area has the highest proportion of sites falling below both quality and value (20%) and has the greatest proportion of sites (45%) that fall short on some aspect (below either quality, value or both quality and value).

4.36 Figure 4.1 provides a map of quality and value performance of open space across the study area.

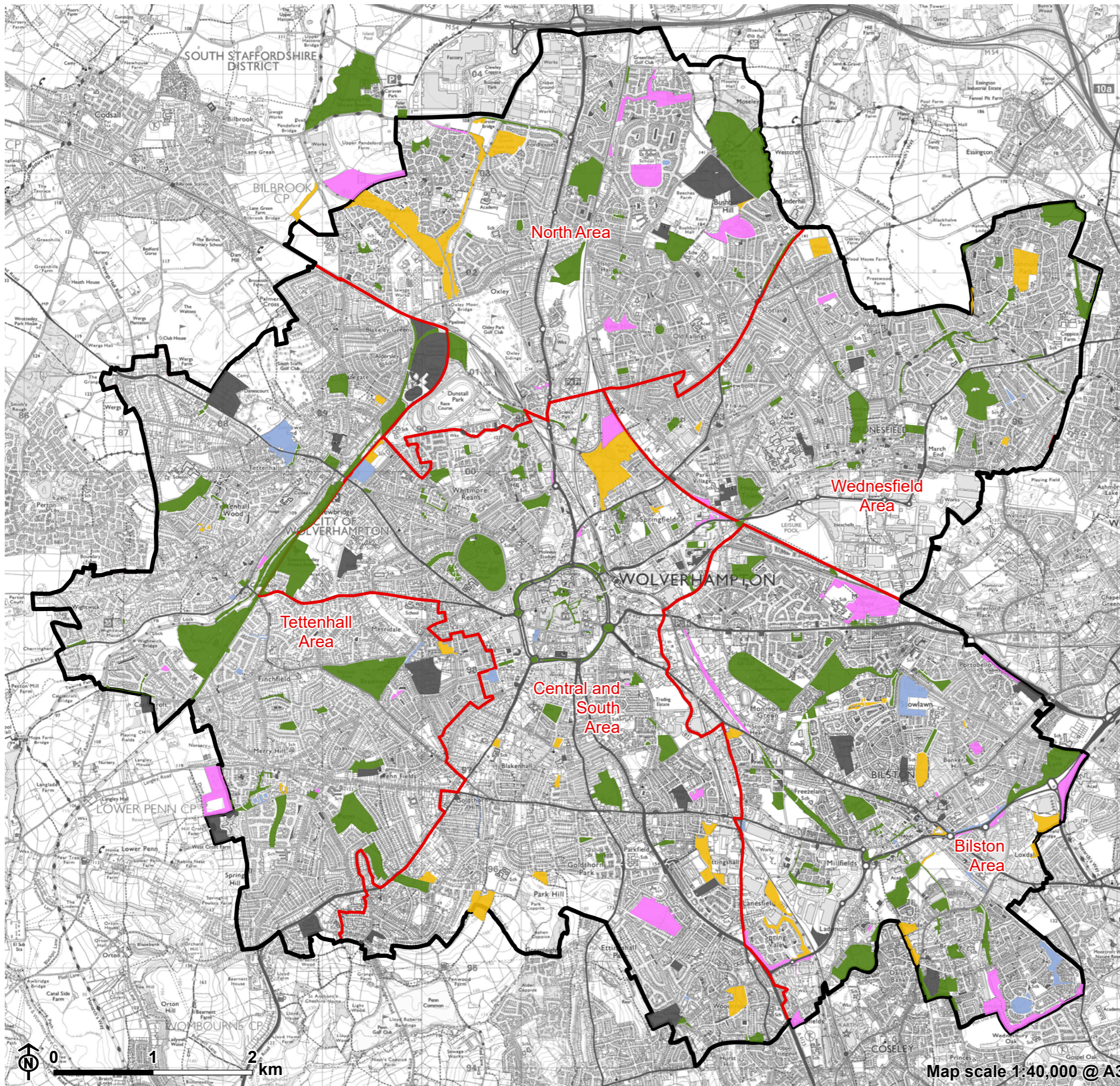
Table 4.5: Quality and Value performance of all audited open space sites by analysis area

Analysis area	Higher Quality/ Higher Value	Higher Quality/ Lower Value	Lower Quality/ Higher Value	Lower Quality/ Lower Value	Below either Quality, Value or both
North Area					
No. of sites by category within analysis area	24	1	3	8	12
% of sites by category within analysis area	67%	6%	8%	19%	33%
Bilston Area					
No. of sites by category within analysis area	42	9	10	15	34
% of sites by category within analysis area	55%	12%	13%	20%	45%
Central and South Area					
No. of sites by category within analysis area	50	6	12	7	25
% of sites by category within analysis area	67%	8%	16%	9%	33%
Tettenhall Area					
No. of sites by category within analysis area	22	9	4	5	18
% of sites by category within analysis area	59%	20%	10%	11%	41%

Analysis area	Higher Quality/ Higher Value	Higher Quality/ Lower Value	Lower Quality/ Higher Value	Lower Quality/ Lower Value	Below either Quality, Value or both
Wednesfield Area					
No. of sites by category within analysis area	27	1	5	3	9
% of sites by category within analysis area	78%	3%	14%	6%	23%
Outside Wolverhampton boundary					
No. of sites by category within analysis area	2	0	1	1	2
% of sites by category within analysis area	50%	0%	25%	25%	50%
Total number of audited sites by category	169	25	36	37	



Figure 4.1: Public Open Space Quality and Value performance against proposed benchmarks



- Wolverhampton boundary
- Analysis Area
- Open space quality and value**
- Higher quality, higher value
- Higher quality, lower value
- Lower quality, higher value
- Lower quality, lower value
- Not audited

'Quality' refers to aspects relating to management and the condition of features and facilities 'value' refers to the presence of various features and facilities, and value to the local community.

Application of Benchmark Standards to provision for children and young people

4.37 Table 4.6 below provides a summary overview of performance against the quality and value standards for each play type.

4.38 44% of equipped play areas exceed both the quality and value standards (64% exceeding the quality standards overall).

4.39 Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP - sites focussed on provision for 5-11 year olds) and Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAP – sites with provision for all ages) have a higher proportion of sites exceeding both quality and value when compared to Local Areas for Play (LAP- sites focussed on provision for children under 5).

4.40 17% of equipped play spaces overall fall below both quality and value. LEAPs (sites focussed on provision for 5-11 year olds) make up the majority of sites falling below both quality and value.

Table 4.6: Quality and Value performance of audited provision for children

Play type	Higher Quality/ Higher Value	Higher Quality/ Lower Value	Lower Quality/ Higher Value	Lower Quality/ Lower Value	Grand Total
Local Area for Play (LAP)					
Total audited LAP	4	4	3	1	12
% audited LAP	33%	33%	25%	8%	
Locally Equipped (LEAP)					
Total audited LEAP	17	6	8	8	39
% audited LEAP	44%	15%	21%	21%	

Neighbourhood (NEAP)					
Total audited NEAP	7	3	1	2	13
% audited NEAP	54%	23%	8%	15%	
Grand Total	28	13	12	11	64
%	44%	20%	19%	17%	

4.41 Table 4.7 provides an overview of the quality and value performance of provision for children per analysis area.

4.42 Tettenhall and Bilston Analysis Areas have the highest proportion of sites which exceed both the quality and value standards (60% and 50%). The vast majority of sites within Tettenhall Analysis Area exceed the quality standard (80%).

4.43 The Central and South Analysis Area and North Analysis Area have the highest proportion of sites that fall short on either quality, value or both (both 62% of sites). The North Analysis Area has the highest proportion of sites which do not meet the standards for both quality and value (23%).

Table 4.7: Quality and Value performance of provision for children by analysis area

Analysis area	Higher Quality/ Higher Value	Higher Quality/ Lower Value	Lower Quality/ Higher Value	Lower Quality/ Lower Value	Below either Quality, Value or both
Bilston Area					
No. of site by category within analysis area	6	0	4	2	6
% of sites by category within analysis area	50%	0%	33%	17%	50%
Central and South Area					
No. of site by category within analysis area	8	5	4	4	13
% of sites by category within analysis area	38%	24%	19%	19%	62%
North Area					
No. of site by category within analysis area	5	3	2	3	8
% of sites by category within analysis area	38%	23%	15%	23%	62%
Tettenhall Area					
No. of site by category within analysis area	6	2	1	1	4
% of sites by category within analysis area	60%	20%	10%	10%	40%

Analysis area	Higher Quality/ Higher Value	Higher Quality/ Lower Value	Lower Quality/ Higher Value	Lower Quality/ Lower Value	Below either Quality, Value or both
Wednesfield Area					
No. of site by category within analysis area	3	3	1	1	5
% of sites by category within analysis area	38%	38%	13%	13%	63%
Grand Total	28	13	12	11	

4.44 The assessment of provision for young people and other recreation focussed on the quality and condition of individual facilities such as MUGAs, wheels parks and outdoor gyms. Only one value point is associated with these facilities within the audit form, therefore benchmark standards have not been proposed. However, it should be assumed that facilities will ideally achieve between three and five on quality (fair to very good). Facilities scoring one or two would likely need to be considered for refurbishment, replacement or repair in the near future.

4.45 **Table 4.8** provides an overview of quality scores of audited facilities identified as provision for young people and other recreation. The table below indicates that around 75% of facilities were considered to be ‘good’ or ‘very good’ for quality (scoring four or five); 9% were rated as ‘fair’.

Table 4.8: Provision for young people and other recreation - quality scores summary of audited facilities

Type of provision	Quality score					Grand Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
MUGA*	0	4	5	16	5	30
Outdoor Gym	0	0	1	18	7	26
Wheels park / skate park	0	1	1	3	1	6
BMX track	0	1	0	0	1	2
Basketball	1	4	0	3	2	10
Teen shelter	0	1	0	1	0	2
Total	1	11	7	41	16	76
% Total	1%	14%	9%	54%	21%	

*Multi Use Games Area

4.46 Table 4.9 provides an overview of provision for young people and other recreation per analysis area.

4.47 Wednesfield Analysis Area has the highest proportion of sites scoring poor to fair (one to three) (57%). Bilston Analysis Area, Central and South and North Analysis Area all have a similar proportion of sites scoring good or very good (all +80%)

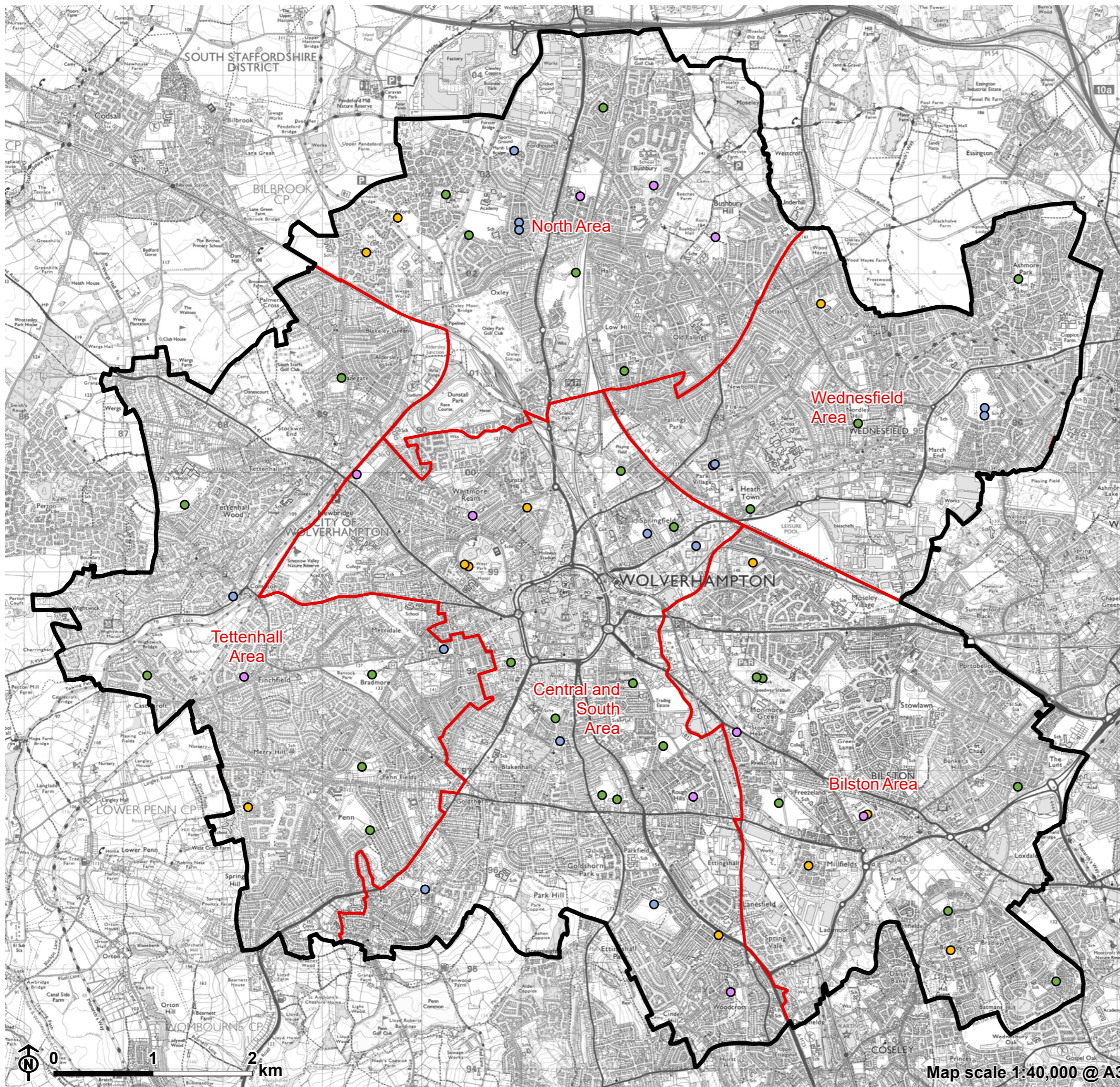
Table 4.9: Quality and Value performance of provision for young people and other recreation by analysis area

Analysis area	Quality score					Grand Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
Bilston Area						
Count of site Q/V performance	0	1	2	11	4	18
% of audited sites within analysis area	0%	6%	11%	61%	22%	
Central and South Area						
Count of site Q/V performance	0	3	1	14	5	23
% of audited sites within analysis area	0.0%	13.0%	4.0%	61%	22%	
North Area						
Count of site Q/V performance	0	1	1	9	3	14
% of audited sites within analysis area	0.0%	7.0%	7.0%	64%	21%	
Tettenhall Area						
Count of site Q/V performance	0	2	0	1	4	7

Analysis area	Quality score					Grand Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
% of audited sites within analysis area	0.0%	29%	0.0%	14%	57%	
Wednesfield Area						
Count of site Q/V performance	1	4	3	6	0	14
% of audited sites within analysis area	7.0%	29%	21%	43%	0%	
Grand Total	1	22	21	164	85	76

4.48 Figure 4.2 provides a map of quality and value performance of audited provision for children across the study area. Figure 4.3 provides a map of quality ratings for audited provision for young people and other recreation.

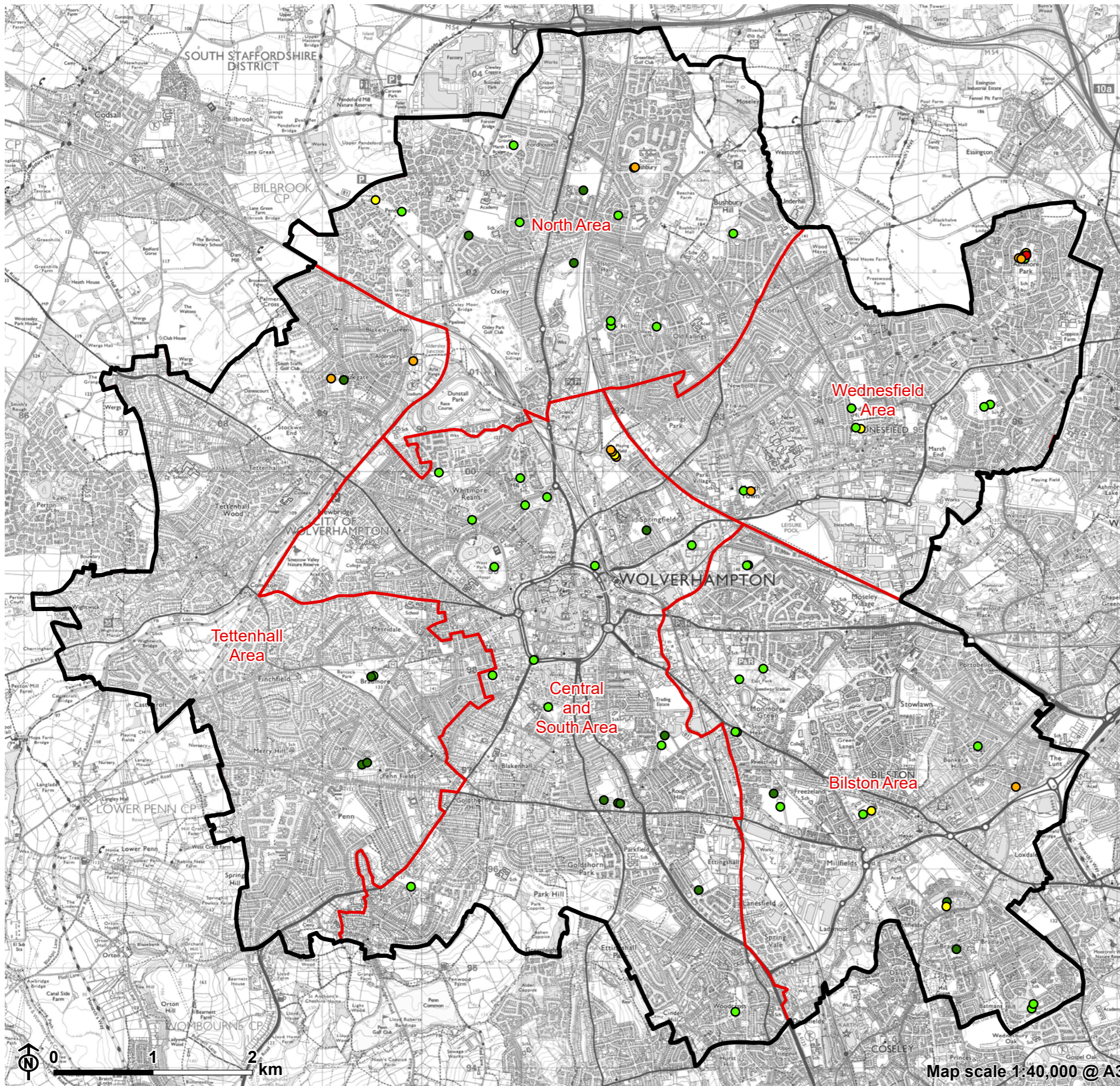
Figure 4.2: Provision for Children performance against proposed benchmarks



- Wolverhampton boundary
- Analysis Area
- Provision for children quality and value**
- Higher quality, higher value
- Higher quality, lower value
- Lower quality, higher value
- Lower quality, lower value

'Quality' refers to aspects relating to management and the condition of features and facilities 'value' refers to the presence of various features and facilities, and value to the local community.

Figure 4.3: Provision for Young People and Other Recreation quality scores



Wolverhampton boundary
 Analysis Area
Provision for young people and other recreation quality
● 1 - Low
● 2
● 3
● 4
● 5 - High
 'Quality' refers to aspects relating to management and the condition of features and facilities.

Summary of findings per audit theme

4.49 The following section provides high level findings from the sample audit by audit theme. Areas of focus for future enhancement based on the findings have also been set out. The detailed scores in individual audit forms (included in a separate volume) can also be scrutinised to understand performance against specific criteria and priority areas for enhancement at specific sites.

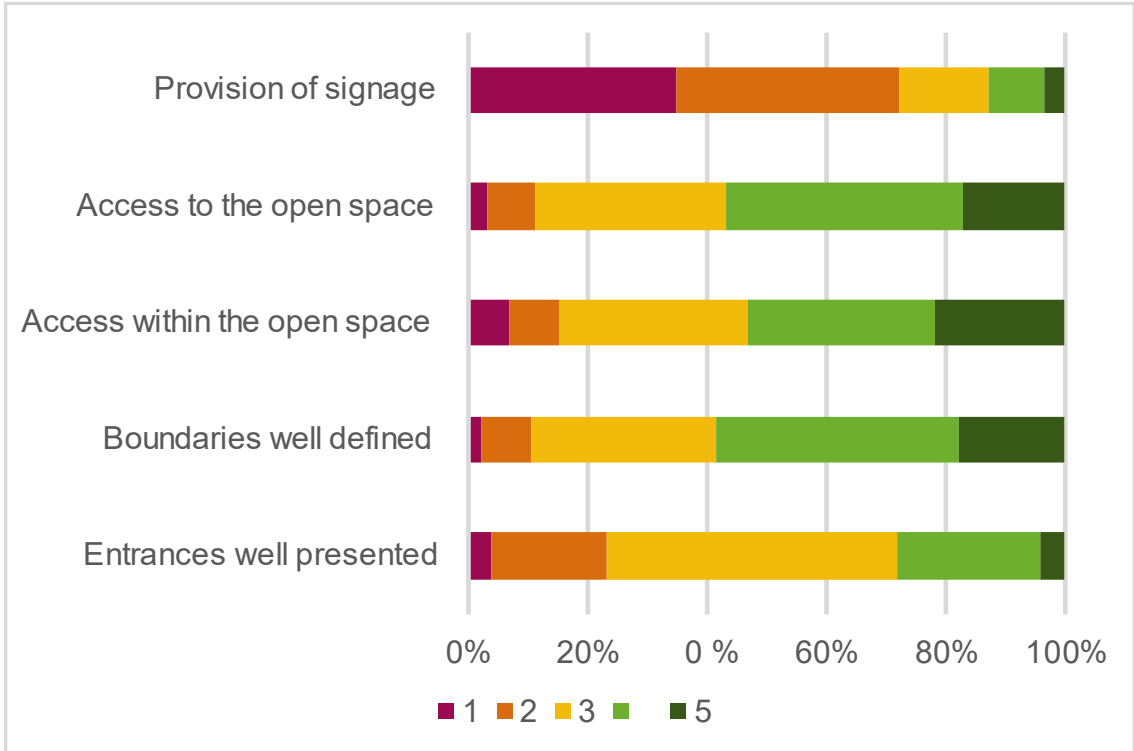
Theme 1: A welcoming place

4.50 Sites generally scored highly for value scores within this theme, as the audit focussed on open spaces that were fully accessible to the public.

4.51 Sites also scored well for the quality aspects of this theme with many sites scoring 3 or higher for each of the criteria (out of 5). Scores for the overall quality of access when travelling to open spaces and for well-defined and maintained boundaries were particularly high. The overall provision of signage scored lower than other criteria (see **Figure 4.4**). Within this overall theme there was an average score of 2.20.

4.52 Civic spaces and cemeteries scored the highest within this theme on average (4.15 and 4.02 respectively) when compared to other typologies. Natural green space and amenity green spaces scored on average lower (2.78 and 3.16 respectively).

Figure 4.4: Quality scores for Theme 1: A Welcoming Place



Improvement to signage (particularly at some amenity green spaces and key natural green spaces) may be a future priority for making open spaces in Wolverhampton more welcoming. This includes removal of old, damaged, and unwelcoming ‘No Ball Games’ signs.

Figure 4.5: Audit images - a welcoming place



Welcoming entrance at West Park (ID 127)



Entrances could be enhanced with clear sight lines and improved boundary treatments - Pendeford Woodland Canalside area (ID 650)

Theme 2: Healthy, safe and secure

4.53 Value scores for this theme are based on the number and type of features or facilities within the open spaces. The most common features are litter bins, benches and space for informal kickabout. These were recorded at 53%, 43% and 43% of audited sites respectively. Other sports provision was limited to the parks plus outdoor sport provision and recreation grounds typologies. Overall, natural green space and amenity green space had the lowest presence of additional features.

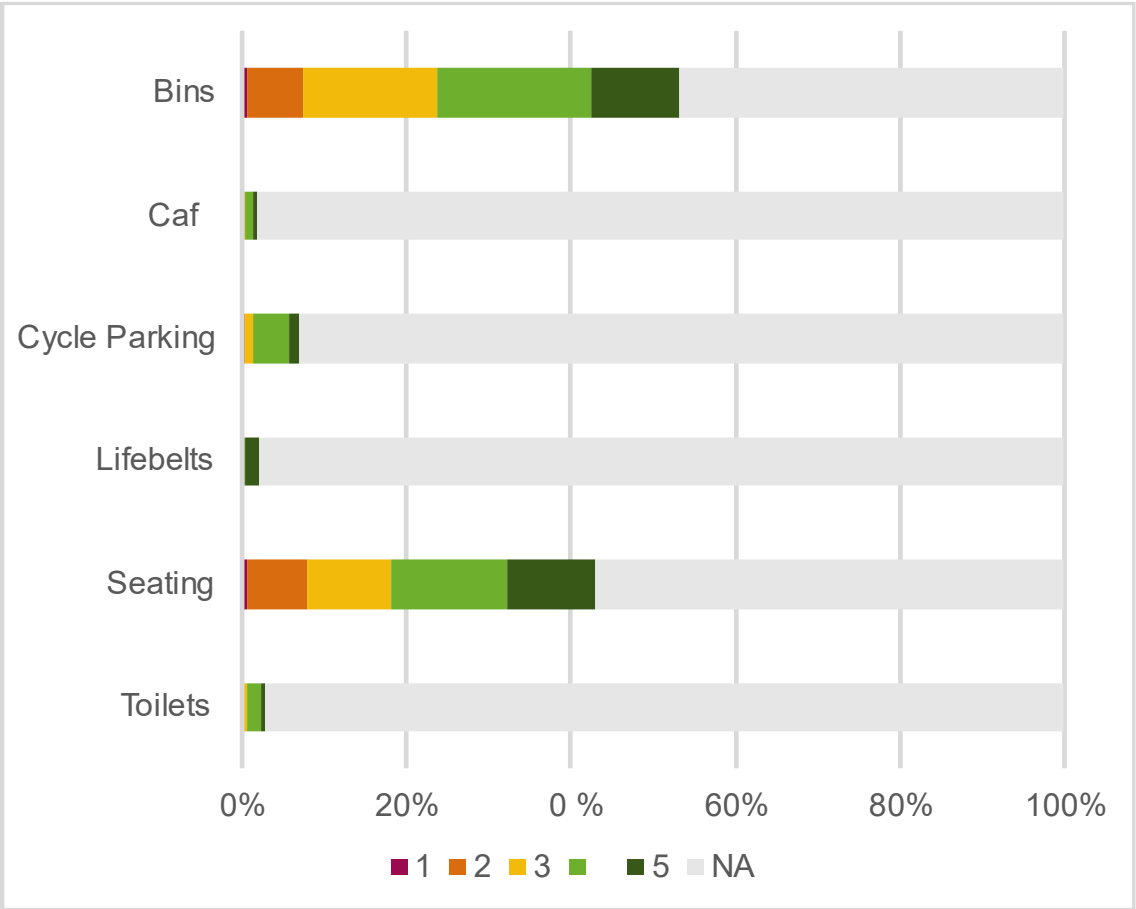
4.54 Most of these features are in relatively good condition, with average scores of greater than 3.5 out of 5, except for grass pitches and informal kickabout areas.

4.55 In terms of safety, sites generally scored well for feeling safe and secure. However, fewer than half of the sites audited had lighting and several did not have an observable flow of people through the open space, both of which may affect perceptions of safety for some users.

4.56 Natural green space had lower average scores for the sense of safety:

- Around 60% of audited natural and semi-natural greenspaces felt safe and secure (lower than any other typology).
- Only around 30% had a flow of people through the site or lighting present.
- Just under 40% of these sites had any natural surveillance from surrounding properties.
- Although still only minimal (recorded at 6% of sites), evidence of dog fouling was more common in this typology than any other.

Figure 4.6: Quality of basic facilities



The priority for improvements to safety is within natural green spaces, which are more likely to be perceived as unsafe. This may include opening up some sightlines at entrances and encouraging community ownership of these spaces. Grass pitches and informal kickabout areas could be enhanced through improvement management, including overseeding, and replacing any damaged goal posts.

Figure 4.7: Audit images - healthy, safe and secure



Anti-social behaviour (off road motorbike use) at Tennyson Road Park (ID 76).



Clear sightlines and good sense of safety and security at Oval Drive Open Space (ID 28)



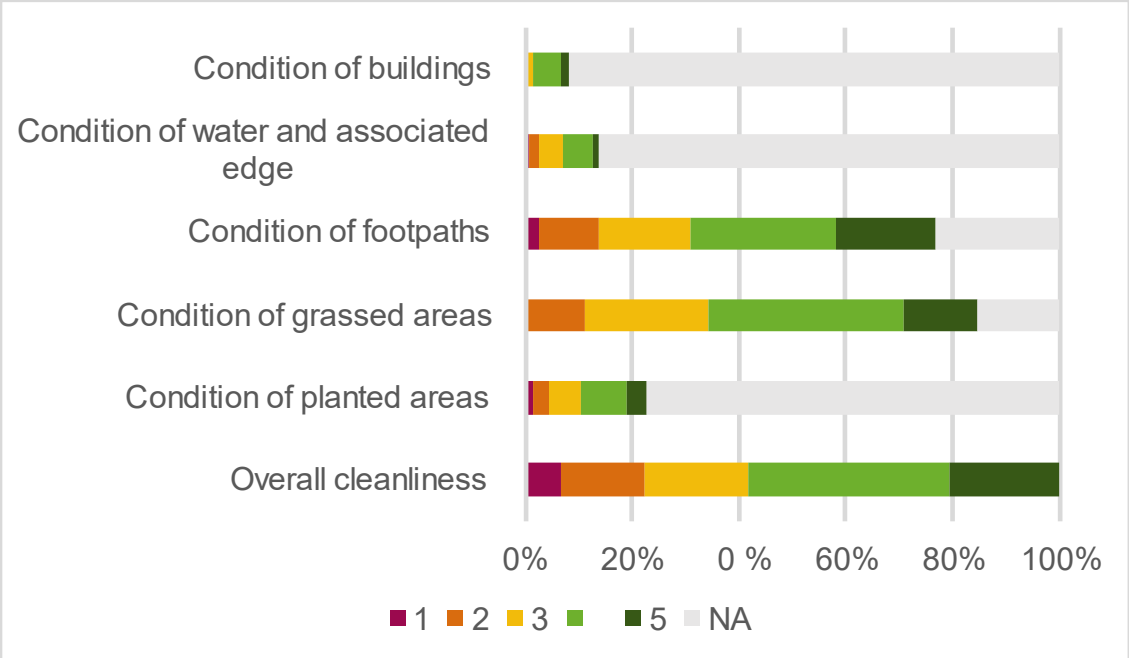
Good informal oversight and lighting provided at Bushbury Triangle Open Space (ID 654).

Theme 3: Well maintained and clean

4.57 Overall, features tended to score well for this theme. On-site buildings, grassed areas, footpaths and planted areas all scored on average 3.55 or above for their condition. This excludes sites where these features were scored NA, which was particularly notable for buildings, water edge, and planted areas. These scores are shown in **Figure 4.8**.

4.58 The majority of audited sites did not have evidence of extensive graffiti or vandalism. Overall cleanliness had an average score of 3.5 out of 5, although this was generally lower for natural green spaces. For this typology, over 40% of sites audited scored only 1 or 2 out of 5.

Figure 4.8: Condition and cleanliness of features within open spaces



Whilst the quality scores show that overall open spaces in Wolverhampton are well maintained and clean, this was an issue that was raised during consultation. There may be priorities in improving cleanliness, litter and fly tipping in natural green space.

Figure 4.9: Audit images - well maintained and clean



Fly tipping, Tennyson Road Park (ID 76)



Well maintained paths and grass with little litter at Oval Drive Open Space (ID 28)

Theme 4: Environmental management

4.59 In general, there was little evidence of wider environmental management across the sites. Fewer than 5% of sites audited included any of the following features:

- Drought tolerant planting;
- Water conservation measures;
- Recycling of waste and material;
- Sustainable energy generation;
- Sustainable drainage; or
- Green or brown roofs.

4.60 Appropriate tree and woodland management was more common. This was recorded in over 80% of audited sites. In addition, evidence of the site providing shade was recorded at nearly 70% of sites.

4.61 A fifth of sites provided a buffer to nearby traffic. Fewer sites provided a buffer to nearby industry or other features. Having a role as buffer to something other than traffic was mostly restricted to natural green space sites.

There is a significant opportunity to improve the multifunctional benefits provided by open spaces to the wider local environment.

Figure 4.10: Audit images - environmental management



Multifunctional wetland features, Goodyear Park (ID 132)



Potential for additional drought tolerant or wildlife friendly planting, West Park (ID 127).

Theme 5: Biodiversity, landscape and heritage

4.62 The majority of open spaces include between three and five different habitats. The most common habitat or land cover types were amenity grass (in nearly 70% of audited sites) and tree groups (in over 60% of audited sites). These habitats are the most common across most typologies. Natural green space is the exception to this, where scrub and woodland are the most common habitats. Parks are more likely to include a variety of habitats.

4.63 In some open spaces, particularly within the parks, areas had been left unmown for nature, and there were some small areas of woodland created as part of a project for the Commonwealth Games. Such initiatives can help enhance the biodiversity value of a site but should be considered in conjunction with the wider ecological networks across the city to enhance ecological connectivity. Management of these areas is also crucial to ensure new woodland survives and thrives.

4.64 This theme also considers threats to the open spaces. Road noise and lack of landscape management were the biggest threats to open spaces, recorded at over a quarter of sites. Threats, particularly lack of landscape management, were more common within natural green space.

There is the opportunity to pursue a range of measures such as more areas of rough or wildflower grassland, provision of wildlife friendly ornamental planting and woodland management to improve the ecological value of sites. Joining up and buffering habitats should be key considerations to align with principles of *'bigger, better and more joined up'*. Biodiversity enhancements should be done with consideration for the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).

Figure 4.11: Audit images - biodiversity, landscape and heritage



Rough grassland, dead wood habitat, hedgerows, trees and scrub, Bantock Park (Site ID 86)



Opportunities for ecological enhancement at Pendeford Park (ID 18)



Active community woodland management, Coppice Woodland (ID 614).

Theme 6: Community involvement

4.65 Overall, the scores for community involvement were low for both quality and value. The vast majority of sites did not contain any features to promote community involvement or evidence of any active community groups.

4.66 Parks tended to include more of these features, with public noticeboards present in nearly 40% of parks surveyed. Cemeteries also scored more highly. 22% of these sites showed evidence of a community group and 22% had a public noticeboard.

There is the opportunity to further encourage community involvement in open spaces, including through establishing Friends Of groups. There is particularly a role for this in amenity green space which tend to be close to

residential areas and have the potential to form important community assets within housing estates.

Theme 7: Marketing and communication

4.67 This theme was only scored for value and questions focussed on the community facilities immediately surrounding the open space. Other social facilities or businesses were the most common nearby facilities, particularly at civic spaces and cemeteries. Schools were immediately adjacent to just over 20% of the sites surveys, particularly at civic spaces and parks.

4.68 Within open spaces themselves there is little evidence of additional features which aid with marketing and communication, such as performance spaces or public art. Natural green spaces and amenity green spaces had the lowest scores within this category. Only around 5% of these typologies had any features which contribute to their marketing and communication value.

There is the opportunity to further engage with nearby social and community facilities to promote use of nearby open spaces.

Figure 4.12: Audit images - marketing and communication



Well used, managed and maintained public noticeboard, West Park (ID 127)



Heritage features and community facilities, Smestow Valley (ID 77)

Play

4.69 Overall, equipped play sites audited are of good quality, with an average score of over 3.7 out of 5. Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs) generally scored the highest, with nearly 50% of these sites scoring 5 out of 5 for quality.

4.70 The most common play equipment within sites were swings, climbing frames and slides, which were recorded in over 80% of sites. Within Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs) rockers were also common (recorded in 87% of sites). 85% of NEAPs had balancing equipment.

4.71 Over 80% of all sites had seating and litterbins within or adjacent to play equipment and 90% of sites had impact absorbent surfaces round the play equipment. Provision for young people was also in generally a good condition, with an average score of 3.9 out of 5.

4.72 Provision for girls and young women was not specifically addressed, and features for this were present in fewer than half of play sites and fewer than 10% of all open spaces audited. In addition, provision for inclusive play was generally not present, or only partially present within play sites. Furthermore, opportunities for natural or informal play were not present in 65% of all sites and 35% of play sites.

Key opportunities for enhancing play provision include providing additional opportunities for informal, social and natural play. In addition, improving provision of accessible equipment and inclusivity of play areas is important. This may also include improving signage and awareness of which playgrounds offer such equipment.

Figure 4.13: Audit images - Play



Added play value and land forming for play at Goodyear Park (ID 132).



A range of features for older children and young people at Phoenix Park (ID 67).



Tired surfacing and equipment, Leicester Street Open Space (ID 64).



Use of surface markings to add play value at Renton Road Open Space (ID125).



Play and other recreation for a range of age groups and good quality seating at Renton Road Open Space (ID 125).