

Chapter 5

Accessibility assessment

Accessibility standards

The existing approach

5.1 The existing 2018 strategy update sets out the following accessibility standards:

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

Accessibility standards

5.2 The new Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework (NEGIF) moves away from setting separate accessibility standards for different typologies and proposes accessibility catchments which may be applied to all accessible 'natural green spaces' within each level of a site hierarchy. The proposed Natural England Green Infrastructure hierarchy approach has been adapted for

the Wolverhampton context. The site hierarchy and accessibility catchments adopted in Wolverhampton are set out in **Table 5.1**. Walk times are derived from the Chartered Institute for Highways and Transportation, stating that average walking speed is approximately 60 metres per minute (90m is fast, 30-40m is slow).

5.3 The existing Wolverhampton access standards have been applied to provision for children and provision for young people and other recreation. Access catchments have not been applied to cemeteries as they are not deemed appropriate for the purposes of this assessment and do not reflect need.

Table 5.1: Accessibility standards for Wolverhampton

Hierarchy / typology	Guideline size	Distance	Estimated walk time (minutes)
District (city-wide) open space	20ha-100ha	2km	30-35
Town open space	10ha - 20ha	1km	15-20
Neighbourhood open space	2ha – 10ha	300m	5-10
Doorstep	0.5ha – 2ha	200m	5 or less
Provision for children	n/a	300m	5-10
Provision for young people and other recreation	n/a	1km	15-20

Access to Greenspace Close to Home standard

5.4 The 2023 NEGIF proposes a size and proximity Accessible Greenspace Standard for local authorities, to ensure that everyone should have access to a variety of green space within 15 minutes walk from their home. This has been defined in Wolverhampton as having access to:

1. Either a Doorstep (200m catchment) or Neighbourhood (300m catchment) open space.
2. And a Town (1km catchment) greenspace.

5.5 Areas that do not meet both criteria would be considered to fall short of the Access to Greenspace Close to Home standard.

Quality, value and accessibility

5.6 The following section provides a series of maps showing the application of the adopted accessibility standards. Accessibility catchments have been applied as straight line (as the crow flies) catchments. It should be noted that there are several key barriers to access which would divert routes on the ground and affect access and travel times in some locations.

5.7 Key barriers to access include:

- Railway lines including the West Coast Main Line and the Shrewsbury and Walsall lines.
- Canals including; the Shropshire Union Canal Main Line; Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal; Birmingham Main Line; and the Wyrley and Essington Canal.
- A number of large, busy roads such as Stafford Road, Inner Ring Road (A4150), Birmingham New Road (A4123) and Penn Road (A449).

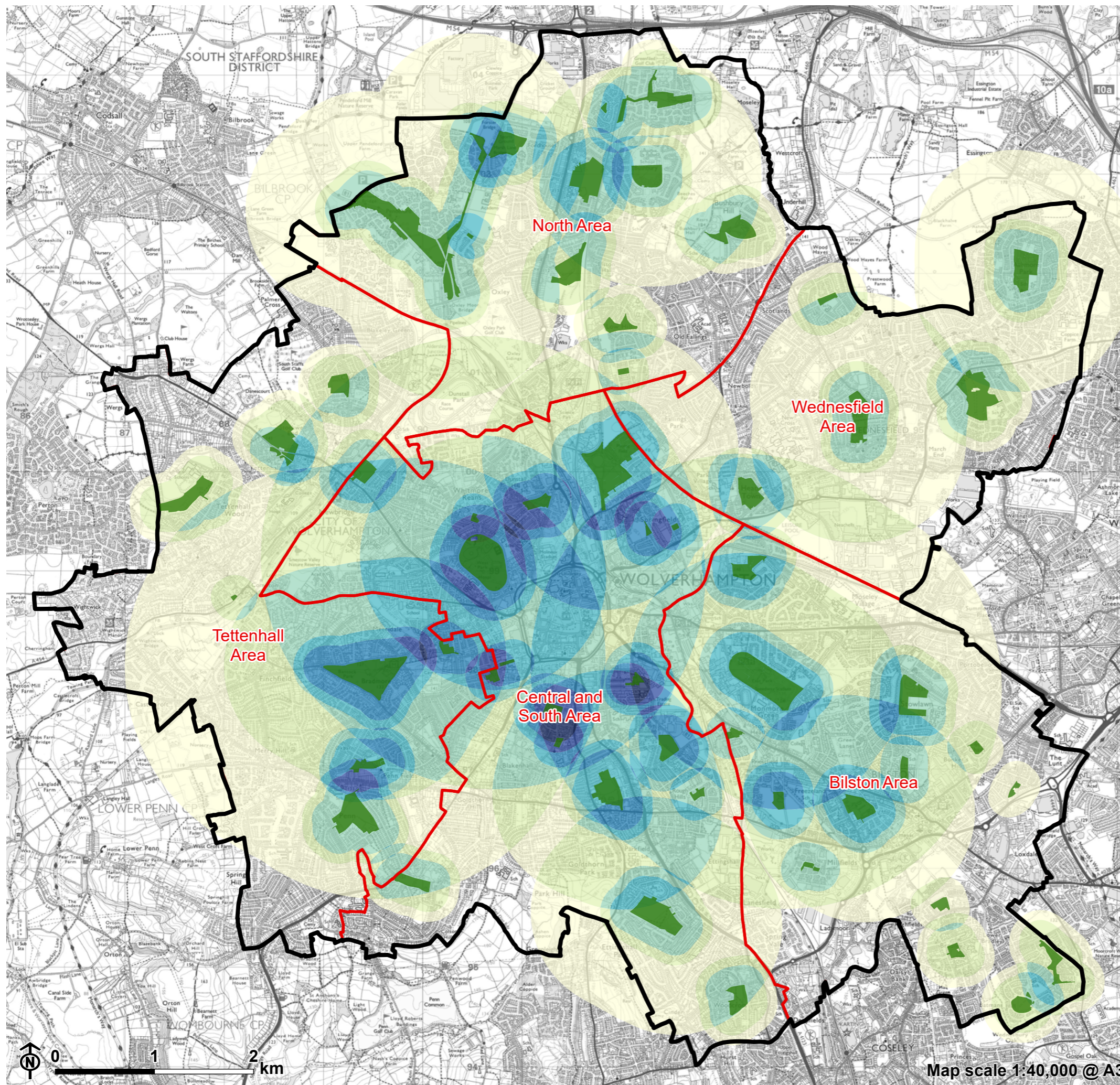
5.8 Figure 5.1 to Figure 5.6 shows accessibility mapping per typology. The 'performance' of open spaces against the quality and value standards is also indicated, providing a strategic overview of quality, value and accessibility by typology. It should be noted that the smaller access catchments are also applied to sites within higher levels of the open space size hierarchy. For example, a District open space would also have Town, Neighbourhood and Doorstep access catchments applied and a Town' open space would also have a Neighbourhood catchment applied.

Parks

5.9 Figure 5.1 shows quality, value and accessibility for parks. Wolverhampton has good coverage and accessibility to parks at the district (city wide) level although several areas do not have good access to any level of parks provision. This includes some residential areas on the outskirts of all analysis areas, in particular in the Scotlands and Old Fallings areas where the North and Wednesfield Analysis Areas adjoin. Wolverhampton has poorer access to parks at the Neighbourhood and Doorstep scale. Darker areas on Figure 5.1 indicate locations with good access to multiple parks. The Central and South Analysis Area has good access to parks with Town, Neighbourhood and Doorstep catchments, however there are a number of physical features that likely cause severance and impact easy access to sites (such as main roads, canals and railway lines).

5.10 The North and Wednesfield analysis areas have notable clusters of sites that are falling below the quality standards, or both quality and value.

Figure 5.1: Access to parks



- Wolverhampton boundary
- Analysis Area
- Parks
- Access buffer count (Darker areas have access to a greater number of sites)**
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7

The following access catchments have been applied:

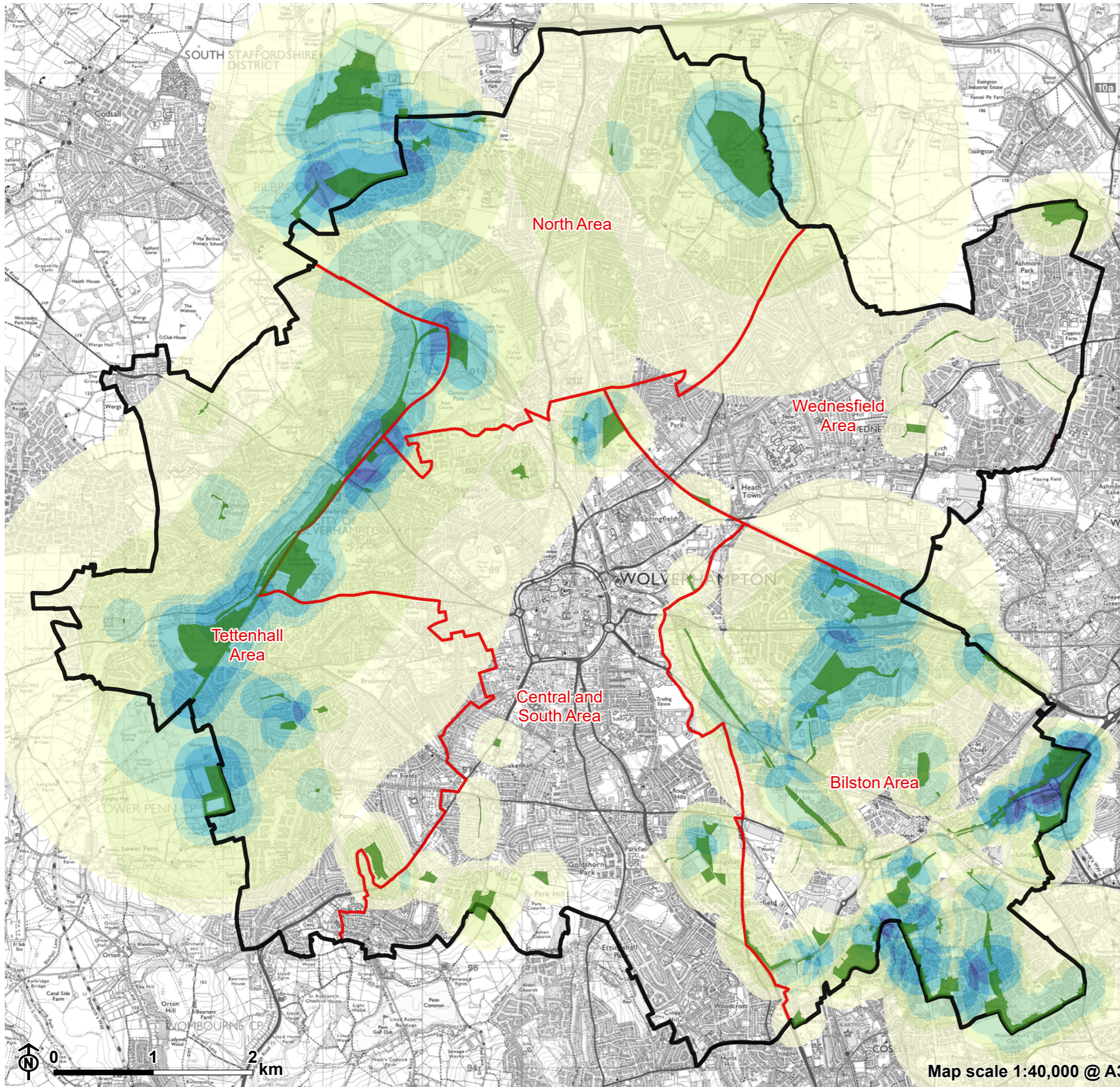
- District Parks: 2km
- Town Parks: 1km
- Neighbourhood Parks: 300m
- Doorstep Parks: 200m

Natural green space

5.11 The North, Tettenhall and Bilston analysis areas experience reasonably good access to natural greenspace, although all analysis areas have deficiencies when focussing on Town or Neighbourhood access catchments. A broad area from the south through the centre of Wolverhampton (Central and South Analysis Area) and Wednesfield is deficient in access to all levels of the natural green space hierarchy. There are several pockets deficient in access to all natural green space within central Bilston Analysis Area, see **Figure 5.2**.

5.12 Where there is little capacity to provide new natural green space, opportunities should be sought to create or enhance habitat areas in other types of open space. There may also be opportunities to improve access and connections to existing natural green space through enhanced access points and pedestrian and cycle access along the canal network.

Figure 5.2: Access to natural green space



Wolverhampton boundary

Analysis Area

Natural green space

Access buffer count (Darker areas have access to a greater number of sites)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8

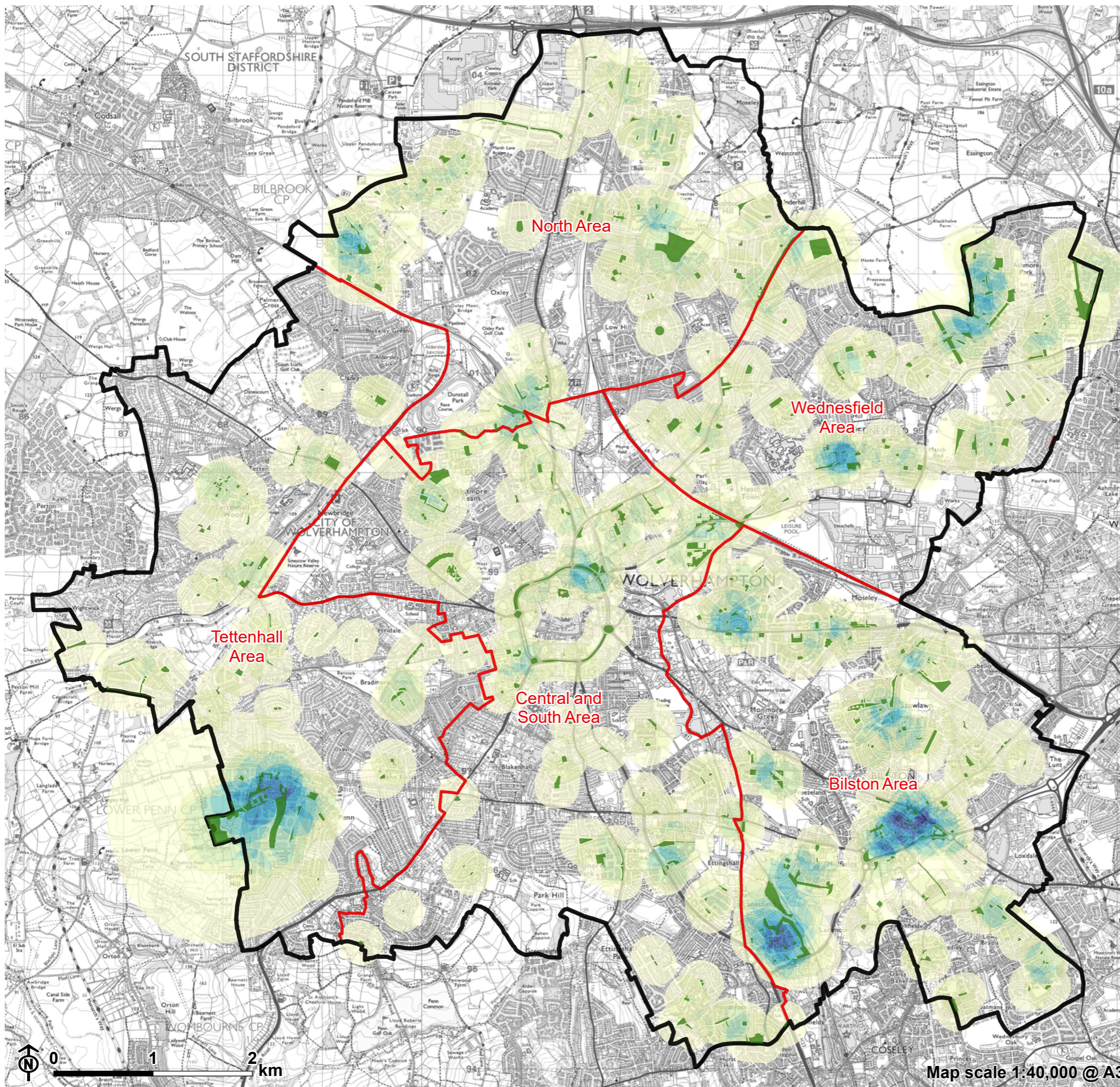
The following access catchments have been applied:

- District Natural green space: 2km
- Town Natural green space: 1km
- Neighbourhood Natural green space: 300m
- Doorstep Natural green space: 200m

Amenity green space

5.13 All analysis areas experience deficiencies in access to amenity green space, see **Figure 5.3**. The majority of amenity green space falls within the Doorstep level of the site hierarchy and is likely only used by residents immediately adjacent. It should be noted that residents in areas of deficiency in access to amenity green space may have access to other types of provision (e.g. parks or natural green space).

Figure 5.3: Access to amenity green space



- Wolverhampton boundary
- Analysis Area
- Amenity green space

Access buffer count (Darker areas have access to a greater number of sites)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11

The following access catchments have been applied:

- District Amenity green space: 2km
- Town Amenity green space: 1km
- Neighbourhood Amenity green space: 300m
- Doorstep Amenity green space: 200m

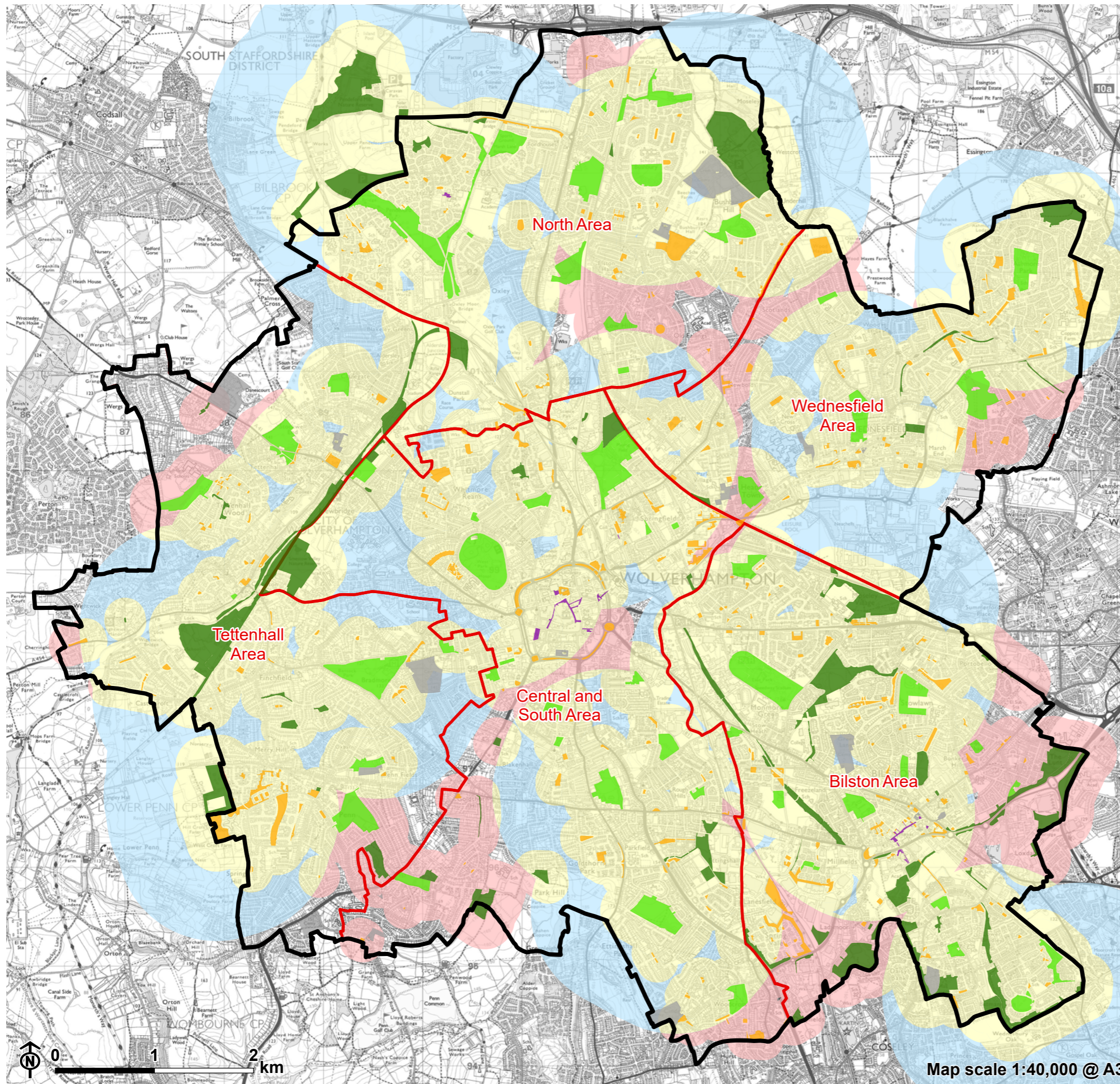
Access to Greenspace Close to Home

5.14 The Access to Greenspace Close to Home standard (see paragraph 5.4) focusses on providing access to a variety of open spaces that can be accessed within a 5 to 15 minute walk. Most areas of Wolverhampton have access to at least one Town open space within this distance. Several small areas do not, including pockets in the south of the North Analysis Area, northern and southern edge of the Tettenhall Analysis Area and the southwest of the Central and South Analysis Area.

5.15 Areas that do not meet the Access to Greenspace Close to Home standard include: pockets around the city centre; south west of the Central and South Analysis Area extending into Tettenhall Analysis Area; the southern boundaries of the Bilston Analysis Area; south section of the Wednesfield Analysis Area; and other small areas in the Wednesfield and North analysis areas (see **Figure 5.4**).

5.16 Access to Greenspace Close to Home brings together accessibility data for a range of typologies and levels of the open space size hierarchy and provides a broad overview of access to green space. Areas without easy access to a range of different types of open space, both at the doorstep or neighbourhood and at the town scale, should be considered priority areas for enhancements. If possible, the provision of neighbourhood, doorstep or pocket parks should also be considered. For areas where there is little capacity for additional open space (such as the city centre) this could comprise the provision of pocket parks, enhancements to the public realm (e.g. the creation of civic spaces) or the creation of enhanced linear links and connections (such as watercourses or the canal network).

Figure 5.4: Access to nature close to home



- Wolverhampton boundary
- Analysis Area
- Primary typology**
 - Amenity green space
 - Civic space
 - Natural green space
 - Parks
 - Cemeteries (buffers have not been applied to this typology)
- Nature close to home buffers**
 - Access to doorstep and/or neighbourhood green space only
 - Access to town green space only
 - Access to both doorstep and/or neighbourhood green space and town green space

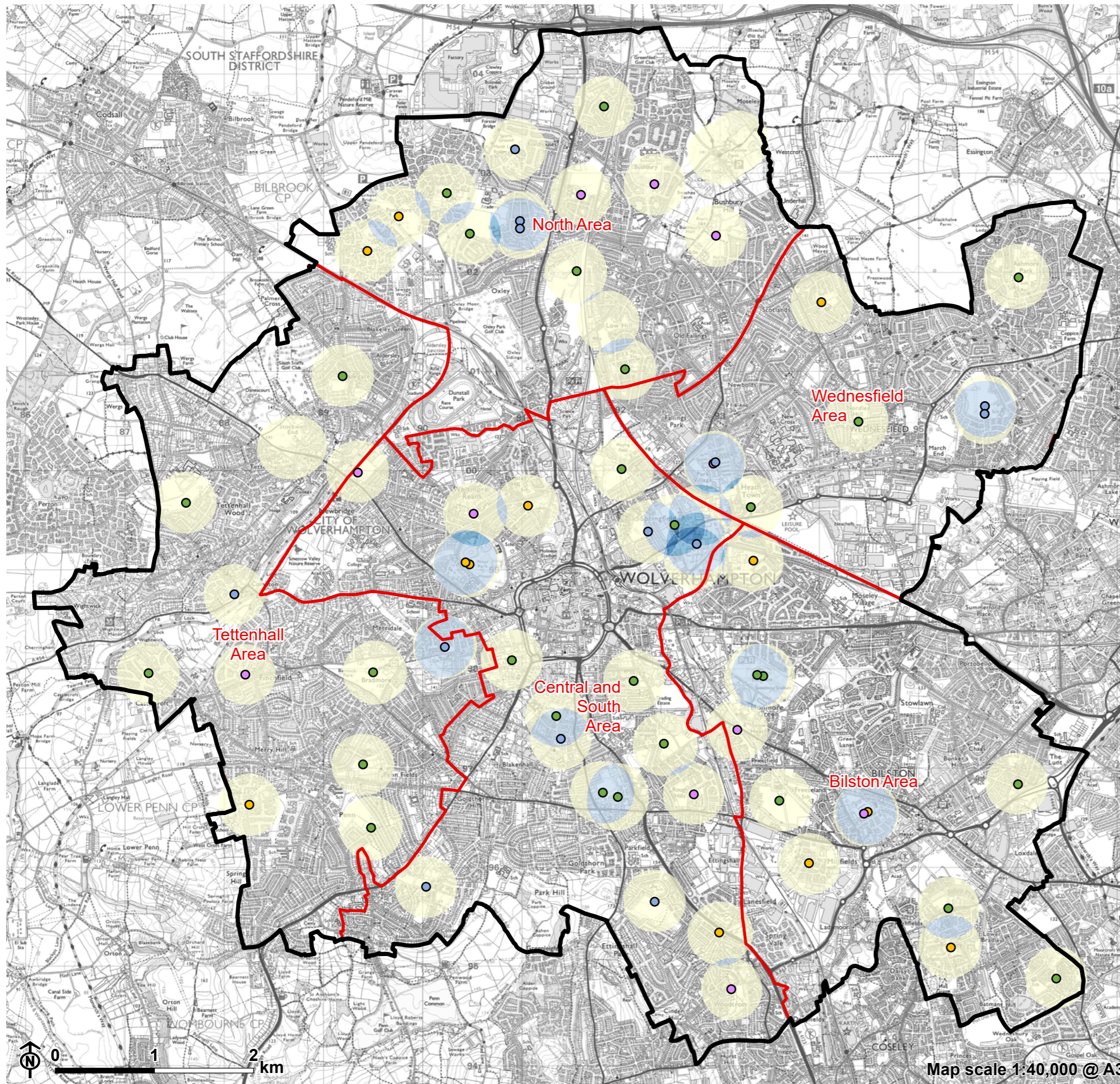
Natural England's Green Infrastructure standard sets a target for accessing nature close to home. This focusses green spaces within 1km (a roughly 15 minute walk) and sites within 300m (roughly 5 minute walk).

Provision for children, young people and other recreation

5.17 All analysis areas have some deficiencies in access to provision for children, see **Figure 5.5**. Notable areas with clusters of sites that fall below the quality and / or value standards include: Pendeford and Bushbury in the North Analysis Area; central Bilston Analysis Area and around Spring Vale and Parkfield in the Central and South Analysis Area; and Whitmore Reans. Few areas have access to more than one site; notable areas that do have access to more than one site are east and north of the city centre (although several are below the quality and / or value standards).

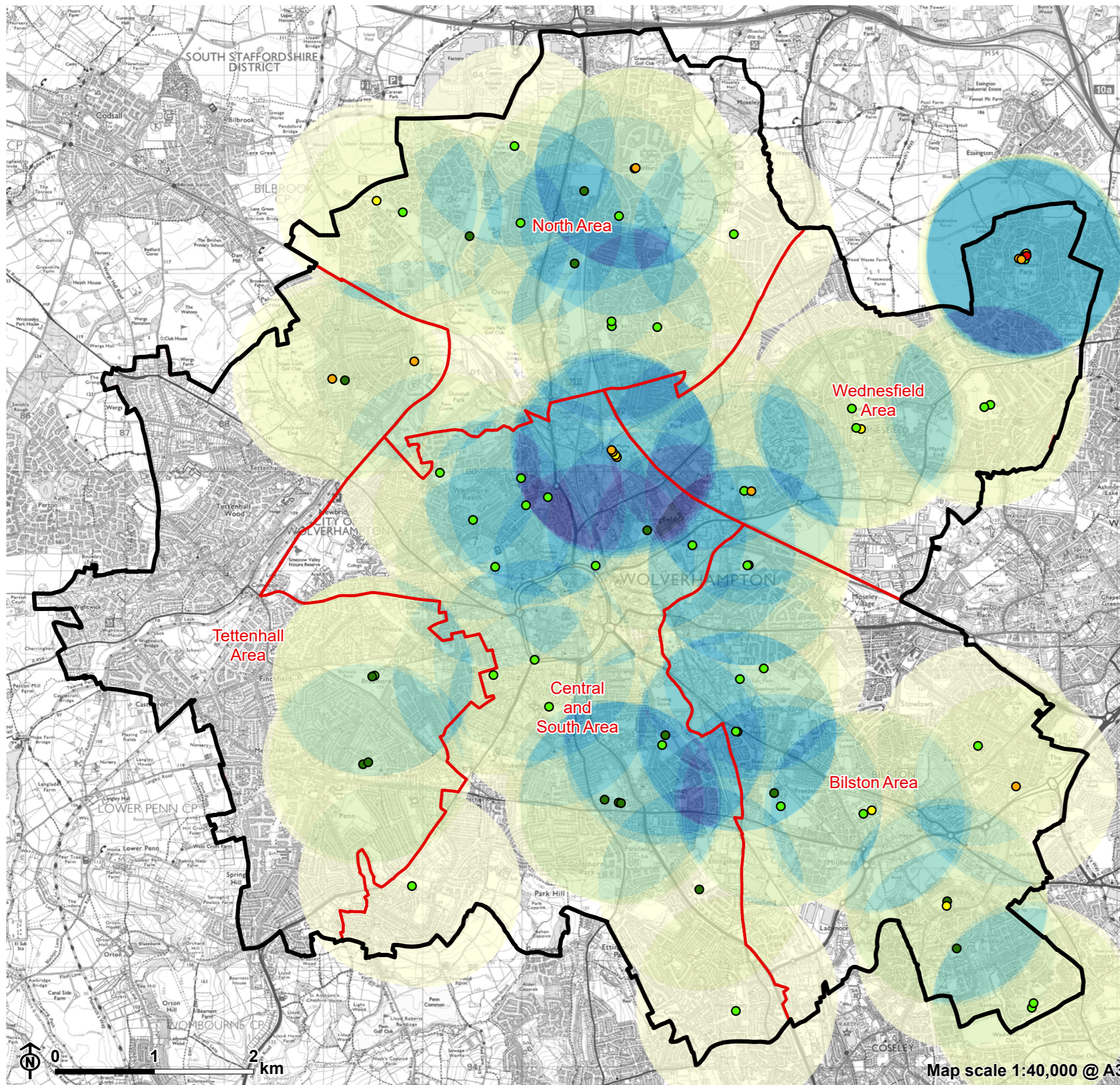
5.18 Access to provision for young people and other recreation is reasonably good; see **Figure 5.6**. Key areas of deficiency include the west section of Tettenhall Analysis Area, the south of Wednesfield Analysis Area and north of Bilston Analysis Area. Overlapping access catchments indicate that some areas have access to a range of different types of provision; this includes the north section of the Central and South Analysis Area, an area straddling the Central and South and Bilston Analysis Areas, Ashmore Park in the Wednesfield Analysis Area and around Bushbury in the North Analysis Area.

Figure 5.5: Access to provision for children



- 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
 - Access buffer count (Darker areas have access to a greater number of sites)**
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5
- Access catchment provision for children: 300m

Figure 5.6: Access to provision for young people and other recreation



Wolverhampton boundary
 Analysis Area
Provision for young people and other recreation quality
● 1 - Low
● 2
● 3
● 4
● 5 - High

Access buffer count (Darker areas have access to a greater number of sites)

	1
	2
	3
	4
	5
	6
	7
	8
	9
	10
	11
	12

Access catchment provision for young people and other recreation: 1km

Chapter 6

Community insight

6.1 The following section provides a synthesis of the key findings and implications of the community insight that has been gathered to inform the Strategy. A range of engagement methods were employed to ensure a mix of both quantitative and qualitative data was captured. Around 750 participants were engaged as part of the consultation process, not including City of Wolverhampton Council staff forums and the separate consultations on Farndale Open Space and East Park. Several key strands of public and internal council consultation were undertaken, including:

- An online survey, hosted on the city council's Consultation Hub (567 participants).
- Two structured community workshops (12 participants).
- Focussed discussion groups with specific interest / demographic groups and forums (171 participants not including staff forum attendees).

6.2 In summary, the purpose of gathering community insight was to:

- Set out the value of open space and its contribution to the quality of life of residents.
- Understand perceptions of the quality of open space across the study area and to what extent the quality of sites may need to be improved.
- Gather information on any barriers faced by specific group or users of open space.
- Identify specific aspirations or needs for future open space provision and enhancement.
- Understand interest in community involvement in open space (e.g. volunteering)

Online Survey

6.3 An online survey was conducted to gather information on residents' open space and play space use, how satisfied they were with the quality of open space, and what additional types of open space and play space may be needed in the future. The results of the survey are summarised below. A blank version of the full survey is included in **Appendix B**.

6.4 The survey was live and open to responses during 2023 for a period of 15 weeks between July and October. The online survey was promoted widely amongst residents and established community groups. The main avenues of promotion comprised:

- City of Wolverhampton Council website and Consultation Hub
- Social media (including Wolverhampton Parks X, and Wolverhampton Council X, Facebook, Instagram).
- Established groups / services (e.g. Wolverhampton Voluntary and Community Action)
- Community hubs / public buildings (e.g. Wolverhampton Central Library, Civic Centre).

6.5 To provide an opportunity for those without good digital access to respond to the survey, paper copies were provided for submission in all public libraries.

6.6 The survey had a total of 567 responses.

Survey demographic

6.7 The majority of respondents were female (66%), 26% were male, and 5% preferred not to say.

6.8 Survey participation steadily increased with age, with 10% of respondents aged 16 - 34, 33% of respondents aged 35 – 54, and 52% of respondents aged 55 and over. The highest participation was amongst those over the age of 65 (31%).

6.9 In terms of ethnicity, 68% of respondents reported being from a white British ethnic background. 26% of participants were from ethnic minority groups, including 17% Indian participants, 3% from other white backgrounds, 2% Black, Black British or Caribbean participants, 2% mixed ethnicity (White and Black Caribbean, White and Asian, and other mixed background), and less than 1% of participants were from each of the following ethnicities: Pakistani, Irish, African, and Arab. 5% of participants preferred not to say or didn't answer.

6.10 Christianity (all denominations) was the most common religion amongst respondents (42%). 28% of respondents reported following no religion. 9% of respondents reported to be Sikh and 6% Hindu. Seven respondents were Muslim, and one Buddhist.

6.11 The vast majority of respondents (90%) had access to a private garden at home. 5% of respondents had access to a communal/shared garden while five reported having access to a balcony. and seven respondents had no access to outside space at home.

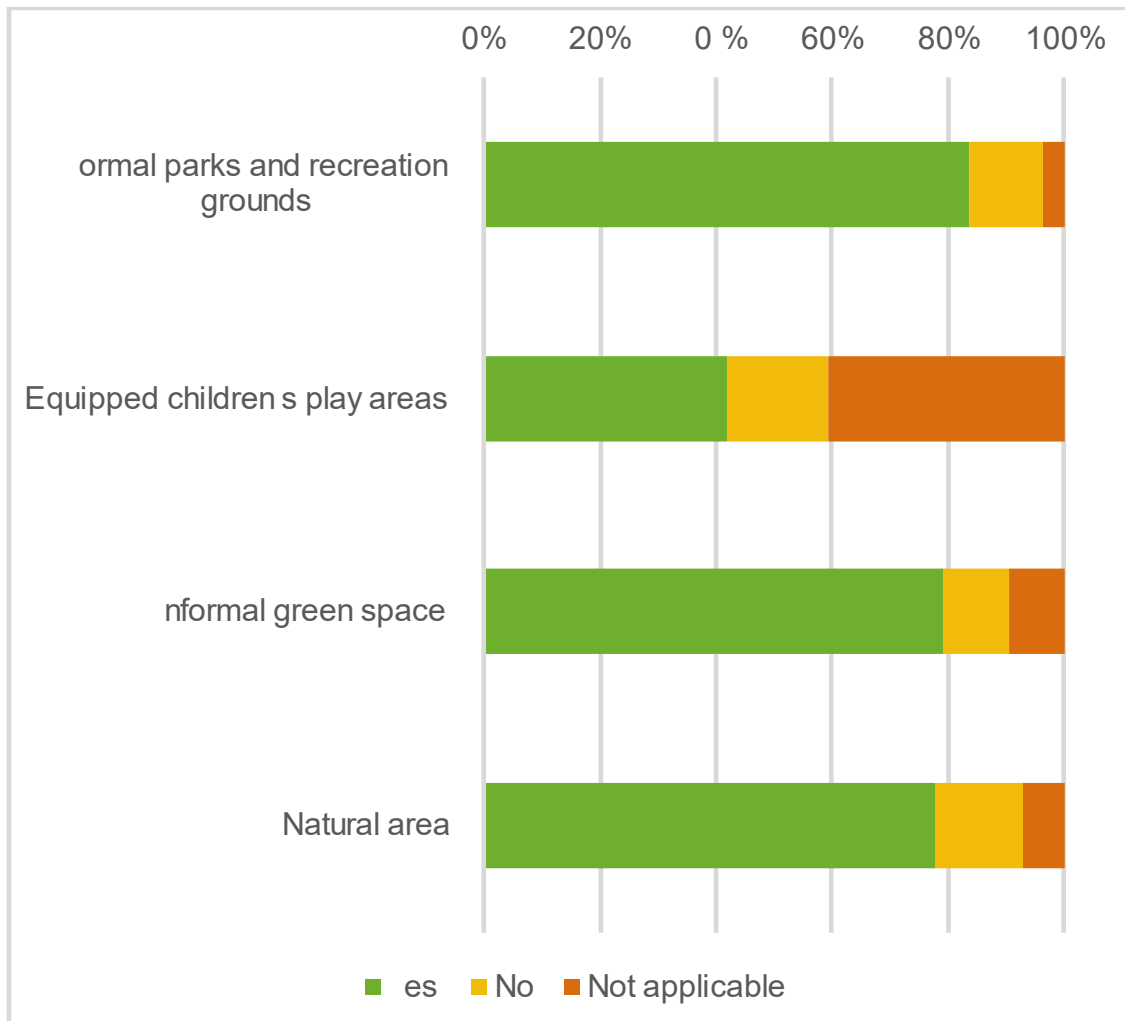
Use and access to open space

6.12 97.5% of respondents reported visiting parks, play areas and open spaces in Wolverhampton.

6.13 When asked, the majority of respondents were happy with how far they have to travel to reach different types of open space with satisfaction varying for formal parks and recreation grounds (83.6%); informal green space (79.2%); and natural areas (77.8%). 42% of participants reporting being happy with the travel to equipped children's play areas. As might be expected a notable

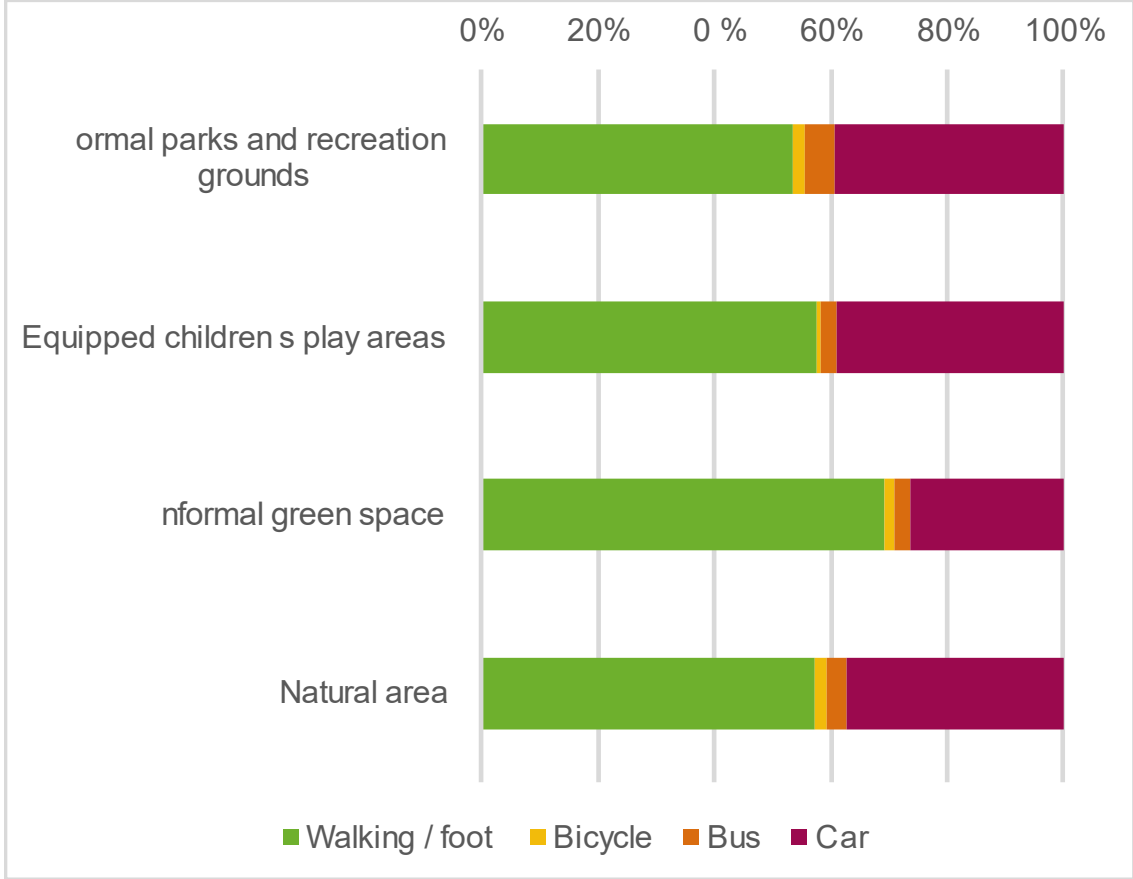
proportion of residents indicated that they do not visit such play areas (41%); see **Figure 6.1**.

Figure 6.1: Are you happy with how far you have to travel to access the following types of open space?



6.14 Residents' most popular mode of travel for accessing parks and open space was walking (59.1% average), followed by car (35.4% average). Buses and bicycles only accounted for a small percentage of travel at 3.4% and 1.8% respectively. See **Figure 6.2**.

Figure 6.2: Normally, how do you travel to the following types of open space?



6.15 24% of respondents reported that their use of open space had changed permanently as a result of the Covid pandemic. Respondents reported a deeper appreciation for nearby parks, canals, and natural areas, leading to increased regular visits even after the pandemic. Some residents started walking groups, formed new routines for daily walks, or engaged in outdoor activities like running or cycling. Respondents were also given the opportunity to provide additional comments regarding the impact of Covid on their use of open space. These are summarised in the key themes below.

- **Concerns and Issues:** Participants reported issues with maintenance, cleanliness, safety, and antisocial behaviour in certain areas. They noted their effects on their ability to enjoy these spaces and raised concerns over accessibility for some individuals and families.

- **Desire for Improvement:** There is a collective desire for improvements such as better maintenance, more facilities for various age groups, additional benches, better lighting, and measures to address safety concerns in certain areas. There is also a call for preserving and maintaining green spaces for community well-being.

Open space quantity

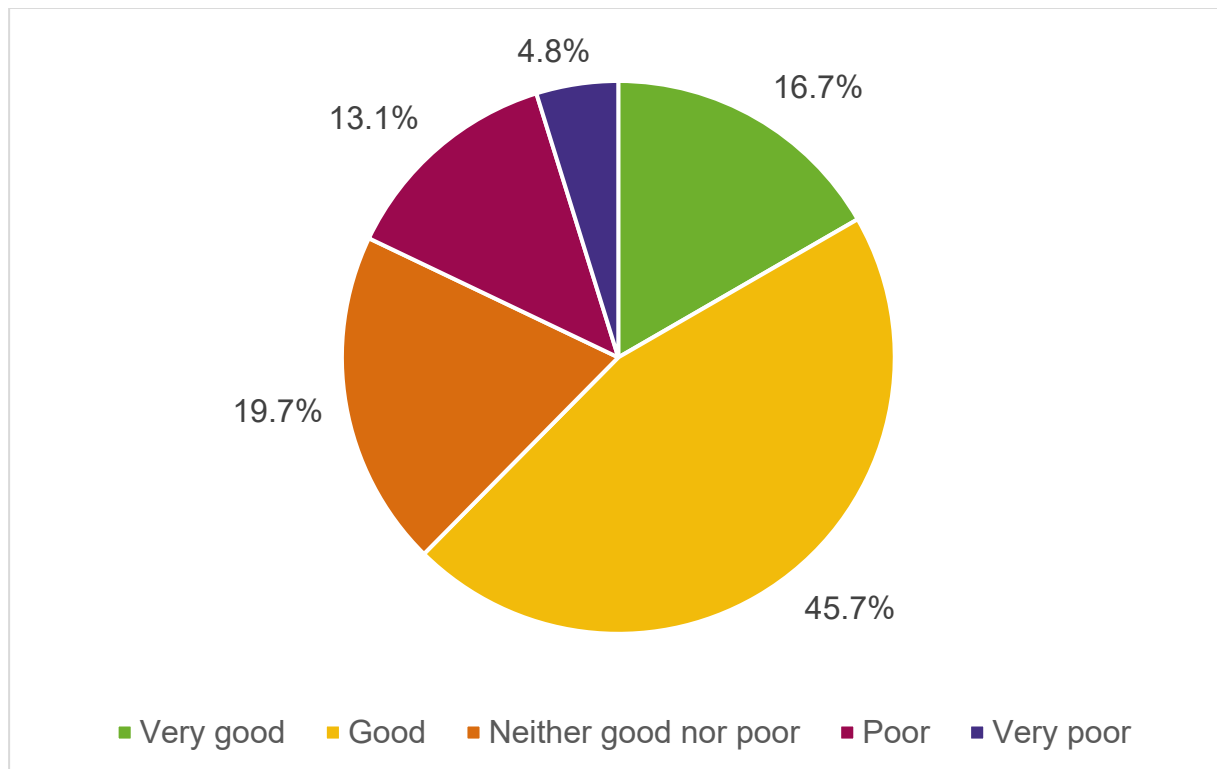
6.16 Participants were asked if they think there is enough open space in their local area. 60% of respondents felt that the amount of open space in their local area is 'about right', 36% felt that there is 'not enough', and 1.8% thought there is 'too much'.

6.17 When asked to think back to Covid lockdown, 68% of respondents felt that they had enough open space to exercise in their local area, 22% felt that there was not enough open space to access exercise, and 10% felt that open spaces were too busy to exercise in.

Quality and condition of open spaces

6.18 Participants were asked what they thought of the overall quality and condition of open space in their local area (see **Figure 6.3**). 46% of participants felt it was good, 17% felt it was very good, 13% felt it was poor, and 5% thought it was very poor. 20% of participants felt it was neither good nor poor.

Figure 6.3: What do you think of the overall quality and condition of open space in your local area?



Value and perceived benefits of open space

6.19 Participants were asked what benefits they feel they receive from open space. A list of potential benefits was provided, each of which was rated on a scale of 0-5 (0 being ‘no benefit’ and 5 being ‘a major benefit’). Respondents rated physical health, making areas more attractive, mental health, access to nature, and socialising as the top five benefits provided by open space (rated on a scale of 0 to 5). See **Figure 6.4** and **Figure 6.5**. Respondents were also given the opportunity to provide additional comments on the benefits of open space. These are summarised below and give an indication of how residents value open space in Wolverhampton.

■ Recreational opportunities:

- Open spaces provide a safe environment for dog walking, and also offers opportunities for various recreational activities like exercise, entertainment

for children, picnics, and sports, helping to contribute to community engagement, enjoyment, and overall well-being.

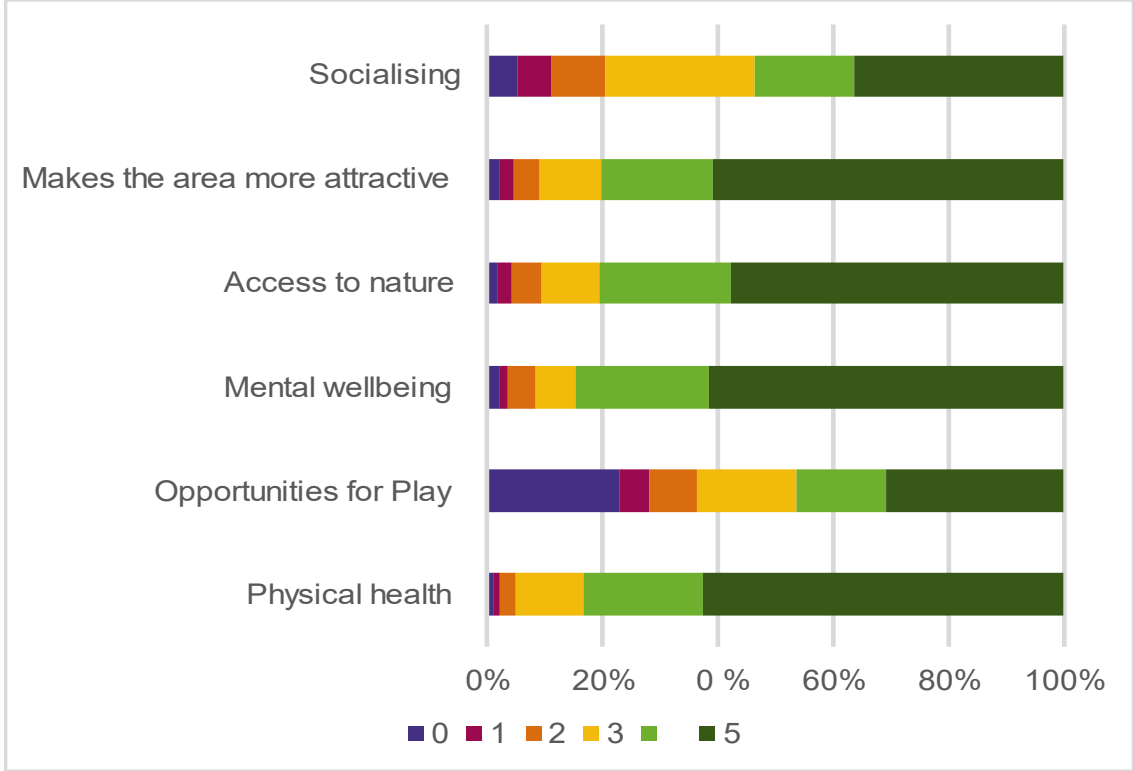
■ Access to nature and environmental benefits:

4. Open spaces helped respondents access nature, engage with wildlife and take part in conservation activities.
5. Respondents noted the importance of open space in providing access to '*fresh air*' and its contribution to better air quality, serving as the '*lungs of the city*', as well as its role in supporting wildlife habitats and aiding in the fight against climate change.

■ Emotional well-being, mental health, and social interaction:

6. Open spaces offer respondents a space for quiet contemplation.
7. Open spaces also provide meeting spots for friends and community groups, which contribute to improved mental health and a better quality of life.

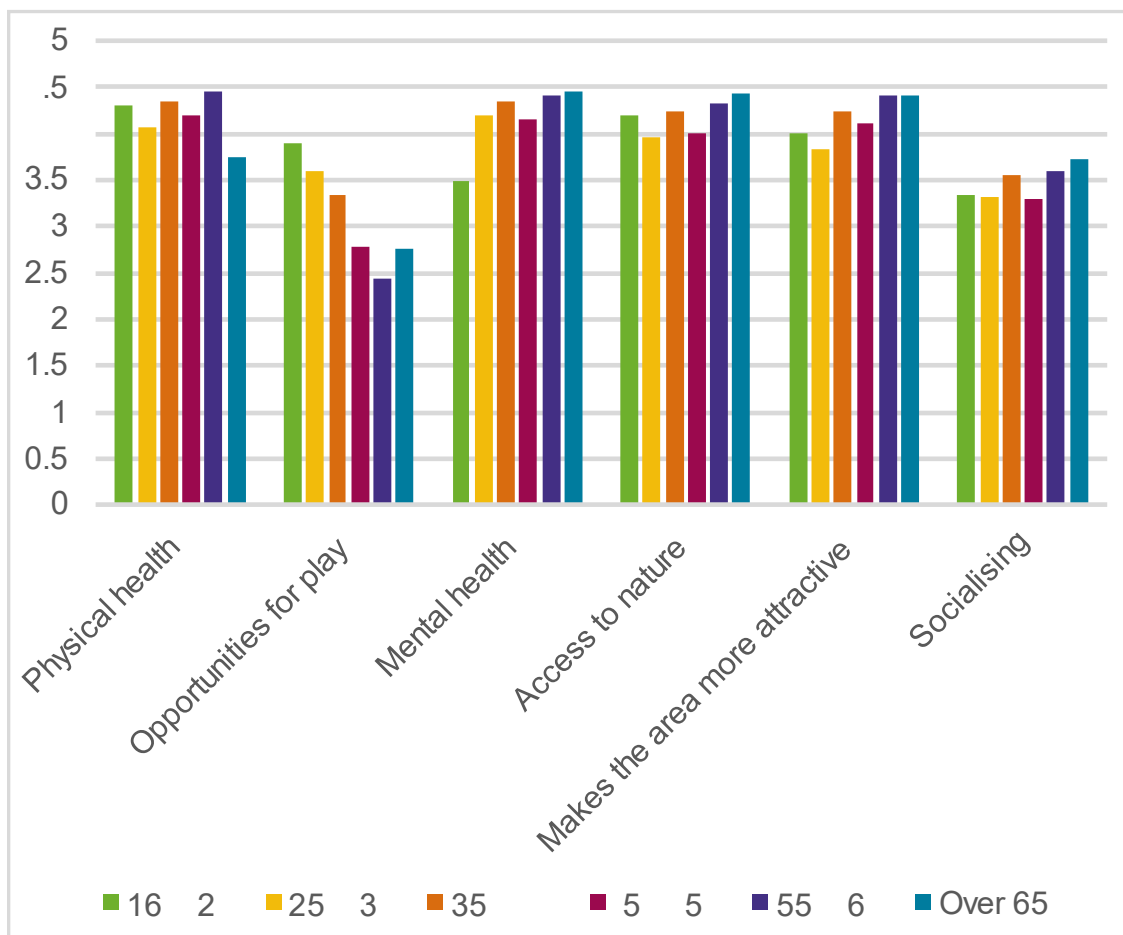
Figure 6.4: What benefits do you feel you receive from open spaces in Wolverhampton?*



*Participants were asked to rate the different potential benefits provided by open space in Wolverhampton on a scale of one to five. The numbers shown relate to the rating (i.e. 0 = no benefit to 5 = significant benefit).

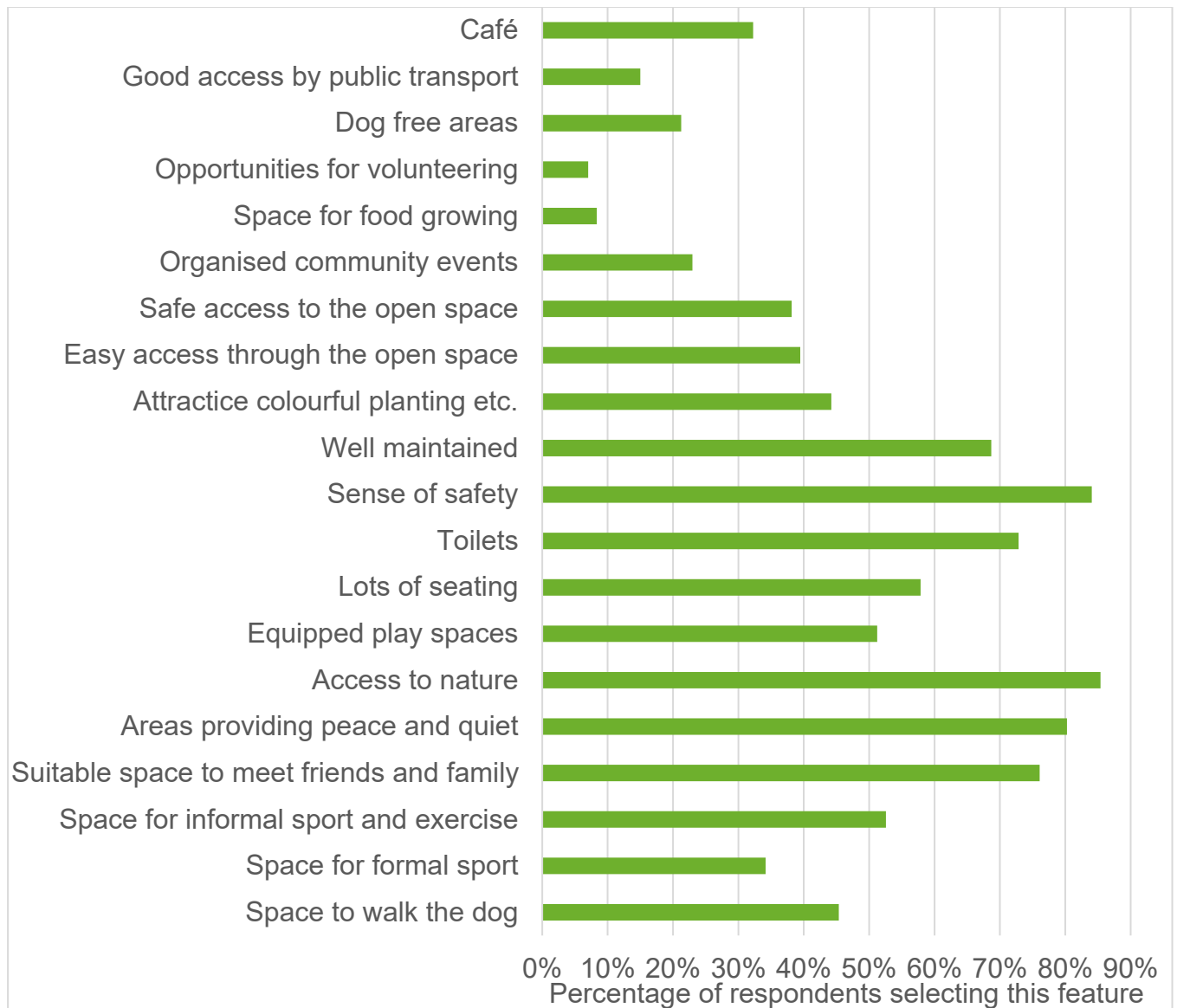
Figure 6.5: What benefits do you feel you receive from open spaces in Wolverhampton? (average score)

(colours show age group bands listed below figure)



6.20 Respondents were asked what is most important to them when visiting an open space. The top 10 most important aspects of open space according to participants are (in ranking order): access to nature; sense of safety; areas providing peace and quiet; suitable space to meet friends and family; toilets; being well maintained; lots of seating; space for informal sport and exercise; equipped play spaces; and space to walk the dog. See **Figure 6.6** for further information.

Figure 6.6: What is most important to you when visiting an open space?



Volunteering / community engagement

6.21 Respondents were asked if they were currently involved in any open space volunteering activities, and if not, whether they would be interested in getting involved. 11% of respondents reported being involved in open space volunteering. 15% of respondents reported that they are not currently involved in open space volunteering but would like to be. 74% of respondents stated that they are neither involved in open space volunteering or interested in becoming involved.

Community workshops

6.22 LUC led two in-person workshops aimed at gathering qualitative data on residents': experience of open space; desires and future aspirations for open space; and views on potential opportunities for open space improvement. One workshop was undertaken in the east of the city, and one in the west (one evening session and one daytime session). The results from both workshops have been combined for the purposes of analysis. Workshops were jointly attended by 12 participants.

6.23 The workshops were structured around three key exercises, based on several 'themes' or subject areas. The three exercises included:

- Exercise one: Areas doing well (participants' experience and use of open space in Wolverhampton).
- Exercise two: Looking forward (aspirations for open space) .
- Exercise three: Prioritising actions (identifying key actions for the strategy).

Exercise one: Areas doing well

6.24 Participants were asked to identify areas of open space provision they think are performing well in Wolverhampton. Sticky notes with participants'

comments were arranged within a ‘matrix’ under several themes and identified either as a ‘site specific’ or a ‘city wide’ consideration. Many participants used the exercise to identify areas they also considered to be performing poorly.

Table 6.1 below summarises the number of positive and negative comments by theme recorded as part of this exercise.

Table 6.1: Exercise one: positive / negative comments

Theme	Positive comments	Negative comments	Neutral / suggestions for improvement
Welcoming sites	7	8	-
Easy to access	4	2	5
Play	1	3	-
Sport	1	-	1
Accessing nature	12	2	2
Events & activities	4	-	-
Volunteering and getting involved	-	-	5
Other	2	1	2
Total (Exercise one)	31	16	15

■ Welcoming sites

- 8. Participants highlighted a number of sites considered to be key examples of sites that are performing well in terms of being welcoming; these included West Park, Bantock Park, Peace Park and Claregate Park. Fowlers Park was mentioned specifically in relation to improvement works to the lake.
- 9. Site maintenance issues were the most frequent aspects noted as affecting how welcoming a site is, including graffiti, dog faeces, litter and overflowing

bins. It was suggested that an increase in fly tipping was linked to increased charges for bulky waste removal.

■ Easy to access

10. Several participants highlighted the importance of appropriate placement of access points on sites '*Bantock Park has lots of access points*'.
11. Respondents felt parking provision for open spaces is not always mindful of the impacts upon nearby residents. However, a lack of parking was noted by others, specifically in relation to disabled parking and parking for football match days.
12. Whether open spaces are within walking distance was identified as an importance consideration for parents '*whether you can walk there or not is a key factor*'. One participant suggested that sites need to be roughly within a 15 minute walk.
13. One participant gave an example of their walking group going to South Staffordshire as there was better connectivity of public rights of way.

■ Play

14. Accessibility and the availability of toilets was considered an important factor when choosing play areas for those with young children. East Park was identified as an exemplary site by respondents.
15. Participant felt that the '*no ball games allowed*' signage in areas of open space was often outdated and unlikely to be enforced.
16. Appropriate placement of play sites was noted several times as a key consideration '*play sites - generally not well sited*'.

■ Sport

17. Exercise equipment in Wolverhampton was noted to be '*good*' and noted to be well used - '*teenagers often use this*'. Claregate Recreation Ground was noted as a good example. However, a resident also discussed the need to encourage more outdoor fitness activities and opportunities, outside of the outdoor exercise equipment.

■ Accessing Nature

18. Participants noted several examples of sites providing good opportunities for access to nature including Pendeford Mill Nature Reserve, Smestow Valley and areas with trees - *'areas of trees in Bantock Park – good for kids'*. The variety of different types of sites that are available to visit in Wolverhampton was noted as a benefit.
19. The use of small areas of amenity greenspace to provide community activities and benefits for nature was noted, such as bug hotels built by residents, with a parent stating the importance of this for children.
20. Natural/relaxed management areas were considered a good addition by some but only when located within suitable areas *'Bantock (Park) – paths that aren't mown. Ok, as long as not everywhere. Grass should be multipurpose'*.
21. Participants discussed the removal of trees that they had seen across Wolverhampton, expressing the view that no more should be taken down in future. Participants also felt that trees which had fallen down naturally, or had been taken down, should be left as they provide a fun play space for kids and benefit nature.

■ Events and activities

22. Bantock Park was noted for its diversity of events, including national play day, outdoor theatre, proms, and antiques days.
23. Residents expressed a desire for more open space activities and better use of sites such as Muchall Park. Some participants noted that better communication and more information about existing events would be beneficial.

■ Volunteering and getting involved

24. Participants discussed volunteering opportunities at Pendeford Mill Nature Reserve; events for children to promote wildlife, nature, and crafts.
25. A participant also raised the timings of volunteering opportunities, stating *'I would like more volunteering opportunities at lunchtimes, evenings and weekends because I work.'*

Exercise two: Looking forward

6.25 Using a similar format to Exercise one, participants were invited to arrange comments made in that exercise on sticky notes within a matrix. Exercise two was focussed on identifying open space priorities for the future. Considerations for the future that were highlighted during this exercise are summarised under several themes below:

■ Safe

26. Vegetation management to ensure existing pathways are useable (some canal routes noted as an issue).
27. Physical barriers or provision of a bike track to reduce dangerous use of motorbikes on walking routes (*'railway walk'* noted as an example site).
28. Enhance youth service / engagement with young people.
29. Clear guidance (including on-site) for reporting anti-social behaviour.
30. Enhance on-site staff presence / Ranger Service.
31. CCTV / better lighting (Bantock Park noted as an example).

■ Inclusive

32. Improved accessible and inclusive play space.
33. Address parking issues, including availability of disabled parking (football matchdays noted as a particular issue).
34. Participants discussed the importance of providing for those with specific access needs (Wildside Activity Centre provided as a good example – not managed by the city council).

■ Community spaces where people can come together

35. Opportunities for more organised events and activities including nature trails, bird walks, and park runs.
36. Better communication for what events are on and where.
37. Opportunities for the development of community *'swap shops'* to trade clothes, books etc. for the associated benefits to sustainability.

38. Greater use of small and unused green spaces in residential areas to: build bug hotels, plant wildflowers, and allow volunteers to look after their own space in order to help foster more community spirit.

39. Conservatory at West Park could be re-opened for community use. Better use of bandstands.

■ Being healthy and active

40. Better signage, highlighting public rights of way and other footpaths.

41. Guided walks.

42. More activities, information and trails for children in parks, which could also be educational.

43. Better information regarding allotments; waiting lists, availability and other options for food growing.

■ Helping wildlife and the environment

44. Identify areas suitable for wetlands.

45. Participants raised issues of noise levels and disturbance, and their potential impacts to local wildlife.

46. Promote a wider variety of habitats (e.g. scrubland, heathland, woodland).

47. Appropriate access to wildlife information (Participants were concerned over the potential for targeted damage to protected species or areas if the location of some species was made public).

■ Other

48. Measures to address unofficial parking on green space.

49. Consider further policy and guidance on managing potential noise from large events in parks. Noise disturbance from events in some residential areas was noted with Bantock Park given as an example.

50. Provide more bins and better monitoring of known fly-tipping sites.

51. The transformation of brownfield sites into green space (Sandwell Valley noted as an example).

52. Work in partnership with others (e.g. Canal & River Trust).

Exercise three: Prioritising actions

6.26 A series of pre-prepared potential actions was presented to participants, arranged under several themes (attendees were also given the opportunity to add their own actions based on exercise two). Participants were then asked to indicate which of the actions they considered to be a priority (with a green sticker), or not a priority (with a red sticker). The number of stickers provided to each participant was limited to three per theme to focus the exercise on prioritisation.

6.27 The results from the exercise are summarised below under each theme. Most participants chose to use few red stickers (indicating actions considered 'not a priority'). The results below focus on actions identified as a priority by the workshop attendees. Actions indicated as 'not a priority' are also noted.

Safe and inclusive spaces

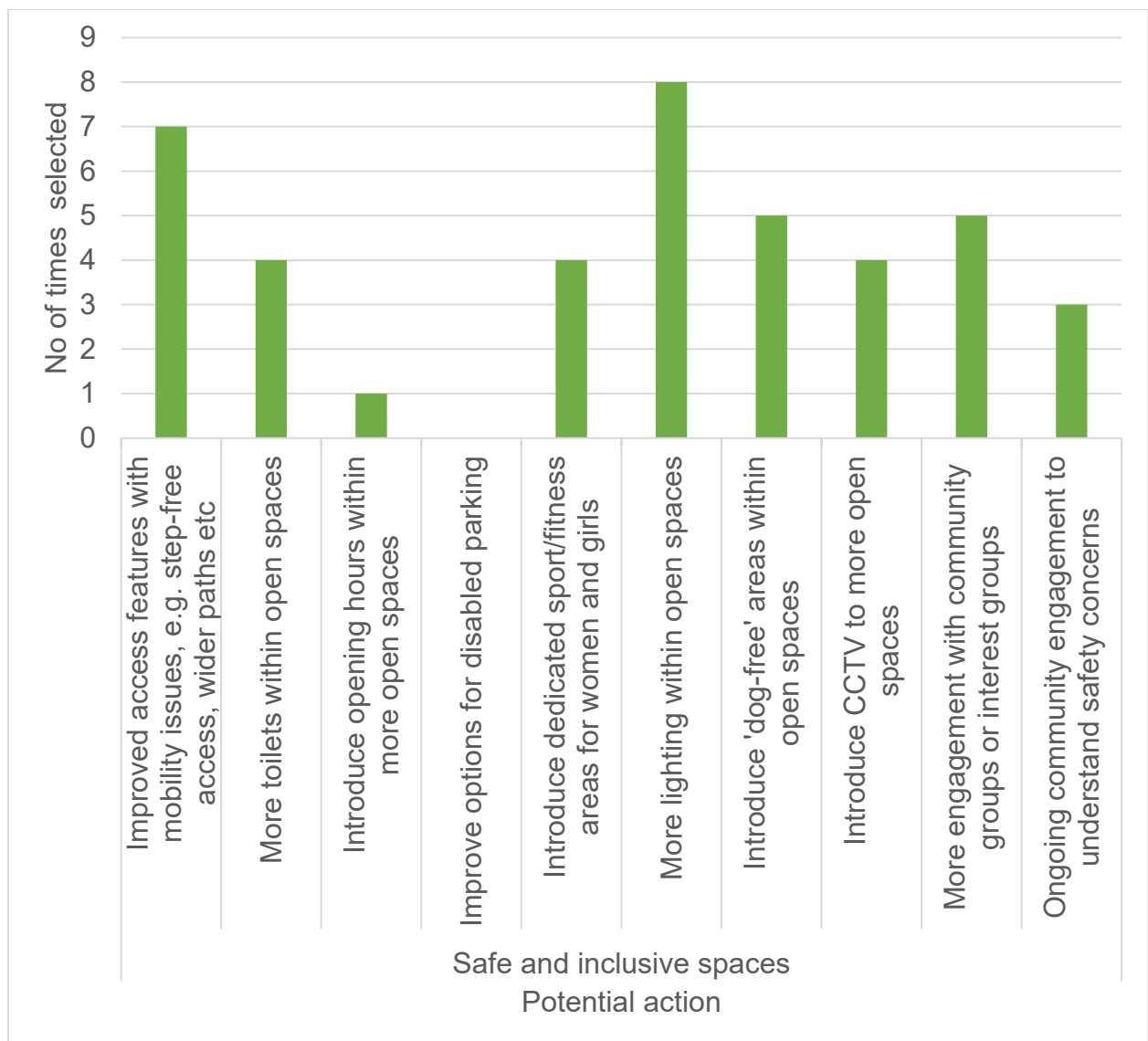
6.28 All but one potential action identified as a priority were under 'safe and inclusive places' See **Figure 6.7**. No actions were indicated as 'not a priority'. Potential actions selected most often by attendees included:

- More lighting within open spaces.
- Improved access for those with mobility issues e.g. step free access, wider paths.
- Introduce dog free areas within open spaces
- More engagement with community groups or interest groups.

6.29 *'More toilets within open spaces; and 'introduce dedicated sport/ fitness areas for women and girls'* were among the next most often selected. Potential

actions selected the least included ‘introduce opening hours within more open spaces’ and ‘improve options for disabled parking’.

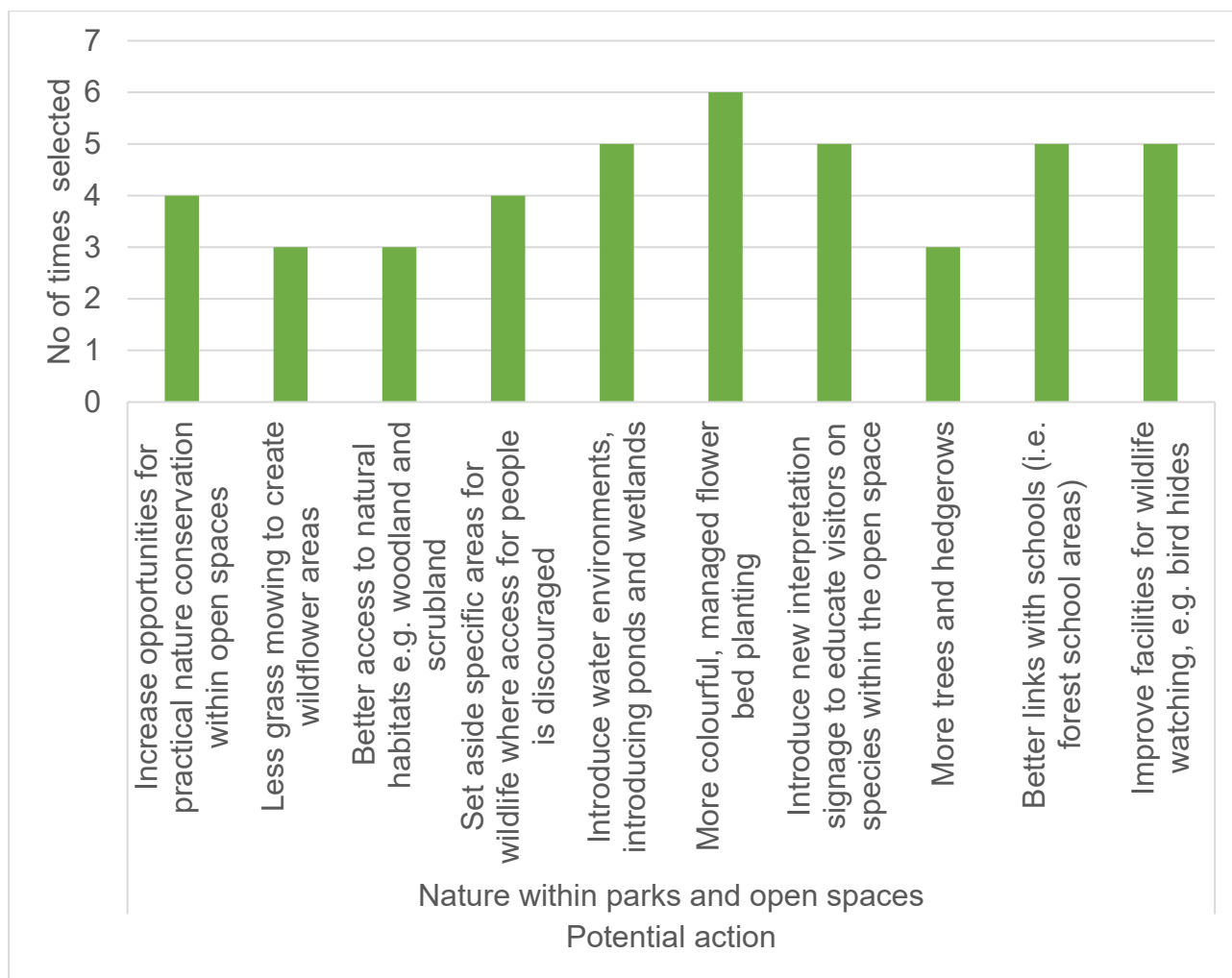
Figure 6.7: Potential actions: safe and inclusive spaces



Nature within parks and open spaces

6.30 All potential actions within this theme were selected at least three times, see **Figure 6.8**. This included: introduce water environments (ponds and wetlands); introduce new interpretation signage to educate visitors on species within the open space; better links with schools (i.e. forest school areas); and improve facilities for wildlife watching, e.g. bird hides. All of these were selected as a priority. More colourful, managed flower bed planting was selected the most, although one participant indicated this action as not a priority.

Figure 6.8: Potential actions: nature within parks and open spaces

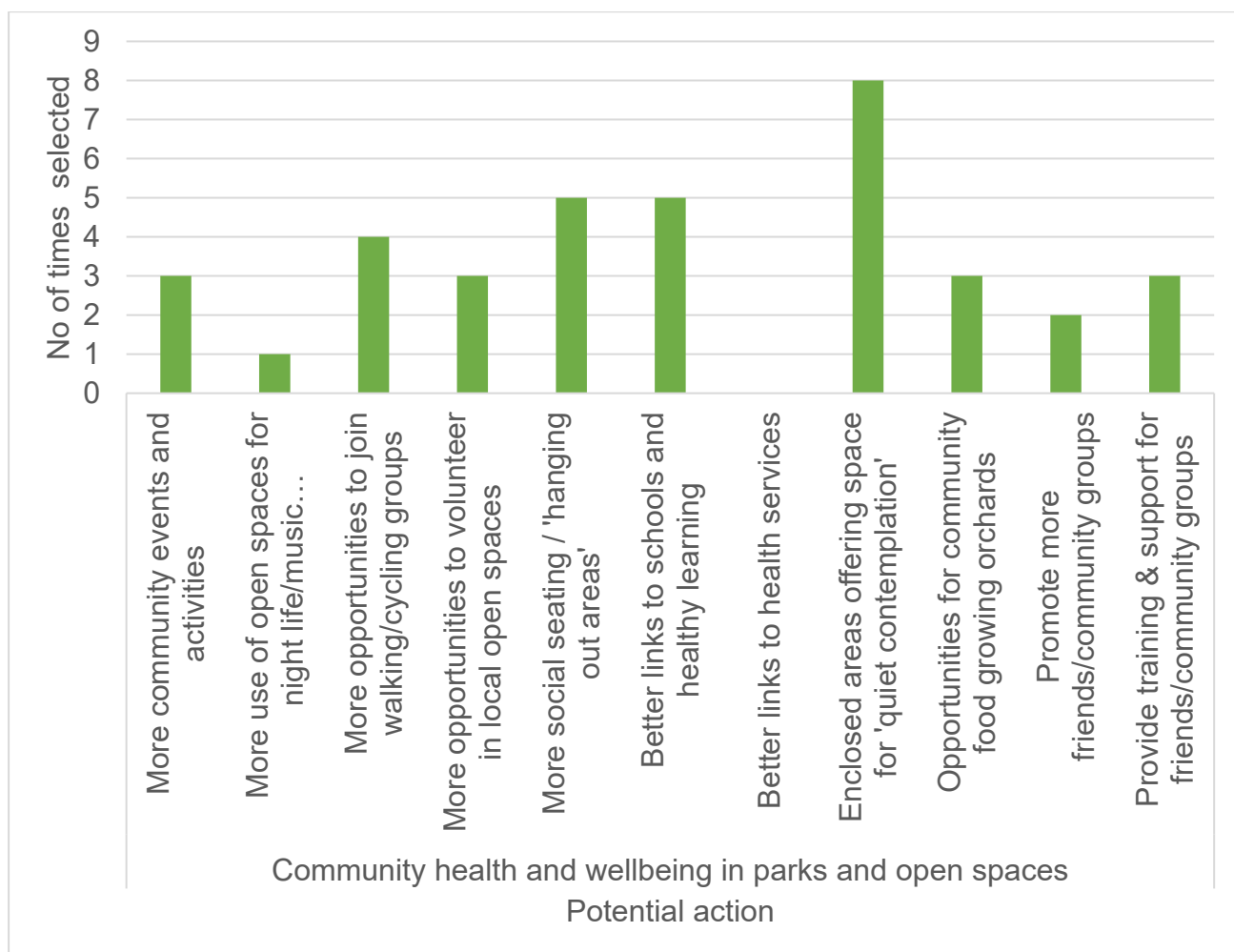


Community health and wellbeing in parks and open spaces

6.31 All potential actions under this theme were selected at least once, apart from 'better links to health services', see **Figure 6.9**. 'More use of open spaces for night life / music performances' was selected the least and two attendees marked this as 'not a priority'. Those selected the most included:

- Enclosed areas offering space for quiet contemplation.
- More social seating / hanging out areas.
- Better links to schools and learning about health.

Figure 6.9: Potential actions: community health and wellbeing in parks and open spaces



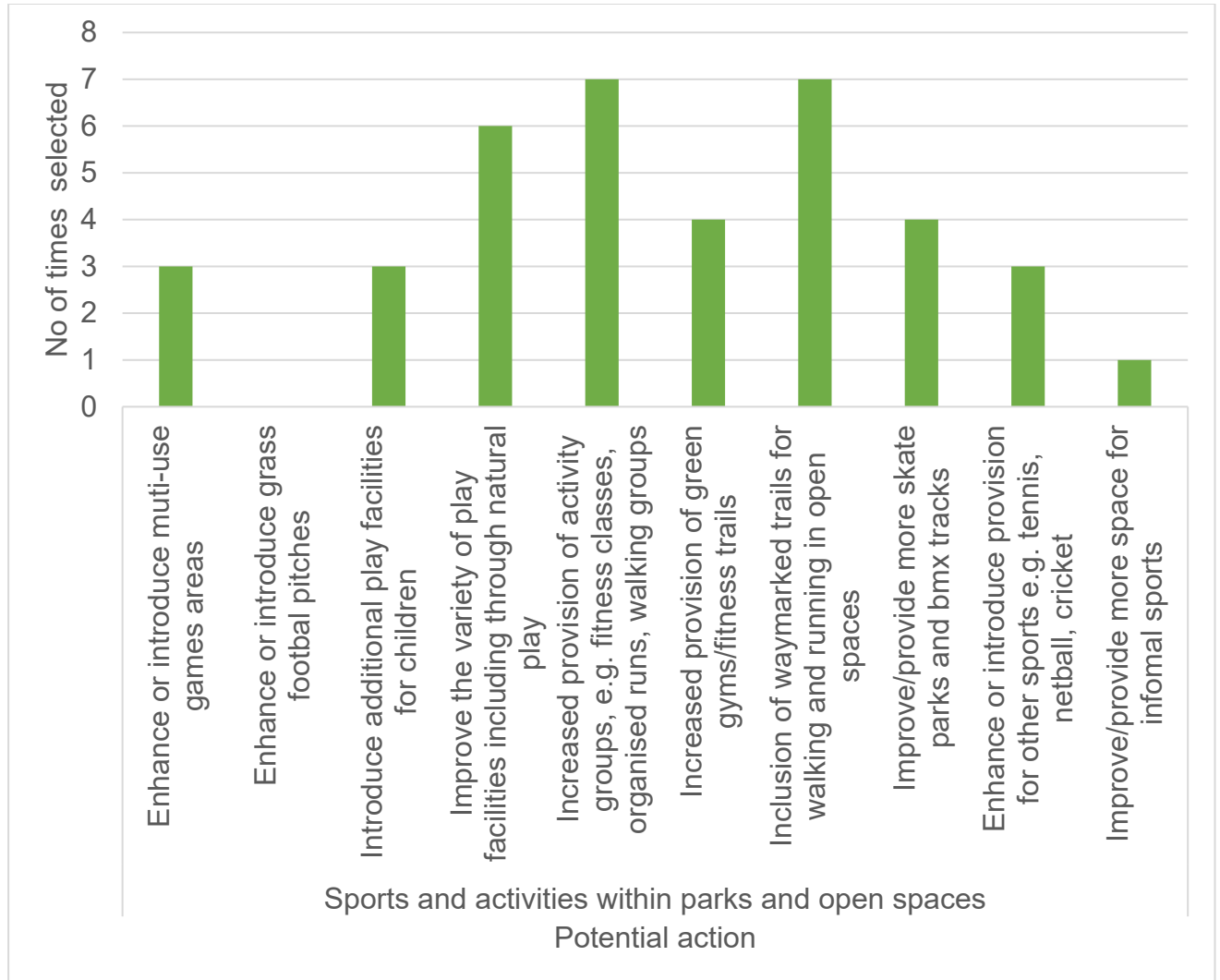
Sports and activities within parks and open spaces

6.32 Potential actions selected the most under this theme included:

- Inclusion of waymarked trails for walking and running in open spaces.
- Increased provision of activity groups, e.g. fitness classes, organised runs, walking groups.
- Improve the variety of play facilities including through natural play.

6.33 Actions selected the least or not at all included '*enhance or introduce grass football pitches*', and '*improve / provide more space for informal sports*', see **Figure 6.10**.

Figure 6.10: Potential actions: sports and activities within parks and open spaces

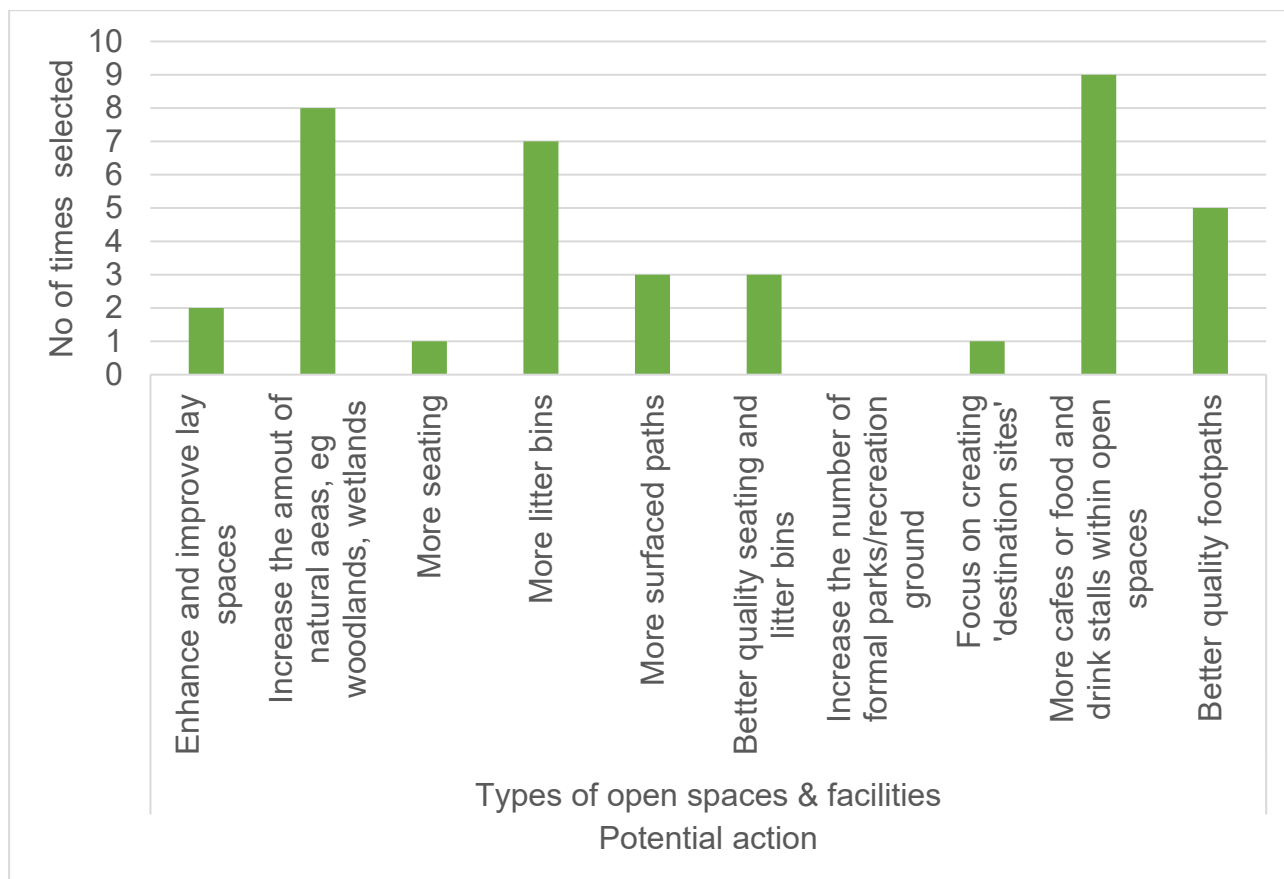


Types of open spaces and facilities

6.34 This theme focussed on identifying the type, character of open spaces and facilities they would like to see in their local area. All potential actions were selected apart from ‘*increase the number of formal parks and recreation grounds*’. Those selected most often are listed below. See **Figure 6.11**.

- More cafes or food and drink stalls within open spaces (selected more than all other actions during the exercise).
- Increase the amount (number) of natural areas, e.g. woodlands, wetlands.
- More litter bins.

Figure 6.11: Potential actions: types of open spaces and facilities

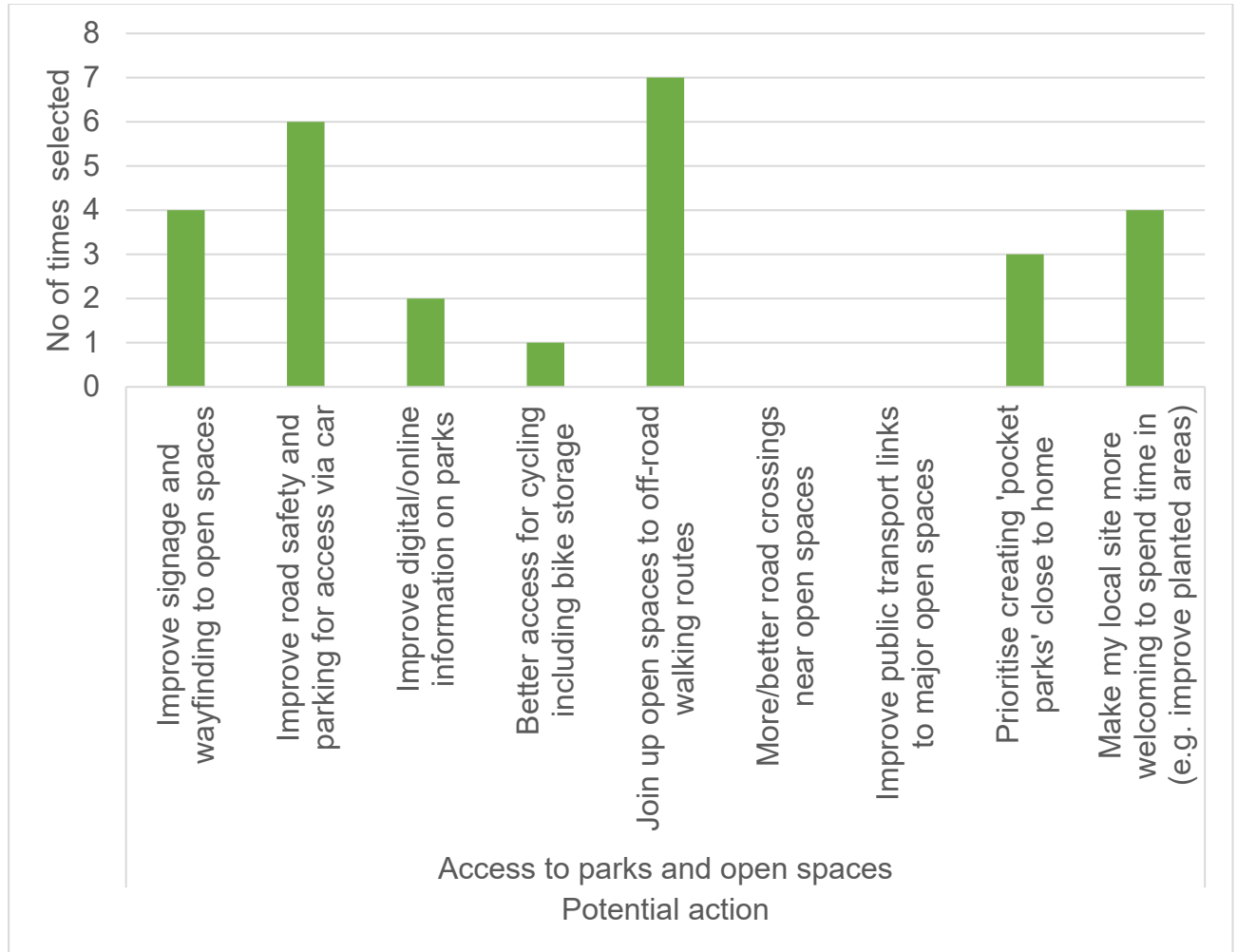


Access to parks and open spaces

6.35 This theme focussed on ways in which residents may more easily access and enjoy open spaces close to home, see **Figure 6.12**. Actions selected as a priority the most included:

- Join up open spaces to off-road walking routes.
- Improve road safety and parking for access via car.
- Improve signage and wayfinding to open spaces.
- Make my local site more welcoming to spend time in (e.g. improve planted areas).
- Several actions were each selected once as 'not a priority'. These included improve digital online information on parks, better access for cycling including bike storage, more better road crossing near open space, and make my site more welcoming to spend time in. Whilst more / better road crossings and improve public transport links were not selected, it is unlikely this indicates no interest in these actions amongst the group.

Figure 6.12: Potential actions: access to parks and open spaces



Focussed group discussions

6.36 Focussed discussions were held with several established community groups in Wolverhampton. This included discussions with representatives from city council staff forums which could provide insight into specific needs and issues related to several protected equality characteristics. Meetings were held with the following groups and forums:

- HY5! Youth Forum
- Milan Community (Gujarati) group (men's group and women's group)
- African Caribbean Community Initiative (ACCI)
- Ladies' exercise group (predominantly of South Asian heritage)
- City Council Age and Disability Staff Forum
- City Council Rainbow Staff Forum
- City Council Race, Religion and Belief Staff Forum

6.37 The findings from these discussions have been synthesised into the key considerations below. Needs and issues which were raised as being of specific importance to a particular discussion group are also noted. Notes from each group discussion are included in **Appendix C**.

Inclusive sites

6.38 Several comments suggest some users are very perceptive and aware of whether parks and open spaces are inclusive for the whole community. This was highlighted as a particular consideration by the HY5! Youth Forum *'inclusive places and spaces can make us feel happy, stay healthy, make memories, make new friends and feel part of the community'*.

6.39 When asked about things they don't like to experience in parks and open spaces, responses included *'feeling left out'*, *'we don't want to be segregated'*,

'(we would like) a park where disabled and non-disabled people can play together' and *'not being able to sit around the picnic bench with everyone else'*. Others highlighted a range of needs and characteristics that may need to be considered as part of parks management; this included people with autism, mobility issues, special educational needs, anxiety and neurodiversity.

Inclusive physical access

6.40 Good physical access around sites and facilities so people can fully engage with parks and open spaces was of particular importance for the Youth Forum, with one attendee stating they do not visit parks as there are no facilities for people in wheelchairs. Participants also discussed *'not being able to go on the play equipment'* and commented *'surfaces are hard to move around on in my wheelchair'*. When asked about their 'ideal space', participants described *'different seating and picnic tables for those using wheelchairs'*, *'surfaces to make it easier to move around'*, *'wheelchair spaces on roundabouts and swings'*, *'lower basketball hoops'*, *'a lift and/or hoist'*, *'fitness equipment that all people can use'*, *'more toilets'*, and *'a better variety of equipment for people who are disabled'*.

Anti-social behaviour concerns & personal safety

6.41 A number of groups with protected characteristics that were consulted share common concerns around personal safety. Anti-social behaviour, or fear of anti-social behaviour, acts as a barrier to some members of the community using specific open spaces. This was a particular concern amongst the women's groups, south Asian elders community groups and representatives from the ACCI. For some groups, over half of comments relating to barriers referenced anti-social behaviour in some form. Comments included *'scared of people who drink in the park'*, *'due to their age, they don't feel safe to visit the park'*, *'groups of men drinking alcohol'*, and *'scared to go to woodland spaces'*. Participants generally discussed feeling safer when visiting with others, if they felt there was a staff presence, or if there are channels to communicate concerns (e.g. signage with contact details). Sites noted as a concern included

Peace Green, 'gangs' at Phoenix Park, West Park and Fowlers Park. Dogs, either off lead or uncontrolled, were mentioned as a particular concern by the Youth Forum, with several suggesting providing defined areas for exercising dogs to help others feel safe.

6.42 The LGBT+ Rainbow Staff Forum highlighted specific concerns around personal safety when within open spaces. Lighting and other security measures in parks (such as opening times, a staff presence) was suggested by most groups to improve sense of safety.

Character and design of sites

6.43 The group discussions highlighted that the character and design of sites is an important factor in the use and enjoyment of parks and open spaces. This includes the need to create social spaces that people are drawn to and feel comfortable using including seating, social areas and areas under cover. Comments included; *'more seating where groups can sit, not just side by side'* and *'outdoor canopy... maybe something like a permanent gazebo'*. When asked what they would like to see in parks and open spaces, many participants mentioned engaging design features and sensory features that would improve their enjoyment and experience of sites such as; *'sensory garden', 'sights, sounds and smells', 'quiet space I can go to', 'colour changes', 'water', 'more picnic areas', 'more flowers and trees wanted', and 'flower beds, it encourages people to sit'*.

Public transport links / service issues

6.44 Several examples were given of being put off using parks due to public transport issues. This was noted as more of an issue for older participants and where residents travel to specific sites to meet friends and family, as they prefer not to go to sites on their own. Comments included; *'waiting for buses, disabled people cannot stand for long periods', 'Ladymoor Pool – no seating area for the bus stop', 'public transport – not on time for some residents', 'mobility of getting to the parks'*.

6.45 Other issues and considerations that were frequently brought up by participants included:

- **Toilets:** including fully accessible and Changing Places toilets. Participants frequently discussed toilets which were closed or not open for community use.
- **Cleanliness and litter:** including fly tipping and not enough bins. Those involved in exercise or walking groups discussed slippery paths (e.g. due to leaves), paths not useable in winter, bird droppings and dog waste.
- **Provision of more inclusive activities, events and education programmes:** This was specifically highlighted by the HY5! Youth Forum and ACCI. Suggestions included learning opportunities for a variety of ages, nature walks, boats back on West Park Lake, activities to bring the community together, adapted bikes / trikes / tandems, audio tours and music.

Other consultation

6.46 In recent years additional consultation has been undertaken by City of Wolverhampton Council. Consultation studies of relevance have been summarised in the following section and include the key findings from:

- Farndale Avenue Open Space online survey 2021
- East Park consultation 2021/22

Farndale Avenue Open Space online survey 2021

6.47 In 2021, an online survey was conducted to gather information on residents' current use and desires for the future use of Farndale Avenue Open Space in Whitmore Reans. The online survey ran for a period of six week between May and June in 2021. A total of 202 responses were recorded.

6.48 A summary of the key findings from the consultation are provided below:

- Participants were asked how frequently they visited or travelled through Farndale Open Space. 28% of respondents reporting visiting daily, 26% weekly, 7% monthly, and 21% less frequently than a month.
- The five most frequent reasons for visiting Farndale Avenue Open Space were for short-cut access to shops, work, school etc. (50%), other exercise/ recreation (33%), dog walking (16%), activity related to Gatis Community Space (16%), and playing football (8%).
- Participants were asked where they would like to see open space improvements if future funding was made available. The four funding choices with the majority of votes were for improved lighting (70%), CCTV for security (70%), organised activities for children/families (60%), and walking paths around the fields (56%).

East Park consultation 2021/22

6.49 Between December 2021 – January 2022, City of Wolverhampton Council ran consultation to gather an understanding of residents' use of East Park and their future desires for the space. The council's methods of community engagement consisted of a household postal survey, supplementary younger persons' online survey, wider online survey, and in-park surveys. A total of 259 responses were received.

6.50 The key findings of the study are summarised below:

- Visiting East Park
 3. 84% of respondents said they enjoyed their visit to East Park, and 60% said they feel safe when visiting.
 4. Respondents' top reasons for visiting East Park included: walking, taking children to play, and for fresh air.
 5. To encourage more frequent visits respondents sought: better facilities for families and children, and a café / refreshment area.
- Future development

6. Respondents' top three desired improvements to current facilities were: ease of access; wildlife and nature; and variety of trees, flowers and shrubs.

Summary of community insight

Maintenance, litter, and cleanliness: Community insight has highlighted the need for improved maintenance and cleanliness within Wolverhampton's open spaces. Fly-tipping, dog faeces, litter, and unkept pathways and ponds were frequently raised as issues that impacted residents' ability to enjoy open spaces. To help tackle these problems residents suggested the installation of more bins, increased frequency of bin emptying/ park maintenance, more dog litter warning signs, and increased enforcement and monitoring of flying tipping.

Safety: Safety was a key issue for participants, largely stemming from fears as a result of antisocial behaviour, drug and alcohol use in parks, large groups, and unleashed dogs. Improvements suggested by residents included a greater management of antisocial behaviour via park staffing, access to helplines, CCTV, and more lighting. Also suggested were greater control measures for dogs and the creation of dog parks. It should be noted that safety issues were mentioned frequently amongst a number of the focus groups, including interest groups for the LGBT+ community, disability forum and ladies' group.

Accessibility and inclusion: The need for improvements to accessibility was raised by participants, particularly in regard to the elderly and disabled people. Issues discussed included a lack of wheelchair friendly facilities such as wheelchair friendly benches, picnic tables, pathways, and play features / sport provision. Other issues raised were: limited availability of toilets / Changing Places toilets and cafes; frequently late bus services; lack

of seating at bus stops; lack of grit boxes; and the need for safer road crossings into parks. Accessibility considerations that were raised by participants included issues with accessing and traveling to open spaces, and facilities within open spaces.

Facilities and features: Respondents expressed a desire for improved availability of certain facilities and features within open spaces, notably: toilets; changing rooms for sport; cafes; additional benches; social seating; sheltered areas; more disability friendly features; and more flower beds.

Community engagement: Improvements to community engagement was discussed by participants and staff forum members. Respondents' feedback was centred around the need for a greater availability of information regarding the open space network via physical mapping and online resources. Other issues raised were a need for: improved information sharing about community events being held; an increased numbers of community events; and streamlining of the process by which the public and community groups can arrange events with the council.

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