

## The Mansfield Green Space Standard – Full Methodology

### 1. CORE GREEN SPACE

The Council will seek to ensure that residents have safe and easy access to:

1. Green space within a 5 minute (400 metres) walking journey **AND**
2. Play space (formal or natural play area) within a 5 minute (400 metres) walking journey, generally near to a range of ages **AND**
3. Natural Green Space within 10 minutes walking journey (700 metres), open countryside, or more formally managed green space with area(s) of natural amenity or play space

As a basic requirement, this aims at making sure that all residents have access to green space (in some form) within a safe and easy walk of their homes (5 minutes). These core access requirements are most appropriately addressed through planning requirements. When assessing whether a green spaces area is within the walking distances stated in the above standard, geographical barriers to access such as: busy roads, railway lines, rivers, steep slopes/cliffs, road layout and access routes, will need to be taken into account and improved where appropriate.

The 5 minute walk to play space ensures that the National access standard (Fields in Trust, formally the 6 Acre Standard) to play areas for children and young people is met. Most parks in the district have some form of play space. As such, this generally ensures that people will have access to at least one formal park with a 5 minute walk.

Play space primarily includes play areas for a range of ages and abilities. Play areas should be provided for children and young people (toddlers to teenagers) containing a range of facilities and an environment designed to improve focused opportunities for outdoor play. Design of play space in terms of facilities and materials will be influenced by, for example: the size, location, type of space (e.g. one with a more natural setting). Consultation with residents should be taken into consideration.

Play areas also need to be located in areas naturally overlooked from nearby houses and/or well used walking routes. The overall design and type of equipment provided should be aimed at all abilities, including those with special needs.

The 10 minute walk to natural green space (in some form) addresses Natural England's standard for accessing nature nearby, in a realistic way. Although there are green spaces in the district that are entirely natural in their setting and features

(e.g. Local Nature Reserves), this also recognises that access to the countryside and formally managed parks with a reasonable amount of natural features have a role to play in bringing nature into people’s everyday lives.

Natural England defines natural green space as places where ‘human control and activities are not intensive so that a feeling of naturalness is allowed to predominate’. This can include, for example: woodland, orchards, wildflower meadows, rivers and streams, ponds, sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) or nature trails. This can be incorporated with areas of natural play space such as sensory gardens or living willow structures. For formally managed parks and amenity space to count as providing sufficient *natural green space*, it should have natural area(s) contributing to approximately a third or more of the overall park’s area. It must generally be accessible to the public for e.g. walking, sitting, play space and not merely include landscaping on the boundary of the site, unless it contributes in a significant manner to the park’s overall setting and feeling of tranquillity, softening impacts from any nearby urban area.

Sensitive wildlife areas (e.g. Local Wildlife Sites) will need to be managed appropriately so that impact from people is limited to footpaths and seating areas. A combination of sensitive habitat and access management will be required in this case, based on knowledge of the type of habitat and the plants and wildlife that it supports.

### **Average Walking Distances**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Pedestrian Route</b>	<b>Straight Line Distance</b>
<b>1 Minute</b>	100 metres	60 metres
<b>5 Minutes</b>	400 metres	240 metres
<b>10 Minutes</b>	700 metres	400 metres
<b>15 Minutes</b>	1000 metres	600 metres

## **2. IMPROVED ACCESS TO WIDER FACILITIES**

The Council will seek to ensure that residents have safe and easy access to:

1. A ‘District Park’ within a 15 minute walking distance (1,000 metres) **AND**
2. Provision for young people with a 15 minute walking distance (1,000 metres)

This includes access to parks with a more varied experience for visitors (typically Green Flag status parks). These are named ‘district parks’ as they typically provide a landscaped setting with a variety of recreational facilities and experiences (e.g.

larger play areas, diversity of outdoor sports spaces, bandstand, memorial gardens, or pond dipping areas). Or they may also include facilities that offer a unique experience attracting visitors from across the district (e.g. specialist skate park, running track, fishing platforms). Part B also addresses access needs for teenager facilities (e.g. skate parks, multi-use game areas, outdoor gyms) of which National standards indicate a minimum 15 minute walking journey.

Addressing gaps in access to these resources may be more appropriately addressed through wider Council investment but may also inform more site specific improvement needs through planning contributions. The latter addressed where it can be shown that improvements are required as a result of population increases generated from new development.

### **3. BETTER QUALITY**

The Council will seek to ensure that green space provision meets the following requirements:

1. Designed to be accessible for all
2. Safe and secure design principles
3. Support for social interaction through design and available facilities
4. Improve access to nature and natural play areas
5. Contribute to place shaping
6. Meet the need of local communities, for which a green space serves

Key priorities are also emphasised in terms of:

- Recognising the need to support sustained enjoyment and quality of green spaces (e.g. safe and secure design, integrating varied social spaces)
- Contributing to a positive and improved image of neighbouring areas and/or the district as a whole
- Contributing positively to wildlife through sensitive management and creation of natural areas
- Ensuring spaces are accessible for people with all abilities, including those with special needs

Seeking to address any shortfall in quality may need to be addressed through wider Council investment but may also inform more specific site improvement needs through planning contributions. It also sets a positive design guide for the creation of new green space and park facilities.

### **How the standards were defined**

There is no single recognised formula for determining whether there is enough green space, the right balance of different types of green space or whether it is of good enough quality within a given area. Each district or town is different, and as such, there is no one-fits-all solution. National guidance is available for helping guide local assessments, for which the Mansfield District assessment builds upon.

These include:

- Former National Planning Policy Guidance: 'PPG17 Planning for Open space, Sport and Recreation' (2002) and its companion guide 'Assessing Needs and Opportunities: A Companion Guide to PPG17' (2001)
- Fields in Trust National size and access standards for sports and play provision: 'Planning and Design for Outdoor Sports and Play' (2008)
- Green Flag quality criteria
- Natural England's access to green space standard: 'Nature Nearby' (2010)

We identified 3 main questions to be explored in helping to develop the standard:

- Amount of green space: **Is there the right amount of green space for everyone in the district?**
- Access to green space: **Is green space in the right location near enough to where people live?**
- Quality of green space: **Is green space of good quality?** For example: welcoming & accessible, safe & secure, clean and well maintained, supporting a range of recreation activities, supporting wildlife, creating a positive image for the area.

The table below explains the approach taken to answer these questions.

### Defining the Mansfield Green Space Standard

<b>Key Questions Explored</b>	<b>Steps and information used to inform the assessment approach</b>	<b>Approach taken</b>
Amount of green space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Map all areas of publically accessible green space in the district.</li> <li>• Categorise green space into different types (typologies) based on intended use, the experiences that it can offer people and how it is maintained (e.g. for formal sports use or more informal recreation such as walks or relaxation). See table D4.</li> <li>• Calculate the amount of green space per 1000 population (for the whole of the district, per ward area, and per type of green space). Compare this to National standards, where appropriate.</li> <li>• Determine if there is an even balance of informal and formal recreation areas available to residents (at ward level).</li> </ul>	<p>Although it may seem like ‘quantity’ is good measurement to determine whether or not there is enough green space in the district or ward, this approach had major limitations. In answering this question, it was clear that a consistent conclusion for helping to develop a green space standard couldn’t be drawn.</p> <p>Whilst some wards had none to very small amounts of green space within them, they had good access within a safe and easy walking journey. Other areas might have large amounts natural green space but poor access to play space.</p> <p>Good access to green space also depends greatly on the type and quality of facilities available and the size of individual green spaces. Physical barriers such as busy roads can also impact on what people have realistic access to.</p> <p>Mapping and defining types of green space was very useful in defining accessibility considerations, but overall quantity has limited relevance as a measure.</p>
Access to green space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define reasonable minimum walking journeys to different types of green space based on research, national standards, and examples of other green</li> </ul>	<p>A 5-minute walking journey is the shortest distance used based on: how far dog walkers generally travel a green space, and how far people with small children or who are elderly will travel to green space. It is</p>

	<p>space assessments (best practice)*.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Map walking distances (straight line equivalent) around the different types of green spaces (see table D2).</li> <li>• Identify areas where there are gaps and overlaps in access.</li> <li>• Identify key geographical barriers to people accessing green spaces: main/busy roads, rivers, railway lines and general layout of roads/access routes. Main roads were identified through the MDC Transport Study (2015).</li> </ul> <p>*This is a very complex question to answer as it depends on, for example: who it is; age; overall health; ability; level of motivation; whether someone's aim is using their journey to and around the green space as part of their exercise/enjoyment; if the green space is their final destination; the size of the green space; the facilities available, etc.</p> <p>**The 10 minute walk to natural green space is based on Natural England's access to natural green space standard of 5 minutes, Natural England's national results from its Monitoring Engagement in the Natural Environment (MENE) survey that states the majority of people access the natural environment on foot within 15 minutes, and the Woodland Trust's access to woodland standard of</p>	<p>also considered a reasonable distance given people's busy lives, providing a more inclusive approach to provision at the local level. It is a distance that people are willing to walk to public town centre amenities. The 5-minute walk also decreases the chances of the walking journey being disrupted by busy roads.</p> <p>A 10-minute** walking journey to natural space was based on a reasonable average distance travelled to natural urban green spaces and the countryside.</p> <p>A 15 minute walking journey is the longest distance used in relation to district-scale parks and teenager provision. It is assumed that most people will walk that bit further to access parks with a greater diversity of facilities and experiences. This is a distance range (0 to 15 minutes) that the majority of people walk to outdoor spaces (MENE national study 2012) and an effective distance referenced in scientific research for improving health and well-being.</p>
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	500m (approx. 6 minutes).	
Quality of green space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define quality assessment criteria based on: Green Flag criteria, Play England, accessibility audits, and feedback from MDC Parks team.</li> </ul> <p>Key criteria such as place shaping and ensuring places are welcoming were key areas of emphasis based on discussions with elected members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Test the assessment criteria to gauge its accuracy.</li> <li>Conduct the quality assessments.</li> <li>Summarise findings.</li> </ul>	<p>The quality survey criteria included the following categories:</p> <p>Welcoming and accessible, Safe and secure, Cleanliness and maintenance, Overall use, image and setting</p> <p>Up to 20 different individual criteria were used with the criteria adjusted slightly based on the type of green space surveyed (e.g. formal park, amenity space without recreation facilities, natural green space, amenity space under 4 hectares, and play areas).</p>

Close and easy access to green space was based on average walking distance, rather than a journey by bus or car, as people are more likely to use their nearby green spaces if they can walk. Residents in Mansfield also have low car ownership. 2010 Citizen Panel survey results reflect national trends showing that a majority of residents walk to urban parks. Various research studies support the benefits of living within a walkable distance of green space. For example, a Japanese study<sup>1</sup> suggests that elderly people living in areas with walkable green spaces positively influences longevity of urban senior citizens independent of their age, sex, marital status, and socioeconomic status.

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<sup>1</sup> T Takano, K Nakamura, and M Watanabe (2002) "Urban Residential Environments And Senior Citizens' Longevity In Megacity Areas: The Importance Of Walkable Green Spaces" J Epidemiol Community Health 56: 913-918.

## Types of green spaces considered

Type of green space	Description	Distance
District Parks and Recreation Grounds	These are established green spaces that provide a landscape setting with a variety of facilities and features including; outdoor sports facilities, play areas and informal recreation opportunities. Or space offers at least one unique facility or experience of wider district importance. Green spaces with a district or greater community importance, typically but not limited to Green Flag Parks. For example; Green spaces that accommodate Park Run events, District and County championships, festivals etc or include unique facilities such as skate parks, BMX tracks.	15 minute walking journey
Local Parks and Recreation Grounds	These include green spaces with formal sports and/or play provision, though limited to no more than two facilities. Generally includes seating areas and paths, but lack formalised planting and features such as pavilions etc.	5 minute walking journey
Amenity Space	Areas of informal recreation, for example; walking, sitting etc. These spaces are formally maintained i.e. mown and typically open in appearance, though may have small planted areas. These are sites greater than 0.4 hectares that do not fit into other categories.	5 minute walking journey
Small amenity space	These are amenity spaces less than 0.4 hectares. It includes small areas of open space supporting safe, passive recreation and play which sometimes have seating (or with the potential to do so due to its location). These spaces are formally maintained i.e. mown and open in appearance. This excludes road verges and landscaping in social housing areas. To be included it must be overlooked by housing.	5 minute walking journey
Natural Green Spaces	These spaces provide recreational amenity for walking, cycling, learning or quiet contemplation. They usually are made up of woodland, wetlands, heathlands, grasslands or areas of open countryside (e.g. pasture land). They are primarily managed for their wildlife and habitat value, although they may be	10 minute walking journey



	'naturalised' areas such as brownfield land or urban edge of which are publicly accessible. These are sites on their own or part of a wider network of connected natural spaces.	
Teenage Areas	Parks with facilities which typically cater for young people aged 12 and over. These include, for example; skate parks, BMX tracks, multi-use game areas (MUGA's), outdoor gyms, and Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAP's).	15 minute walking journey
Children's Play Areas	Facilities which typically cater for children aged up to 8 years of age but may be used by older children up to 12 years of age. Typically play areas that meet the National Playing Fields definition for LEAPs. <b>AND</b> Facilities which generally cater for children 6 years of age and younger and typically meet the National Playing Fields definition for LAPs.	5 minute walking journey from the park it is located in.