



# ST. HELENS COUNCIL OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT REPORT

JUNE 2016

Integrity, Innovation, Inspiration

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## **Glossary**

ANGSt	Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
DPD	Development Plan Document
FIT	Fields in Trust
FOG	Friends of Group (including users groups and advisory groups)
GIS	Geographical Information Systems
KKP	Knight, Kavanagh and Page
LAP	Local Areas for Play
LEAP	Local Equipped Area for Play
LDF	Local Development Framework
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
MUGA	Multi-use Games Area (an enclosed area using a synthetic grass or hard surface for playing sports)
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NSALG	National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners
ONS	Office of National Statistics
OSSRA	Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment
PPG	Planning Policy Guidance
RoSPA	Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents
SOA	Super Output Areas
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document
SSSI	Sites of Special Scientific Interest
SHC	St. Helens Council

## PART 1: INTRODUCTION

This is the Open Space Assessment Report prepared by Knight Kavanagh & Page (KKP) for St. Helens Council (SHC). It focuses on reporting the findings of the research, consultation, site assessments, data analysis and GIS mapping that underpins the study.

It forms part of a suite of reports that together make up the Open Space, Sport and Recreation (OSSRA) Study which examines:

- ◀ Open spaces
- ◀ Playing pitches and outdoor sports
- ◀ Indoor and built sports facilities

The Assessment Report provides detail with regard to what open space provision exists in St. Helens, its condition, distribution and overall quality. It also considers the demand for provision based on population distribution, planned growth and consultation findings.

This study updates a previous set of reports, referred to as the 'St. Helens Open Space Study 2006', which established recommended standards of open space provision in relation to quantity, quality and accessibility following consultation with the community and an audit of open space provision.

Although Planning Policy Guidance 17 (PPG17) has now been replaced by the National Planning Policy Framework, (NPPF), this assessment of open space facilities is carried out in accordance with the PPG17 Companion Guide entitled 'Assessing Needs and Opportunities' published in September 2002 as it remains the only national guidance on carrying out an open space assessment.

In order for planning policies to be 'sound' local authorities are required by the NPPF (under paragraph 73) to carry out a robust assessment of need for open space, sport and recreation facilities. We advocate that the methodology to undertake such assessments should still be informed by best practice including the PPG17 Companion Guidance.

'Assessing Needs and Opportunities: A Companion Guide to PPG17' still reflects the Government policy objectives for open space, sport and recreation, as set out previously in PPG17. The long-term outcomes aim to deliver:

- ◀ Networks of accessible, high quality open spaces and sport and recreation facilities, in both urban and rural areas, which meet the needs of residents and visitors that are fit for purpose and economically and environmentally sustainable.
- ◀ An appropriate balance between new provision and the enhancement of existing provision.
- ◀ Clarity and reasonable certainty for developers and landowners in relation to the requirements and expectations of local planning authorities in respect of open space and sport and recreation provision.

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This assessment covers the following open space typologies:

*Table 1.1: Open space typology and primary purpose*

	Typology	Primary purpose
<b>Greenspaces</b>	Parks and gardens	Accessible, high quality opportunities for informal recreation and community events.
	Natural and semi-natural greenspaces	Wildlife conservation, biodiversity and environmental education and awareness. Includes urban woodland and beaches, where appropriate.
	Amenity greenspace	Opportunities for informal activities close to home or work or enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas.
	Provision for children and young people	Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children and young people, such as equipped play areas, MUGAs, skateboard areas and teenage shelters.
	Allotments	Opportunities for those people who wish to do so to grow their own produce as part of the long term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion.
	Green corridors	Walking, cycling or horse riding, whether for leisure purposes or travel, and opportunities for wildlife migration.
	Cemeteries, disused churchyards and other burial grounds	Quiet contemplation and burial of the dead, often linked to the promotion of wildlife conservation and biodiversity.
<b>Civic spaces</b>	Civic and market squares and other hard surfaced areas designed for pedestrians including the promenade	Providing a setting for civic buildings, public demonstrations and community events.

## 1.1 Report structure

### ***Open spaces***

This report considers the supply and demand issues for open space facilities in St. Helens. Each part contains relevant typology specific data. Further description of the methodology used can be found in Part 2. The report as a whole covers the predominant issues for all open spaces originally defined in 'Assessing Needs and Opportunities: A Companion Guide to PPG17'; which is structured as follows:

- Part 3: General open space summary
- Part 4: Parks and gardens
- Part 5: Natural and semi-natural greenspace
- Part 6: Amenity greenspace
- Part 7: Provision for children and young people
- Part 8: Allotments
- Part 9: Cemeteries/churchyards

The typology of green corridors is not included as a standalone typology. For the purposes of the study, it has instead been included as part of the natural and semi-natural greenspace typology.

The provision of outdoor sports facilities is not included within the report. Sites of this kind are covered as part of the associated Playing Pitch Strategy.

### ***Associated strategies***

The study sits alongside the Playing Pitch Strategy and Indoor and Built Facility Needs Assessment being undertaken by KKP. The former is in accordance with the methodology provided in Sport England's Draft Guidance 'Developing a Playing Pitch Strategy' for assessing demand and supply for outdoor sports facilities. Both of these are provided in separate reports. The PPS looks to cover all types of outdoor sports facilities.

### **1.2 National context**

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the reformed planning policies for England. It details how these changes are expected to be applied to the planning system and provides a framework for local people and their councils to produce distinct local and neighbourhood plans, reflecting the needs and priorities of local communities.

It states the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. It establishes the planning system needs to focus on three themes of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. A presumption in favour of sustainable development is a key aspect for any plan-making and decision-taking processes. In relation to plan-making the NPPF sets out that Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs.

Under paragraph 73 of the NPPF, it is set out that planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. Specific needs and quantitative and qualitative deficiencies and surpluses in local areas should also be identified. This information should be used to inform what provision is required in an area.

As a prerequisite, paragraph 74 of the NPPF states existing open space, sports and recreation sites, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- ◀ An assessment has been undertaken, which has clearly shown the site to be surplus to requirements.
- ◀ 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.
- ◀ The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.



## 1.3 Local context

This study and its audit findings are important in their contribution to the production of the Council's planning framework and are an integral part of identifying and regulating the open space infrastructure. Through recognising the provision of open spaces in plan form, provision can be assessed in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility, whilst strengthening its presence in planning policy for the future and looking to maximise opportunities for investment. Below is a brief summary of the local context in which the study has been undertaken.

### ***St. Helens Local Plan Core Strategy***

The St. Helens Local Plan Core Strategy is the main document that will guide future planning decisions in St. Helens. It sits within a framework of policy documents known as the St. Helens Local Plan. Together they provide detail on the amount, location and methods of development required up to 2027. Policies within the documents cover topics such as housing, economy, employment, quality of life and accessibility. Green spaces are also included as part of a key element for the Borough's future.

Policy CQL 1 Green Infrastructure of the Core Strategy sets out the need for the Council to protect, manage, enhance and where appropriate expand the Green Infrastructure network.

It details the purpose and justification for the policy, whilst also recognising the local provision standards recommended from the previous open space study in 2006. These provision standards were developed following a consultation process that asked people what level of open space provision was appropriate. In accordance with the NPPF these were used to determine the existing levels of provision. The importance to the protection and provision of open space to meet local community needs and as visual amenities is also highlighted.

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## PART 2: METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Analysis areas

For mapping purposes and audit analysis, St. Helens is divided into nine analysis areas (reflecting the geographical and demographical nature of the area). The analysis areas follow ward boundaries for ease of statistical data availability and are grouped to reflect distinct spatial areas within the borough. This breakdown was agreed by the OSSRA steering group and Council officers and was considered to be a best fit for the analysis of most types of open space. It was considered that individual wards would be too small an area for analysis.

St. Helens is therefore, broken down as follows:

*Table 2.1: Population by analysis area*

<b>Analysis area</b>	<b>Population (2013)*</b>
Billinge & Seneley Green	10,330
Earlestown & Newton	22,482
Eccleston & Windle	17,789
Haydock & Blackbrook	22,733
Moss Bank & Town Centre	22,787
Parr, Sutton & Bold	34,402
Rainford	10,523
Rainhill	10,891
West Park & Thatto Heath	24,284
<b>ST. HELENS</b>	<b>176, 221</b>

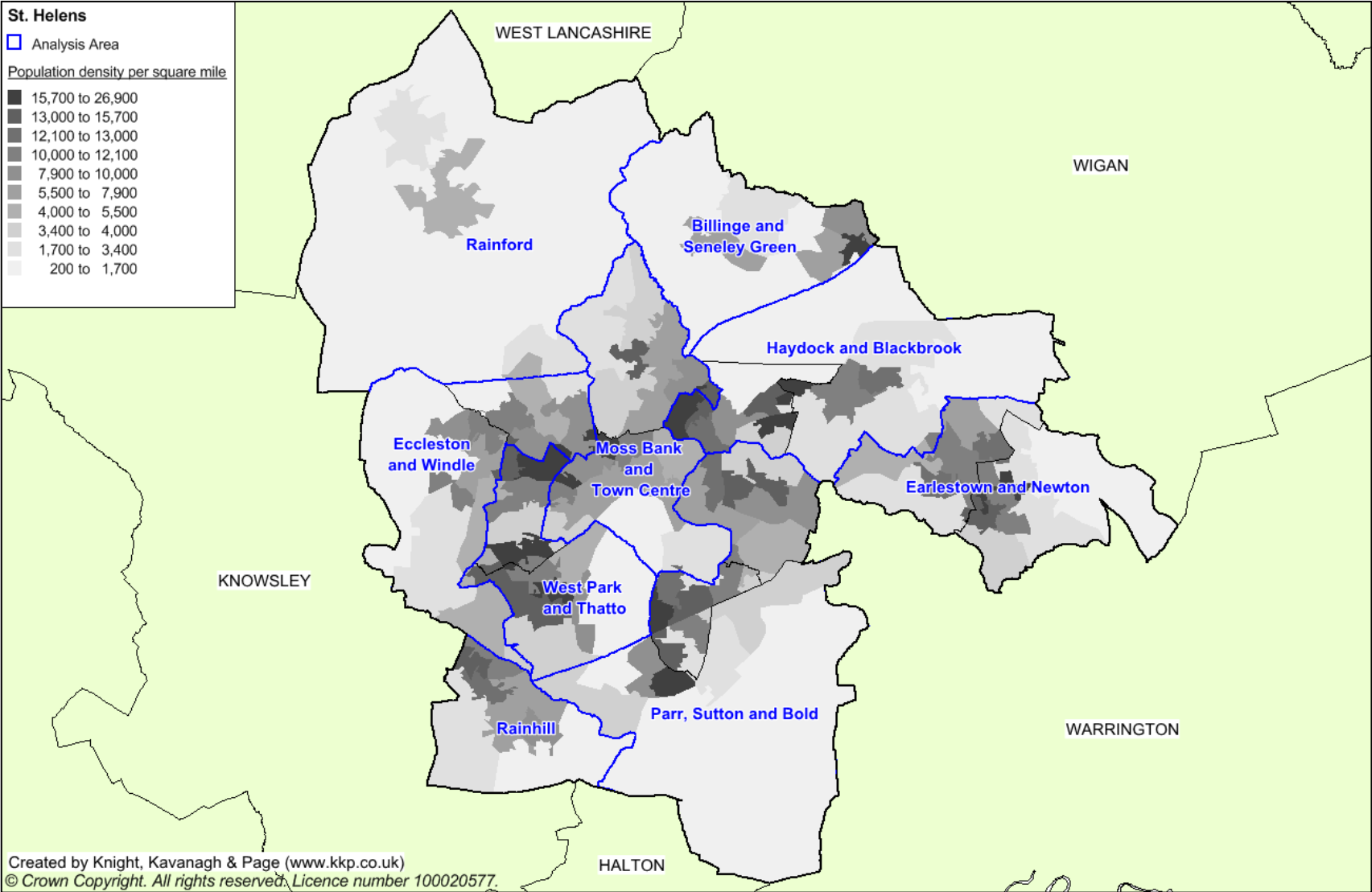
Figure 2.1 overleaf shows the map of analysis areas with population density.

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\* Source: ONS Mid 2013 Population Estimates

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Figure 2.1: Analysis areas in St. Helens



## 2.2 Auditing local provision (supply)

The site audit for this study was undertaken by the KKP Field Research Team. In total, 286 open spaces (including provision for children and young people) are identified, plotted on GIS and assessed to evaluate site value and quality. Each site is classified based on its primary open space purpose, so that each type of space is counted only once. A site's primary purpose is initially based on the council's classification and supported from site visit information. The audit, and therefore the report, utilise the following typologies in accordance with guidance:

1. Parks and gardens
2. Natural and semi-natural greenspace
3. Amenity greenspace
4. Provision for children and young people
5. Allotments
6. Cemeteries/churchyards

In accordance with best practice recommendations a size threshold of 0.2 hectares has been applied to the inclusion of some typologies within the study. This means that, in general, sites that fall below this threshold are not audited. However, some sites below the threshold (i.e. those that are identified through consultation as being of significance) are included. The list below details the threshold for each typology:

- ◀ Parks and gardens – no threshold
- ◀ Natural and semi-natural greenspace – 0.2 ha
- ◀ Amenity greenspace – 0.2 ha
- ◀ Provision for children and young people – no threshold
- ◀ Allotments – no threshold
- ◀ Cemeteries/churchyards – no threshold

Sites for inclusion in the study were initially identified using the 2006 data. This was audited and updated by the planning team, civic pride and sports development at SHC before being handed over to KKP.

### **Data recording**

All information relating to open spaces across St. Helens is collated in the project open space spreadsheet (supplied as an Excel electronic file). All sites included within the audit, as identified and assessed, are included within it. The details for each site are as follows:

#### **Data held on open spaces (summary)**

- ◀ KKP reference number (used for mapping)
- ◀ Site name
- ◀ Ownership
- ◀ Management
- ◀ Typology
- ◀ Size (hectares)
- ◀ Site visit data

Sites are primarily identified by KKP in the audit using official site names, where possible, and/or secondly using road names and locations.

## 2.3 Quality and value

Quality and value are fundamentally different and can be unrelated. For example, a high quality space may be in an inaccessible location and, thus, be of little value; while, if a rundown (poor quality) space may be the only one in an area and thus be immensely valuable. As a result, quality and value are also treated separately in terms of scoring. Each type of open space receives separate quality and value scores. This will also allow application of a high and low quality/value matrix to further help determine prioritisation of investment and to identify sites that may be surplus to a particular open space typology.

### *Analysis of quality*

Data collated from site visits is initially based upon those derived from the Green Flag Award scheme (a national standard for parks and green spaces in England and Wales, operated by Keep Britain Tidy). This is utilised to calculate a quality score for each site visited. Scores in the database are presented as percentage figures. The quality criteria used for the open space assessments carried out are summarised in the following table.

#### **Quality criteria for open space site visit (score)**

- ▶ Physical access e.g. public transport links, directional signposts,
- ▶ Personal security e.g. site is overlooked, natural surveillance
- ▶ Access-social e.g. appropriate minimum entrance widths
- ▶ Parking e.g. availability, specific, disabled parking
- ▶ Information signage e.g. presence of up to date site information, notice boards
- ▶ Equipment and facilities e.g. assessment of both adequacy and maintenance of provision such as seats, benches, bins, toilets
- ▶ Location value e.g. proximity of housing, other greenspace
- ▶ Site problems e.g. presence of vandalism, graffiti
- ▶ Healthy, safe and secure e.g. fencing, gates, staff on site
- ▶ Maintenance and cleanliness e.g. condition of general landscape & features
- ▶ Groups that the site meets the needs of e.g. elderly, young people
- ▶ Site potential

For the provision for children and young people, the criteria is also built around Green Flag and is a non technical visual assessment of the whole site, including general equipment and surface quality/appearance but also including an assessment of, for example, bench and bin provision. This differs, for example, from an independent RoSPA review, which is a more technical assessment of equipment in terms of play and risk assessment grade.

Children's and young people play provision is scored for value as part of the audit assessment. In particular value is recognised in terms of size of sites and the range of equipment they host. For instance, a small site with only a single piece of equipment is likely to be of a lower value than a site with several different forms of equipment designed to cater for wider age ranges.

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## **Analysis of value**

Using data calculated from the site visits and desk based research a value score for each site is identified. Value is defined in a Companion Guide to PPG17 in relation to the following three issues:

- ◀ Context of the site i.e. its accessibility, scarcity value and historic value.
- ◀ Level and type of use.
- ◀ The wider benefits it generates for people, biodiversity and the wider environment.

The value criteria set for audit assessment is derived as:

<p><b>Value criteria for open space site visits (score)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◀ Level of use (observations only) e.g. evidence of different user types (e.g. dog walkers, joggers, children) throughout day, located near school and/or community facility</li><li>◀ Context of site in relation to other open spaces</li><li>◀ Structural and landscape benefits e.g. well located, high quality defining the identity and character of the area</li><li>◀ Ecological benefits e.g. supports/promotes biodiversity and wildlife habitats</li><li>◀ Educational benefits e.g. provides learning opportunities on nature/historic landscapes, people and features</li><li>◀ Social inclusion and health benefits e.g. promotes civic pride, community ownership and a sense of belonging; helping to promote well-being</li><li>◀ Cultural and heritage benefits e.g. historic elements/links (e.g. listed building, statues) and high profile symbols of local area</li><li>◀ Amenity benefits and a sense of place e.g. attractive places that are safe and well maintained; helping to create specific neighbourhoods and landmarks</li><li>◀ Economic benefits e.g. enhances property values, promotes economic activity and attracts people from near and far</li></ul>
<p><b>Value - non site visit criteria (score)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◀ Designated site such as LNR or SSSI</li><li>◀ Educational programme in place</li><li>◀ Historic site</li><li>◀ Listed building or historical monument on site</li><li>◀ Registered 'friends of' group to the site</li></ul>

## **2.4 Quality and value thresholds**

In order to determine whether sites are high or low quality (as recommended by guidance); the results of the site assessments have been colour-coded against a baseline threshold (high being green and low being red).

The primary aim of applying a threshold is to identify sites where investment and/or improvements are required. It can also be used to set an aspirational quality standard to be achieved at some point in the future and to inform decisions around the need to further protect sites from future development (particularly when applied with its respective value score in a matrix format).

The base line threshold for assessing quality can often be set around 66%; based on the pass rate for Green Flag criteria (site visit criteria also being based on Green Flag). Site visit criteria collected for each site is converted to a percentage score. Green Flag Award is the only national benchmark available for quality of parks and open spaces. However, the site visit criteria used for Green Flag is not always appropriate for every open space typology as it is designed to represent a sufficiently high standard of site.

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Quality thresholds have therefore initially been set on average scores and amended to better reflect provision on the ground for each typology.

*Table 2.2: Quality and value thresholds by typology*

Typology	Quality threshold	Value threshold
Parks and gardens	60%	20%
Natural and semi-natural greenspace	35%	20%
Amenity greenspace	40%	20%
Provision for children and young people	50%	20%
Allotments	45%	20%
Cemeteries/churchyards	45%	20%

For value there is no national guidance on the setting of thresholds. The 20% threshold applied is derived from our experience and knowledge in assessing the perceived value of sites. Whilst 20% may initially seem low it is relative score - designed to reflect those sites that meet more than one aspect of the criteria used for assessing value (as detailed earlier).

## **2.5 Identifying local need (demand)**

Consultation to identify local need for open space provision has been carried out through face-to-face meetings and telephone interviews.

Parish councils were consulted. This helped to pick up on issues, problems and concerns relating to open space provision at a more local level, as well as identifying the attitudes and needs of the broader local community. It also allowed any local issues and aspirations to be identified.

This has also been supplemented by consultation with key local authority officers and community groups with local knowledge of sites or provision relating to each typology.

## **2.6 Accessibility standards**

Accessibility standards for different types of provision are a tool to identify communities currently not served by existing facilities. It is recognised that factors that underpin catchment areas vary from person to person, day to day and hour to hour. This problem is overcome by accepting the concept of 'effective catchments', defined as the distance that would be travelled by the majority of users.

Guidance is offered by the Greater London Authority (GLA) (2002): 'Guide to preparing open space strategies' with regard to appropriate catchment areas for authorities to adopt. However, in order to make accessibility standards more locally specific to St. Helens, we propose using data from the previous Open Space Study to set appropriate catchments. As part of the 2006 study people were asked whether the amount of open space was enough. This was then used to derive standards. The following standards are recorded in relation to how far residents are likely to be willing to travel to access different types of open space provision.

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*Table 2.3: Accessibility standards to travel to open space provision*

<b>Typology</b>	<b>Applied standard</b>
Parks and gardens	15 minute walk time (1200m)
Natural and semi-natural	15 minute walk time (1200m)
Amenity greenspace	5 minute walk time (400m)
Provision for children and young people	10 minute walk time (800m)
Allotments	15 minute walk time (1200m)
Cemeteries	No standard set

Most typologies are set as having an accessibility standard of a 15 minute walk time.

No standard is set for the typologies of cemeteries. For cemeteries, provision should be determined by demand for burial space.



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## PART 3: GENERAL OPEN SPACE SUMMARY

This section describes generic trends and findings from the quality and value ratings for each typology in St. Helens. It describes the generic issues that cut across more than one typology. The typology and site specific issues are covered in the relevant sections later in this report.

### 3.1 Quality

The methodology for assessing quality is set out in Part 2. Quality thresholds are the minimum standard open space provision is expected to meet. They are calculated by each site receiving a quality score from the site visit process. Thresholds have initially been set on average scores and amended to better reflect provision on the ground for each typology. The table below summarises the results of all the quality assessment for open spaces across St. Helens.

Table 3.1: Quality scores for all open space typologies

Typology	Threshold	Maximum score	Scores			No. of sites	
			Lowest score	Average score	Highest score	Low	High
Allotments	45%	124	35%	53%	73%	3	15
Amenity greenspace	40%	121	15%	43%	75%	27	60
Cemeteries/churchyards	45%	161	36%	53%	84%	2	17
Provision for children & young people	50%	97	27%	62%	86%	7	66
Park and gardens	60%	159	41%	64%	82%	4	12
Natural & semi-natural greenspace	35%	117	16%	41%	82%	14	49
<b>TOTAL</b>	-	-	<b>15%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>219</b>

Over three quarters (79%) of assessed open spaces in St. Helens rate above the quality thresholds set. More natural and semi-natural greenspace sites and amenity greenspace sites score low for quality compared to other typologies. This is a reflection of the number of sites for these typologies without any specific ancillary features or facilities. Sites for the typology of natural and semi-natural greenspace can also tend to score low for personal security given they can often be in isolated locations and not overlooked by other land uses. Often sites deliberately have very little ongoing management or maintenance in order to provide, for example, wildlife habitats.

Proportionally there are also a high percentage of parks and gardens that rate above the threshold for quality. It is important that large and prominent sites are assessed against criteria intended to do this, so that provision can be to the highest standard although it is not appropriate for all forms of open space provision to be set such a high threshold.

The typologies of allotments, cemeteries and provision for children and young people are generally all of a good quality. In particular the proportion of cemeteries and provision for children and young people rated as being of a high quality is noticeable although both typologies do still have some sites that rate below the thresholds.

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Management and maintenance responsibilities of open space are undertaken by a number of organisations across St. Helens. The Council predominantly has responsibility for more strategic forms of provision such as key parks, play sites and burial provision. In addition, a number of sites are managed by parish councils or other land providers such as Forestry Commission for example.

### 3.2 Value

The methodology for assessing value is set out in Part 2 (Methodology). The table below summarises the results of the value assessment for open spaces across St. Helens.

*Table 3.2: Value scores for all open space typologies*

Typology	Threshold	Maximum score	Scores			No. of sites	
			Lowest score	Average score	Highest score	Low	High
Allotments	20%	105	24%	42%	67%	-	18
Amenity greenspace	20%	100	11%	30%	55%	10	77
Cemeteries/churchyards	20%	100	22%	36%	55%	-	19
Provision for children & young people	20%	55	13%	47%	82%	1	72
Park and gardens	20%	110	28%	54%	82%	-	16
Natural & semi-natural greenspace	20%	110	11%	34%	68%	4	59
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>261</b>

The majority of sites are assessed as being of high value. Similar to the quality scores; amenity greenspaces have a higher proportion of low value sites. This reflects the number of sites that lack any particular ancillary features. The typology also contains a number of smaller sized sites. However, the value these sites offer in providing a visual and recreational amenity as well as a break in the built form may remain important in a wider context.

All park sites and nearly all provision for children and young people rate high for value reflecting their role to local communities.

A high value site is considered to be one that is well used by the local community, well maintained (with a balance for conservation), provides a safe environment and has features of interest; for example play equipment and landscaping. Sites that provide for a cross section of users and have a multi-functional use are considered a higher value than those that offer limited functions and that are thought of as bland and unattractive.

## 3.3 Summary

### General summary

- ◀ In total there are 286 sites identified in St. Helens as open space provision. This is an equivalent of over 1,004 hectares across the area.
- ◀ Most typologies are set as having an accessibility standard of a 15 minute walk time. For certain typologies it is less to reflect their role and function.
- ◀ Over three quarters of all open spaces score above the threshold for quality. Most noticeably, more amenity greenspace and natural and semi-natural sites score low for quality compared to other typologies. This is due to such sites tending to lack features.
- ◀ The majority of all open spaces are assessed as being of high value. Reflecting the importance of provision; nearly all sites with the exception for the typologies of amenity greenspace and natural and semi-natural score high for value.

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## PART 4: PARKS AND GARDENS

### 4.1 Introduction

The typology of parks and gardens covers urban parks, country parks and formal gardens (including designed landscapes), which provide ‘accessible high quality opportunities for informal recreation and community events. Sites referred to as country parks within St. Helens are included as natural and semi-natural greenspace within this study.

Some sites classified as other typologies (e.g. amenity greenspace, outdoor sports facilities) may share characteristics associated with parks. Whilst they may provide opportunities similar to a park; it is a site's primary purpose that has been used to define what category of open space it is.

### 4.2 Current provision

There are 16 sites classified as parks and gardens across St. Helens, an equivalent of over 135 hectares. No site size threshold has been applied and, as such, all sites have been included within the typology.

*Table 4.1: Distribution of parks by analysis area*

Analysis area	Parks and gardens		
	Number	Size (ha)	Current provision (ha per 1,000 population)*
Billinge & Seneley Green	1	1.44	0.14
Earlestown & Newton	2	17.05	0.76
Eccleston & Windle	1	13.65	0.77
Haydock & Blackbrook	-	-	-
Moss Bank & Town Centre	5	13.45	0.59
Parr, Sutton & Bold	2	12.98	0.38
Rainford	-	-	-
Rainhill	1	0.09	0.01
West Park & Thatto Heath	4	77.15	3.18
<b>ST. HELENS</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>135.81</b>	<b>0.77</b>

Only two analysis areas are identified as having no form of parks and gardens provision. All others have parks and gardens with the West Park & Thatto Heath area having the greatest amount of provision.

The largest single site contributing to provision in St. Helens is Sherdley Park, in West Park & Thatto Heath, equating to over 51 hectares of provision. The site has an important dual role as a form of open space contributing to a wide variety of uses and benefits.

Other significant sized sites include Taylor Park (19 hectares) in West Park & Thatto Heath and Victoria Park (13.6 hectares) in Eccleston & Windle.

\* Based on ONS 2013 Mid-term population of 176,221

## ST. HELENS COUNCIL OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT

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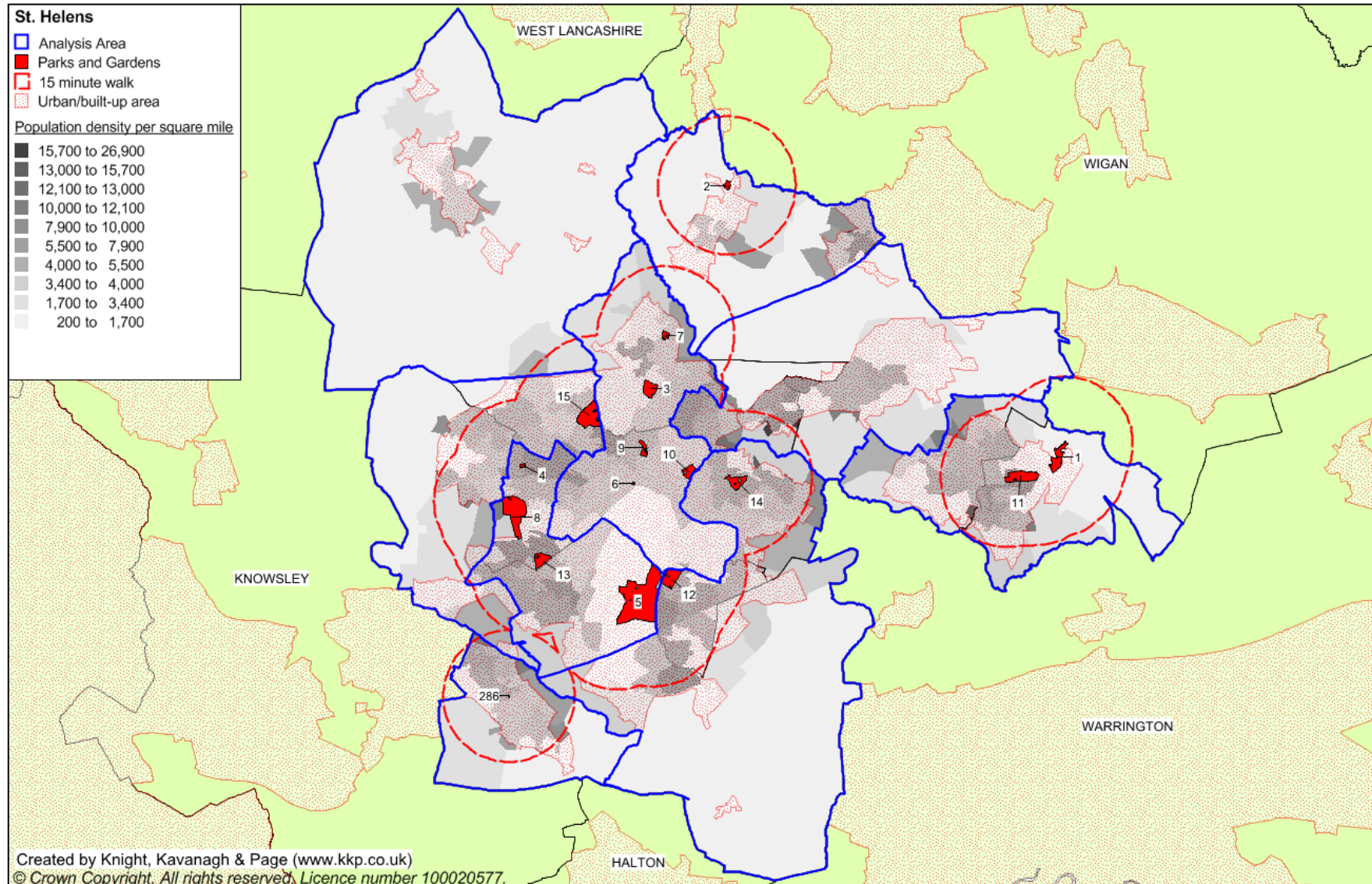
As seen in Table 4.1 proportionally West Park & Thatto Heath (3.18 ha per 1,000 population) has a significant greater amount of provision per 1,000 head of population compared to the other analysis areas. This is due to the large amount of provision in the area. Overall St. Helens is meeting the 0.8 ha per 1,000 population quantity standard suggested for parks and gardens in the 2006 study and referred to in the adopted Core Strategy.

### **4.3 Accessibility**

An accessibility standard of a 15 minute walk time has been set across St. Helens. This is based on the adopted standards derived from the previous open space study for St. Helens. Figure 4.1 shows parks and gardens mapped against the analysis areas with the accessibility catchment.

# ST. HELENS COUNCIL OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT

Figure 4.1: Parks and gardens mapped against analysis area



## ST. HELENS COUNCIL OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT

Table 4.2: Key to sites mapped with quality and value scores

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Quality score	Value score
1	Willow Park	Earlestown and Newton	61%	53%
2	Bankes Park	Billinge and Seneley Green	63%	55%
3	Haresfinch Park	Moss Bank & Town Centre	82%	64%
4	Alder Hey Park	West Park and Thatto Heath	41%	28%
5	Sherdley Park	West Park and Thatto Heath	76%	59%
6	Friend's Garden	Moss Bank & Town Centre	52%	35%
7	Kentmere Park	Moss Bank & Town Centre	46%	50%
8	Taylor Park	West Park and Thatto Heath	78%	82%
9	Fosters Park (off Railway Street)	Moss Bank & Town Centre	62%	50%
10	Nanny Goat Park	Moss Bank & Town Centre	75%	59%
11	Mesnes Park	Earlestown and Newton	67%	66%
12	Sutton Park	Parr, Sutton and Bold	62%	39%
13	Thatto Heath Park	West Park and Thatto Heath	52%	44%
14	Gaskell Park	Parr, Sutton and Bold	72%	59%
15	Victoria Park	Eccleston and Windle	78%	77%
286	Eco Garden	Rainhill	60%	44%

In general there is a reasonably good coverage of parks based on a 15 minute walk time in the more built up areas. Corresponding to Table 4.1 there are some areas of deficiency noted particularly in the Haydock & Blackbrook and Rainford areas.

There are, however, other types of open space provision such as amenity greenspace servicing these areas. Such sites may not meet the criteria of parks provision but are likely to offer similar opportunities and access to recreational activities associated with parks.

Other areas not served by parks provision tend to have a low population density and are unlikely to warrant the creation of any new parks provision.

Council managed open spaces, including parks and gardens, are managed as part of the open spaces portfolio by SHC. Sites receive regular maintenance visits which include regimes such as grass cutting, weeding and general site preservation (e.g. bin emptying, bench refurbishment and path checks). On average a site receives a visit every two weeks. At sites containing play equipment this is more frequent and almost a daily visit.

### 4.4 Quality

In order to determine whether sites are high or low quality (as recommended by guidance); the scores from the site assessments have been colour-coded against a baseline threshold (high being green and low being red). The table below summarises the results of the quality assessment for parks in St. Helens. A threshold of 60% (to reflect Green Flag pass mark) is applied in order to identify high and low quality. Further explanation of how the quality scores and thresholds are derived can be found in Part 2 (Methodology).



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Table 4.3: Quality ratings for parks by analysis area

Analysis area	Scores			Spread	No. of sites	
	Lowest score	Average score	Highest score		Low <60%	High >60%
Billinge & Seneley Green	63%	63%	63%	-	-	1
Earlestown & Newton	61%	64%	67%	6%	-	2
Eccleston & Windle	78%	78%	78%	-	-	1
Haydock & Blackbrook	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moss Bank & Town Centre	46%	63%	82%	36%	2	3
Parr, Sutton & Bold	62%	67%	72%	10%	-	2
Rainford	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rainhill	60%	60%	60%	-	-	1
West Park & Thatto Heath	41%	62%	78%	37%	2	2
<b>ST. HELENS</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>12</b>

Most park sites in St. Helens, with the exception of four sites, score above the threshold for quality against the set criteria.

The four sites to not score high for quality against the threshold are Alder Hey Park (41%) and Thatto Heath Park (52%) in West Park & Thatto Heath and Kentmere Park (46%), and Friend's Garden (52%) in Moss Bank & Town Centre.

Site observations identify a lack of signage at all four sites. Alder Hey Park and Kentmere Park are noted as not having any seating provision. Furthermore, both sites are viewed as having either no play provision or play equipment in need of updating. Generally no specific quality issues are highlighted at the sites. It is likely that scoring below the threshold is a result of their comparison to the other high quality parks provision in the wider area.

All other sites are generally assessed highly and are rated above the 60% threshold. The highest individual scoring sites are:

- ◀ Haresfinch Park (82%)
- ◀ Victoria Park (78%)
- ◀ Taylor Park (78%)
- ◀ Sherdley Park (76%)
- ◀ Nanny Goat Park (75%)
- ◀ Gaskell Park (72%)

Haresfinch Park is the highest scoring site in St. Helens for quality with 82%. This is followed closely by Victoria Park, Taylor Park and Sherdley Park. All are noted as having a range of facilities such as play equipment for children as well as sports provision and natural features (i.e. ponds, wild flowers). Consultation highlights these features as being key attractions and reasons for visiting sites. Maintenance of the sites, in general, is also viewed as being very good.



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Victoria Park has recently been revamped as part of a successful Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). The joint work with Age UK, who is based within the site, involved restoring the site and its facilities to its former historic glory. This included for example new pathways, raised beds and creation of a bandstand.

There are a number of sites with friends of group in the St. Helens area.

- ◀ Bankes Park
- ◀ Mesnes Park
- ◀ King George V, Haydock
- ◀ Sutton Park
- ◀ Queens Park
- ◀ Victoria Park
- ◀ St. Helens Cemetery
- ◀ Taylor Park

These work in conjunction with SHC, to provide added benefit to the quality of parks. Groups help to deliver improvement programmes and often meet on a regular basis to undertake activities such as litter picking or bulb planting. Furthermore, groups also help host regular events such as family fun days.

### **Green Flag**

The Green Flag Award scheme is licensed and managed by Keep Britain Tidy. It provides national standards for parks and greenspaces across England and Wales. Public service agreements, identified by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) highlight the importance placed on Green Flag status as an indicator of high quality. This in turn impacts upon the way parks and gardens are managed and maintained.

A recent survey by improvement charity GreenSpace highlights that parks with a Green Flag Award provide more satisfaction to members of the public compared to those sites without it. The survey of 16,000 park users found that more than 90% of Green Flag Award park visitors were very satisfied or satisfied with their chosen site, compared to 65% of visitors to non-Green Flag parks.

There are currently 13 sites identified as achieving Green Flag Award status in St. Helens. A total of seven of these sites are classified as parks and gardens:

- ◀ Fosters Park
- ◀ Mesnes Park
- ◀ Sutton Park
- ◀ King George V Park, Haydock
- ◀ Gaskell Park
- ◀ Nanny Goat Park
- ◀ Taylor Park
- ◀ Victoria Park
- ◀ Bankes Park

The four other Green Flag Award sites\* are:

- ◀ Clinkham Wood
- ◀ Siding Lane LNR
- ◀ Downall Croft Doorstep Green
- ◀ The Duckeries

To be successfully awarded the Green Flag sites are obviously maintained to a high standard. The work of both the Council maintenance team/contractors and the Friends of Groups at sites are important to their continuing achievement.

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\* These sites have been assessed later in the report as different forms of open space typologies e.g. natural and semi-natural greenspace and amenity greenspace

## ST. HELENS COUNCIL OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT

Site assessments show that other park sites in St. Helens would be appropriate and are likely to score well if they were to be submitted for a Green Flag Award scheme. Haresfinch Park and Victoria Park score particularly well for quality, each receiving a score well above the Green Flag Award 66% pass rate. As part of the recent HLF funding Victoria Park is looking to be put forward for Green Flag accreditation in the near future.

### 4.5 Value

In order to determine whether sites are high or low value (as recommended by guidance); the scores from the site assessments have been colour-coded against a baseline threshold (high being green and low being red). The table below summarises the results of the value assessment for parks in St. Helens. A threshold of 20% is applied in order to identify high and low value. Further explanation of how the value scores are derived can be found in Part 2 (Methodology).

Table 4.4: Value scores for parks by analysis area

Analysis area	Scores			Spread	No. of sites	
	Lowest score	Average score	Highest score		Low <20%	High >20%
Billinge & Seneley Green	55%	55%	55%	-	-	1
Earlestown & Newton	53%	60%	66%	13%	-	2
Eccleston & Windle	77%	77%	77%	-	-	1
Haydock & Blackbrook	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moss Bank & Town Centre	35%	52%	64%	29%	-	5
Parr, Sutton & Bold	39%	49%	59%	20%	-	2
Rainford	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rainhill	44%	44%	44%	-	-	1
West Park & Thatto Heath	28%	53%	82%	54%	-	4
<b>ST. HELENS</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>16</b>

All parks are assessed as being of high value from the site visit assessments (i.e. all site score above the set threshold). This is also supported throughout the consultation which demonstrates the high social inclusion and health benefits, ecological value and sense of place that park sites offer.

The value of parks is further demonstrated by some sites being registered as The Queen Elizabeth II Fields. The programme, run by the charity Field In Trust (FIT), aimed to protect (by a Deed of Dedication) outdoor recreational space across the UK as part of the Queens Diamond Jubilee as well as the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Sites nominated for protection are often considered important assets providing focal points and amenity benefits for local communities. There are seven sites with Queen Elizabeth II Fields (QEII) status in St. Helens. Two of these are identified as park:

- ◀ Sherdley Park
- ◀ Thatto Heath Park

The other QEII sites in St. Helens, most of which are sports or playing pitch sites are:

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- ◀ Ruskin Drive Sports ground
- ◀ Elliot's Field
- ◀ Sutton Manor Colliery
- ◀ Earle Street
- ◀ Crawford Playing Field

One of the key aspects towards the value placed on parks provision is that they are able to provide opportunities for local communities and people to socialise. The ability for people to undertake a range of different activities such as walking, dog walking or taking children to the play area are recognised. Also the use of such sites to accommodate events is important.

### 4.6 Summary

#### **Parks and gardens**

- ◀ There are 16 sites classified as parks and gardens totalling over 135 hectares.
- ◀ Catchment gaps are noted to the north and east analysis areas. However, major settlements such as Rainford are thought to be sufficiently serviced by other forms of open space that provide similar functions to parks. Furthermore, the drive time catchment covers the whole of the Borough.
- ◀ Nearly all parks score above the threshold for quality with the exception of four sites; Alder Hey Park, Thatto Heath Park, Kentmere Park and Friends Gardens. A lack of seating and ancillary facilities in comparison to other park sites is noted at the sites.
- ◀ Haresfinch Park, Victoria Park and Sherdley Park are the highest scoring sites for quality. The quality is predominantly attributed to the range and standard of provision within the sites.
- ◀ There are currently seven park sites in St. Helens with Green Flag status. A number of other sites are also identified as having the potential to be submitted for Green Flag accreditation in the future if desired. One of these, Victoria Park, is intending to be put forward as part of its recent HLF work.
- ◀ All parks are assessed as being of high value, with the important social inclusion and health benefits, ecological value and sense of place sites offer being acknowledged.

**PART 5: NATURAL AND SEMI-NATURAL GREENSPACE**

**5.1 Introduction**

The natural and semi-natural greenspace typology includes woodland (coniferous, deciduous, mixed) and scrub, grassland (e.g. down-land, meadow), heath or moor, wetlands (e.g. marsh, fen), open running water, wastelands (including disturbed ground), and bare rock habitats (e.g. cliffs, quarries, pits). These provide ‘wildlife conservation, biodiversity and environmental education and awareness.’

The typology of natural and semi-natural greenspace has a relatively low quality threshold compared to other open space typologies. This is in order to reflect the characteristic of this kind of provision. For instance, many natural and semi-natural sites are intentionally without ancillary facilities in order to reduce misuse/inappropriate behaviour whilst encouraging greater flora and fauna activity.

**5.2 Current provision**

In total 65 sites are identified as publicly accessible natural and semi-natural greenspace, totalling over 626 hectares of provision. These totals may not include all provision in St. Helens as a site size threshold of 0.2 hectares has been applied. Guidance recommends that sites smaller than this may be of less recreational value to residents.

*Table 5.1: Distribution of natural and semi-natural greenspace by analysis area*

Analysis area	Natural and semi-natural greenspace		
	Number	Size (ha)	Current provision (ha per 1,000 population)*
Billinge & Seneley Green	3	30.17	2.92
Earlestown & Newton	10	49.58	2.21
Eccleston & Windle	9	23.16	1.30
Haydock & Blackbrook	5	59.75	2.63
Moss Bank & Town Centre	4	26.09	1.14
Parr, Sutton & Bold	21	344.30	10.01
Rainford	5	20.25	1.92
Rainhill	2	21.78	1.99
West Park & Thatto Heath	6	51.57	2.12
<b>ST. HELENS</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>626.66</b>	<b>3.56</b>

Of these, three sites have restricted access (Gamble Avenue Woods, Buff Quarry and Crow Lane Copse) but are included as they still provide some natural and semi-natural provision and/or public access.

Over half of the provision across the study area is located in Parr, Sutton & Bold (344 hectares). Subsequently the analysis area has the greater proportion of provision per 1,000 population with 10.01 hectares. This is a significantly greater standard than other analysis areas. However, overall St. Helens is more than meeting the 2 ha per 1,000 population quantity standard as recommended in the 2006 study and set out in the adopted Core Strategy.

\* Based on ONS 2013 Mid-term population of 176,221

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St. Helens has a variety of natural and semi-natural sites including woodlands, grasslands and quarries. There are a significant number of former colliery and quarry sites that make up a large proportion of natural and semi-natural greenspace. For instance, Sutton Manor Colliery (63 hectares), Bold Colliery South Side (47 hectares), and Clockface Colliery Country Park are all included in the typology.

The Council and its partners seek to manage these sites to create an accessible network of linked open spaces through the Bold Forest Park Area Action Plan. Such sites are recognised as unique forms of provision as well as for their contribution to the opportunities and activities associated with natural and semi-natural types of open space in St. Helens.

## ***Designations***

In terms of national designations, there is a number of accessible local nature reserves (LNRs) identified in St. Helens. Stanley Bank Meadow is also identified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The sites are:

- ◀ Siding Lane Local Nature Reserve
- ◀ Clinkham Wood
- ◀ Parr Hall Millennium Green
- ◀ Stanley Bank Meadow (also SSSI)
- ◀ Thatto Heath Meadows
- ◀ Colliers Moss Common North

These sites account for over 150 hectares of natural and semi-natural greenspace that is designated.

A total of 626 hectares of natural and semi-natural greenspace is identified across St. Helens. Management of these sites is the responsibility of a variety of organisations. Aside from the local authority, site management is also the responsibility of the Forestry Commission and private landowners.

## **5.3 Accessibility**

Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt) provides a set of benchmarks for ensuring access to places near to where people live. These standards recommend that people living in towns and cities should have:

- ◀ An accessible natural greenspace of at least two hectares in size, no more than 300 metres (5 minutes walk) from home
- ◀ At least one accessible 20 hectare site within two kilometres of home
- ◀ One accessible 100 hectare site within five kilometres of home
- ◀ One accessible 500 hectare site within ten kilometres of home
- ◀ One hectare of statutory Local Nature Reserves per thousand population

This study, in order to comply with guidance uses locally informed standards. It does not focus on the ANGSt Standard as this uses a different methodology for identifying accessible natural greenspace to that advocated in guidance.

An accessibility standard of a 15 minute walk time has been set across St. Helens for natural and semi-natural greenspace. This is based on the recommended standards derived from the previous open space study for St. Helens. Figure 5.1 shows natural and

## **ST. HELENS COUNCIL OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT**

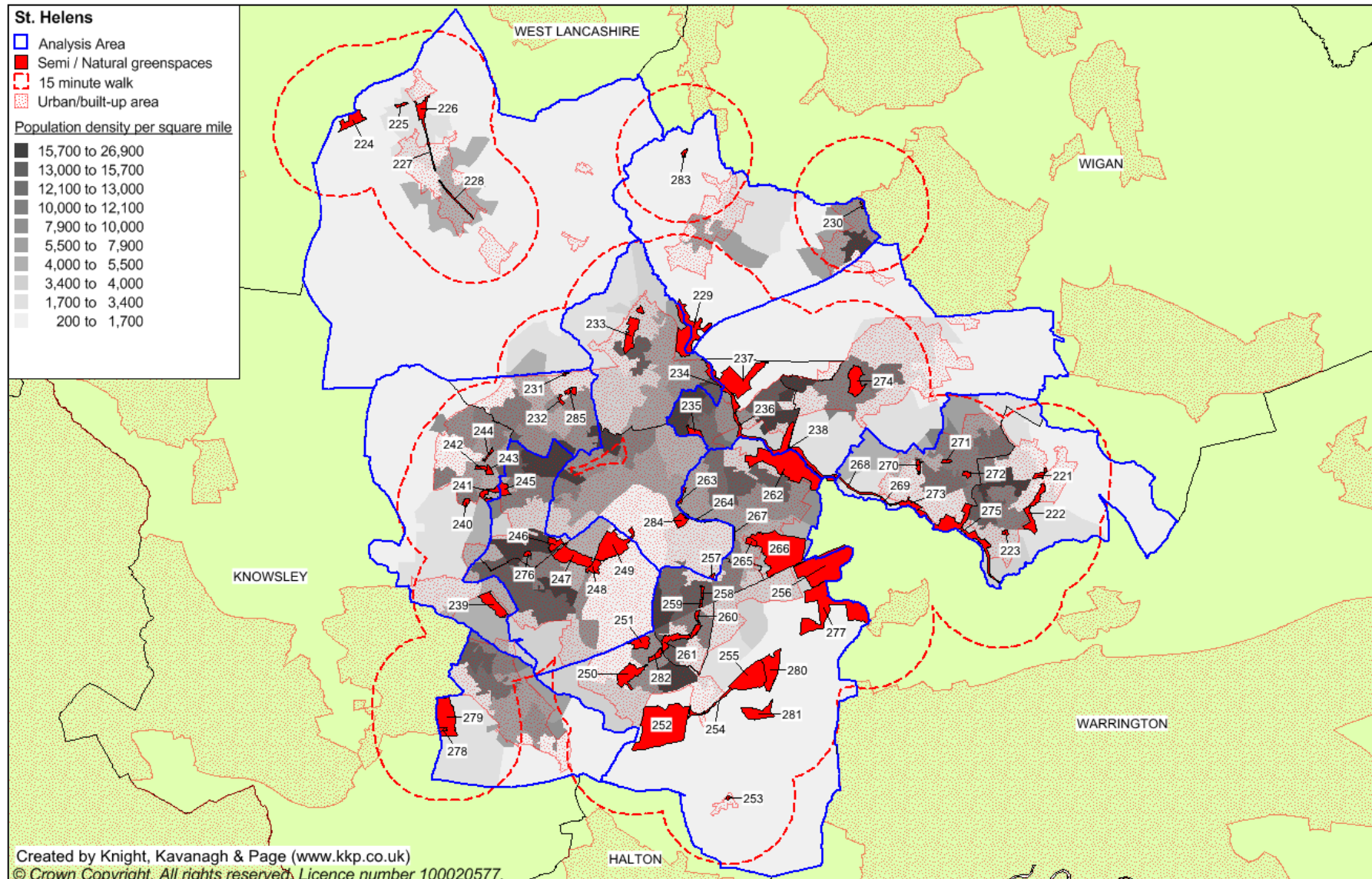
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semi-natural greenspace mapped against the analysis areas with the accessibility catchment.



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Figure 5.1: Natural and semi-natural greenspace mapped against analysis areas



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Table 5.2: Key to sites mapped with quality and value scores

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Quality score	Value score
221	Naylors Wood	Earlestown and Newton	46%	30%
222	Newton Brook Greenway	Earlestown and Newton	35%	30%
223	Vulcan Pond	Earlestown and Newton	37%	26%
224	Siding Lane Local Nature Reserve	Rainford	76%	44%
225	Red Delph Wood	Rainford	39%	26%
226	Rainford Linear Park	Rainford	16%	31%
227	Rainford Linear Park (part)	Rainford	48%	22%
228	Rainford Linear Park (part)	Rainford	38%	36%
229	Carr Mill Dam	Billinge and Seneley Green	48%	55%
230	Booths Brow Road semi natural space	Billinge and Seneley Green	23%	11%
231	Windle Hall Coppice	Eccleston and Windle	31%	39%
232	Gamble Avenue Woods	Eccleston and Windle	30%	39%
233	Clinkham Wood (part)	Moss Bank and Town Centre	73%	68%
234	Sankey Valley Country Park	Moss Bank and Town Centre	82%	68%
235	Parr Hall Millennium Green	Haydock and Blackbrook	64%	64%
236	Sankey Valley Park 1	Haydock and Blackbrook	53%	59%
237	Stanley Bank Meadow	Haydock and Blackbrook	52%	54%
238	Sankey Valley Park 2	Haydock and Blackbrook	38%	36%
239	St Benedicts Wood	Eccleston and Windle	35%	26%
240	Old Joan's Plantation	Eccleston and Windle	39%	21%
241	Eccleston Hall Open Space	Eccleston and Windle	35%	31%
242	Millwood	Eccleston and Windle	39%	30%
243	Mill Dam	Eccleston and Windle	36%	35%
244	Eccleston Parish Council Nature Reserve	Eccleston and Windle	29%	30%
245	Eccleston Bottom Dam	West Park and Thatto	39%	26%
246	Alexandra Colliery	West Park and Thatto	45%	21%
247	Greengates/Roughdales	West Park and Thatto	39%	26%
248	Thatto Heath Meadows	West Park and Thatto	38%	26%
249	Ravenhead Nature Park	West Park and Thatto	35%	22%
250	Daisyfield and Farndon Avenue	Parr, Sutton and Bold	35%	36%
251	Buff Quarry	Parr, Sutton and Bold		
252	Sutton Manor Colliery	Parr, Sutton and Bold	55%	64%
253	School Lane Wood	Parr, Sutton and Bold	39%	20%
254	Miner's Way	Parr, Sutton and Bold	44%	23%
255	Clockface Colliery Country Park	Parr, Sutton and Bold	61%	32%
256	Bold Colliery South Side	Parr, Sutton and Bold	33%	58%
257	Ex SIDAC Car Park - Open Space	Moss Bank and Town Centre	33%	16%
258	Waterdale Reservoir	Parr, Sutton and Bold	41%	21%
259	Sutton Millennium Green	Parr, Sutton and Bold	41%	20%
260	Sutton Leach Former Reservoir	Parr, Sutton and Bold	17%	16%
261	Sutton Mill Dam	Parr, Sutton and Bold	49%	45%



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Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Quality score	Value score
262	Southport Street	Parr, Sutton and Bold	37%	55%
263	Sutton Brook Greenway 1	Parr, Sutton and Bold	48%	50%
264	Sutton Brook Greenway 2	Parr, Sutton and Bold	52%	36%
265	Moss Nook Trout Fishery	Parr, Sutton and Bold	25%	26%
266	Colliers Moss	Parr, Sutton and Bold	28%	45%
267	Sutton Brook Greenway	Parr, Sutton and Bold	40%	39%
268	Sankey Valley Park 3	Earlestown and Newton	59%	59%
269	Sankey Valley Park 4	Earlestown and Newton	52%	35%
270	Dingle Green Open Space Extension	Earlestown and Newton	48%	36%
271	Crow Lane Copse	Earlestown and Newton	20%	15%
272	Collingwood Road/Hope Street Open Space	Earlestown and Newton	41%	26%
273	Sankey Valley Park 5	Earlestown and Newton	43%	30%
274	Princess Pit	Haydock and Blackbrook	38%	30%
275	Sankey Valley, Red Brow Wood, Mucky Mountains	Earlestown and Newton	37%	36%
276	Thatto Heath Dam	West Park and Thatto	41%	21%
277	Wheatacre Farm	Parr, Sutton and Bold	33%	39%
278	Parrens Covert	Rainhill	46%	21%
279	Whiston Woods	Rainhill	45%	26%
280	Maypole Farm	Parr, Sutton and Bold	35%	23%
281	Griffin Wood	Parr, Sutton and Bold	26%	21%
282	Red Quarry	Parr, Sutton and Bold	54%	26%
283	Billinge Beacon	Billinge and Seneley Green	37%	49%
284	Sunshine Park	Moss Bank and Town Centre	57%	35%
285	Hard Lane Quarry	Eccleston and Windle	27%	26%

The majority of the St. Helens area is covered by the 15 minute walk time catchment. However, there appears to be some minor gaps in Rainhill and Billinge & Seneley Green based on a 15 minute walk time. Both areas are served by other form of open space provision amenity greenspace. An option to address any deficiencies in these areas could be to increase the natural features present at existing sites.

### 5.4 Quality

In order to determine whether sites are high or low quality (as recommended by guidance); the scores from the site assessments have been colour-coded against a baseline threshold (high being green and low being red). The table below summarises the results of the quality assessment for natural and semi-natural greenspace in St. Helens. A threshold of 35% is applied in order to identify high and low quality. Further explanation of how the quality scores are derived can be found in Part 2 (Methodology).

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Table 5.3: Quality rating for natural and semi-natural greenspace by analysis area

Analysis area	Scores			Spread	No. of sites	
	Lowest score	Average score	Highest score		Low <35%	High >35%
Billinge & Seneley Green	23%	36%	48%	25%	1	2
Earlestown & Newton	20%	42%	59%	39%	1	10
Eccleston & Windle	27%	34%	39%	12%	4	5
Haydock & Blackbrook	38%	49%	64%	26%	-	5
Moss Bank & Town Centre	33%	61%	82%	49%	1	4
Parr, Sutton & Bold	17%	39%	61%	44%	6	14
Rainford	16%	43%	76%	50%	1	4
Rainhill	45%	46%	46%	1%	-	2
West Park & Thatto Heath	35%	40%	45%	10%	-	6
<b>ST. HELENS</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>50</b>

Please note the Buff Quarry site in Parr, Sutton & Bold was not assessed for quality or value as it is currently inaccessible. However, it is included in the audit as it seems it is intended to form part of a wider site with the Daisyfield and Red Quarry sites. Both of which are considered as good quality and value.

Over three quarters of natural and semi-natural sites (78%) in St. Helens score above the threshold for quality. However, 14 sites score below the applied quality threshold. The majority of these are located in Eccleston & Windle (four sites) and Parr, Sutton & Bold (six areas).

The four sites in Eccleston & Windle scoring below the threshold are Windle Hall Coppice (31%), Gamble Avenue Woods (30%), Eccleston Parish Council Nature Reserve (29%) and Hard Lane Quarry (27%). Most score low due to a lack of any notable ancillary facilities (i.e. bins, benches, interpretation boards); the exception being the Hard Lane Quarry site which has a play area. In addition, Gamble Avenue Woods is part of a school boundary and therefore has limited community access.

Site observations do recognise that the Eccleston Parish Council Nature Reserve has a real potential to further promote the potential learning and habitat opportunities available on site. Despite its name the site is not a designated LNR although this is the intention along with Mill Wood as Mill Brow LNR.

Similarly the other sites to score below the threshold in St. Helens are observed as having a lack of ancillary features such as bins, benches or information/interpretation boards. There are also a number of sites observed as having specific site problems at the time of visiting. In particular the Sutton Leach Former Reservoir in Parr, Sutton & Bold is identified as having impassable pathways due to them being overgrown. In addition, there was evidence of moped use. Other sites noted with specific issues include:

- ◀ Sankey Valley, Red Brow Wood and Mucky Mountain - issue with moped/quad bikes
- ◀ Sutton Brook Greenway 1- broken glass, litter and fire damage noticed
- ◀ Sunshire Park - broken glass, litter and fire damage noticed
- ◀ Sankey Valley Country Park – fire damage

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Despite this, the four sites still all score above the threshold due to the positives on site, such as ecological and social benefits, out weighting the negative occurrences.

The majority of sites (78%) score above the threshold for quality in St. Helens. The highest scoring site is Sankey Valley Country Park; receiving a score of 82% for quality. Other sites scoring particularly high for quality include:

- ◀ Sankey Valley Country Park (82%)
- ◀ Siding Lane Local Nature Reserve (76%)
- ◀ Clinkham Wood (73%)
- ◀ Parr Hall Millennium Green (64%)
- ◀ Clockface Colliery Country Park (61%)

All the above sites are observed as being attractive and well maintained; offering plenty of ancillary features such as bins, benches, interpretation boards and excellent quality pathways all to a high standard. In addition, they are all noted as being well used by a variety of people.

Both the Clinkham Wood and Siding Lane Local Nature Reserve are also Green Flag Award winning sites; further evidence of their high standard of quality.

### 5.5 Value

In order to determine whether sites are high or low value (as recommended by guidance); the scores from the site assessments have been colour-coded against a baseline threshold (high being green and low being red). The table below summarises the results of the value assessment for natural and semi-natural greenspace in St. Helens. A threshold of 20% is applied in order to identify high and low value. Further explanation of how the value scores are derived can be found in Part 2 (Methodology).

*Table 5.4: Value scores for natural and semi-natural greenspace by analysis area*

Analysis area	Scores			Spread	No. of sites	
	Lowest score	Average score	Highest score		Low <20%	High >20%
Billinge & Seneley Green	11%	38%	55%	45%	1	2
Earlestown & Newton	15%	32%	59%	44%	1	9
Eccleston & Windle	21%	31%	39%	18%	-	9
Haydock & Blackbrook	30%	48%	64%	34%	-	4
Moss Bank & Town Centre	16%	47%	68%	52%	-	4
Parr, Sutton & Bold	16%	35%	64%	48%	2	19
Rainford	22%	32%	44%	22%	-	5
Rainhill	21%	23%	26%	5%	-	2
West Park & Thatto Heath	21%	24%	26%	5%	-	6
<b>ST. HELENS</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>61</b>

## ST. HELENS COUNCIL OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT

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Please note the Buff Quarry site in Parr, Sutton & Bold was not assessed for quality or value as it is inaccessible. However, it is included in the audit as it seems it is intended to form part of a wider site with the Daisyfield and Red Quarry sites. Both of which are considered as good quality and value.

Nearly all natural and semi-natural greenspace sites (95%) score above the threshold for value with only four scoring below the threshold.

Booths Brow Road, Ex-Sidac Open Space, Sutton Leach former Reservoir and Crow Lane Copse all score below the threshold for value. Accessibility into and through all these sites are questionable. Subsequently the level of use is likely to be low. All four sites also score below the threshold for quality as well; suggesting a connection between their quality and value scores. However, the habitat opportunities they provide should still be recognised.

The highest scoring sites for value are Clinkham Wood and Sankey Valley Country Park. Both receive a value score of 68.2%. The sites are observed as being attractive to a variety of groups (e.g. nature enthusiasts and families). In addition, they offer opportunities for recreation such as walking and cycling as well as learning. In particular Sankey Valley Country Park has a visitor centre and active ranger service that are thought to add to its overall quality and value. The Friends of Clinkham Wood is also likely to provide added benefit to the site in terms of quality and value. The group meet on a monthly basis to undertake additional improvement works. It also works closely with the ranger service. Both sites also have a good level of detail in terms of interpretation boards and history of the sites.

### 5.6 Summary

#### Natural and semi-natural greenspace summary

- ◀ St. Helens is identified as having 65 individual natural and semi-natural greenspace sites. This totals over 626 hectares of provision.
- ◀ Accessibility standards of a 15 minute walk time have been set. Minor deficiencies are identified in Rainhill and Billinge & Seneley areas. However, it is unlikely new provision is needed due to the general wider level of provision across St. Helens.
- ◀ There are six sites designated as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) or similar classification across St. Helens. An equivalent of over 150 hectares.
- ◀ Natural greenspace sites are viewed as being of a good quality. This is reflected in the audit assessment with the majority (78%) scoring above the threshold. Sankey Valley Country Park scores the highest for quality with 82%; a reflection of its general high level of standard.
- ◀ The majority of sites (96%) are rated as being above the threshold for value. Although four sites are identified as scoring below the threshold. All rate low for both quality and value which tends to relate to a lack of features, maintenance and usage of the sites.
- ◀ The highest scoring sites for quality and value, such as Sankey Valley Country Park, Clinkham Wood, Parr Hall Millennium Green and Sutton Manor Colliery, provide a range of opportunities and uses for visitors. Such sites also, in general, give additional information that will help provide greater learning opportunities whilst on site.

**PART 6: AMENITY GREENSPACE**

**6.1 Introduction**

The typology of amenity greenspaces is defined as sites offering opportunities for informal activities close to home or work or enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas. These include informal recreation spaces, housing green spaces, village greens and other incidental space.

Some sites classified as other typologies (e.g. parks and gardens, outdoor sports facilities) may share characteristics associated with amenity greenspace. Whilst they may provide opportunities similar to an amenity greenspace; it is a sites primary purpose that has been used to define what category of open space it is.

**6.2 Current provision**

There are a total of 87 amenity greenspace sites identified in St. Helens. This results in there being over 164 hectares of provision. Amenity greenspace in St. Helens are most often found in housing estates or settlements and function as informal recreation spaces or as open spaces along highways that provide a visual amenity. There are also a number of recreation grounds which have been classified as amenity greenspace.

*Table 6.1: Distribution of amenity greenspace sites by analysis area*

Analysis area	Amenity greenspace		
	Number	Size (ha)	Current provision (ha per 1,000 population)*
Billinge & Seneley Green	10	6.10	0.59
Earlestown & Newton	9	17.24	0.77
Eccleston & Windle	11	15.14	0.85
Haydock & Blackbrook	9	12.51	0.55
Moss Bank & Town Centre	13	21.32	0.94
Parr, Sutton & Bold	17	63.76	1.85
Rainford	3	2.90	0.28
Rainhill	7	6.97	0.64
West Park & Thatto Heath	8	18.89	0.78
<b>ST. HELENS</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>164.83</b>	<b>0.94</b>

Site sizes vary from the smallest incidental open space on housing estates, such as Herbert Street Open Space at 0.07 hectares, to the largest, The Duckeries, at over 19 hectares. The typology may not include all open space provision as a site size threshold of 0.2 hectares has been applied. This is intended to reduce the number of small infill and highway verge forms of provision which have limited recreational use. However, three sites below 0.2 hectares are included due to their location and role.

\* Based on ONS 2013 Mid-term population of 176,221

It is important to note that whilst the majority of provision is considered as being smaller grassed areas in and around housing or visual landscaped space, there is some variation of sites within this typology. For example recreation grounds can be included under amenity greenspace, such as Christ Church Playing Field and Old Lane Recreation Ground. These often serve a different purpose to grassed areas in housing estates and can provide an extended range of opportunities for recreational activities compared to grass areas. In addition, these sites are often larger in size.

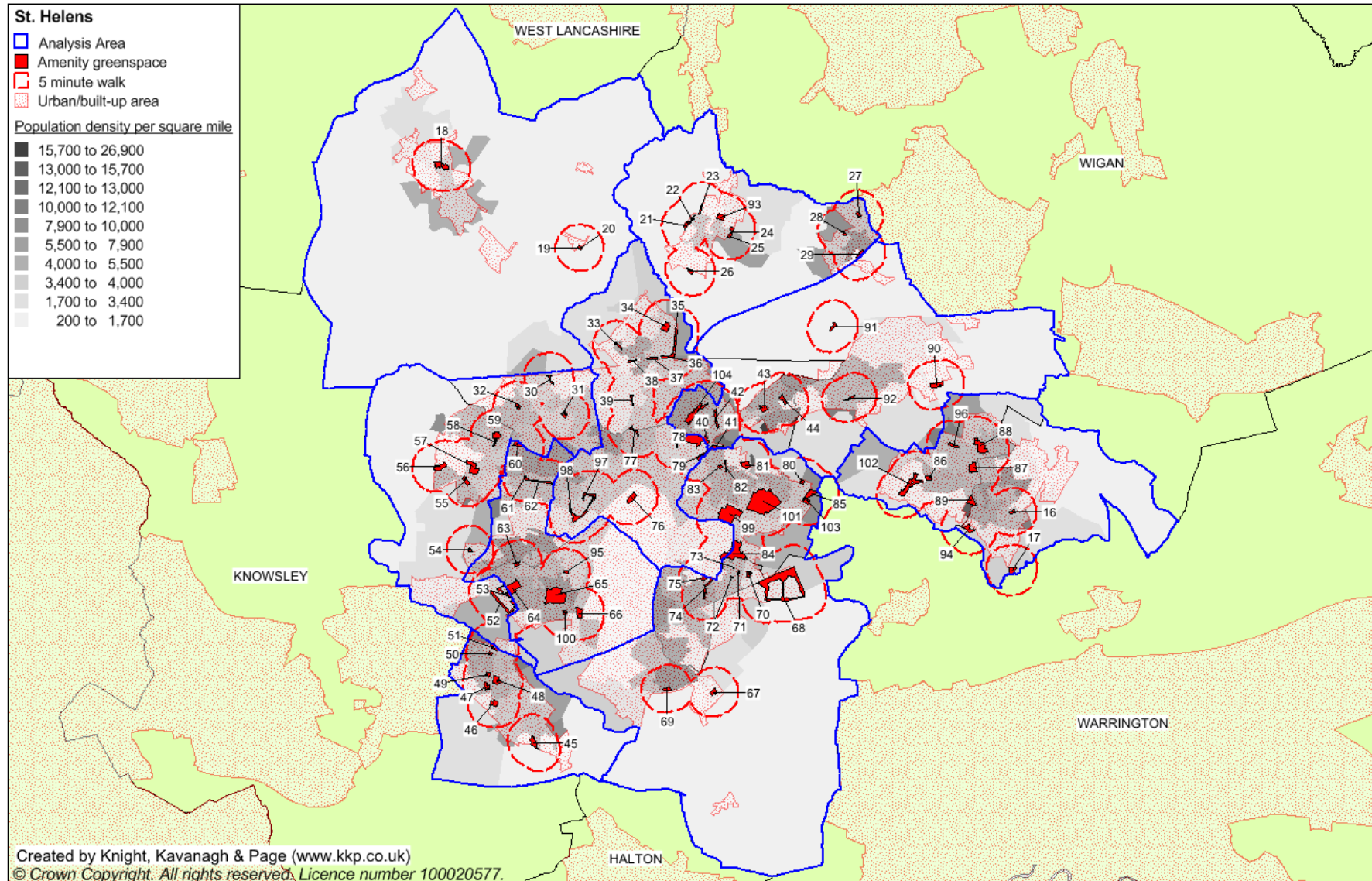
### **6.3 Accessibility**

An accessibility standard of a 5 minute walk time has been applied. These are based on the locally derived standards from the previous open space study for St. Helens. Figure 6.1 shows the standard applied to help inform where deficiencies in provision may be located.



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Figure 6.1: Amenity greenspace mapped against analysis area with quality and value scores



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Table 6.2: Key to sites mapped

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Quality score	Value score
16	Stephenson Road Open Space	Earlestown and Newton	46%	23%
17	Vulcan Village Playing Field	Earlestown and Newton	45%	28%
18	Old Hall Estate Open Space	Rainford	56%	44%
19	Hawes Avenue Open Space	Rainford	31%	12%
20	Crank Recreation Ground	Rainford	28%	11%
21	Rainford Road Open Space	Billinge and Seneley Green	41%	23%
22	Roby Well Way Open Space	Billinge and Seneley Green	45%	23%
23	Roby Well Way Open Space	Billinge and Seneley Green	36%	17%
24	Brookside Close Open Space	Billinge and Seneley Green	38%	29%
25	Ashfield Crescent	Billinge and Seneley Green	41%	34%
26	Ribble Crescent Open Space	Billinge and Seneley Green	44%	17%
27	Downall Croft Doorstep Green	Billinge and Seneley Green	64%	49%
28	Pebbles Open Space Area	Billinge and Seneley Green	19%	11%
29	Strange Road Open Space	Billinge and Seneley Green	47%	24%
30	Abbey Road Open Space	Eccleston and Windle	31%	42%
31	Windlehurst Youth Community Centre	Eccleston and Windle	29%	16%
32	Dartmouth Drive Open Space	Eccleston and Windle	45%	48%
33	Kingsway Open Space	Moss Bank & Town Centre	41%	38%
34	Kentmere Open Space	Moss Bank & Town Centre	60%	30%
35	Carr Mill Road Open Space	Moss Bank & Town Centre	50%	43%
36	Hawes Avenue Open Space	Moss Bank & Town Centre	50%	35%
37	Kendal Drive Open Space	Moss Bank & Town Centre	61%	48%
38	Ullswater Avenue Open Space	Moss Bank & Town Centre	44%	42%
39	Teal Close Open Space	Moss Bank & Town Centre	53%	42%
40	Frodsham Drive Open Space	Haydock and Blackbrook	53%	45%
41	Park Road Open Space	Haydock and Blackbrook	42%	28%
42	Blackbrook Road Open Space (N)	Haydock and Blackbrook	60%	45%
43	Fosters Park (off Fosters Road)	Haydock and Blackbrook	59%	39%
44	St Marks Field	Haydock and Blackbrook	50%	35%
45	Mill Lane Open Space	Rainhill	40%	23%
46	Swan Gardens	Rainhill	40%	24%
47	Old Lane Recreation Ground	Rainhill	48%	28%
48	Warburton Hey Public Open Space	Rainhill	42%	24%
49	First and Second Avenue Playground	Rainhill	41%	23%
50	Stapleton Road Amenity Space	Rainhill	39%	23%
51	Amanda Road Open Space	Rainhill	34%	23%
52	Foxwoods (W)	Eccleston and Windle	52%	28%
53	Foxwoods (E)	Eccleston and Windle	43%	23%
54	Seddon Road Amenity Space	Eccleston and Windle	34%	17%
55	Open Space Adjacent to Eccleston Mere Junior School	Eccleston and Windle	47%	39%
56	Millwood Avenue Open Space	Eccleston and Windle	43%	43%
57	Christ Church Playing Field	Eccleston and Windle	15%	11%
58	Aldermill Grange Open Space	Eccleston and Windle	41%	28%



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Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Quality score	Value score
59	Kiln Lane Open Space	Eccleston and Windle	42%	23%
60	Dodd Avenue Playing Field	West Park and Thatto	50%	28%
62	Eccleston Branch Line Linear Park	West Park and Thatto	50%	29%
63	St Matthew's Drive Open Space	West Park and Thatto	34%	18%
64	Nutgrove Covered Reservoirs	West Park and Thatto	29%	28%
65	Clay Colliery Open Space	West Park and Thatto	44%	33%
66	Platt Field Open Space	West Park and Thatto	48%	34%
67	Lindsay Street Playing Field	Parr, Sutton and Bold	41%	33%
68	New Bold Green	Parr, Sutton and Bold	41%	49%
69	Cannon Street Open Space	Parr, Sutton and Bold	41%	23%
70	Percy Street/Frederick Street Open Space	Parr, Sutton and Bold	41%	48%
71	Alice Street Open Space	Parr, Sutton and Bold	31%	43%
72	Herbert Street Open Space	Parr, Sutton and Bold	27%	32%
74	Brotherhood Drive Open Space	Parr, Sutton and Bold	41%	24%
75	Waterdale Amenity Space	Parr, Sutton and Bold	38%	22%
76	Lyons Yard Open Space	Moss Bank & Town Centre	45%	23%
77	College Street Open Space	Moss Bank & Town Centre	45%	23%
78	Merton Bank Road Open Space	Moss Bank & Town Centre	33%	28%
79	Recreation Street Open Space	Moss Bank & Town Centre	29%	33%
80	Winter Grove Open Space	Parr, Sutton and Bold	42%	28%
81	St Peter's Church Hall	Parr, Sutton and Bold	37%	22%
82	Boardman's Lane Open Space	Parr, Sutton and Bold	55%	23%
83	land south of Seath Avenue	Parr, Sutton and Bold	33%	23%
84	Watery Lane Open Space	Parr, Sutton and Bold	37%	49%
85	Waring Avenue Open Space	Parr, Sutton and Bold	62%	48%
86	St John's Open Space	Earlestown and Newton	49%	23%
87	Winston Road Open Space	Earlestown and Newton	56%	24%
88	Tulley Park	Earlestown and Newton	57%	29%
89	Red Brow Wood Open Space	Earlestown and Newton	27%	23%
90	Vista Road Playing Field	Haydock and Blackbrook	45%	33%
91	Pewfall Recreation Ground	Haydock and Blackbrook	39%	18%
92	Clipsey Lane Railway Line (disused)	Haydock and Blackbrook	43%	35%
93	London Fields Open Space	Billinge and Seneley Green	45%	24%
94	Newton Cottage Hospital AGS	Earlestown and Newton	32%	28%
95	Adelaide Avenue Open Space	West Park and Thatto	31%	23%
96	Makerfield Drive	Earlestown and Newton	45%	29%
97	The Shires AGS1	Moss Bank & Town Centre	27%	28%
98	The Shires AGS2	Moss Bank & Town Centre	40%	23%
99	Cromdale Grove Open Space	Parr, Sutton and Bold	43%	48%
100	The Broads Open Space	West Park and Thatto	36%	21%
101	The Duckerries	Parr, Sutton and Bold	71%	55%
102	The Dingle Open Space	Earlestown and Newton	45%	39%
103	Littlewood Open Space	Parr, Sutton and Bold	75%	55%
104	Bosworth Field Open Space	Haydock and Blackbrook	65%	40%

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Catchment mapping with a 5 minute walk time applied shows a generally good level of coverage across St. Helens.

In most instances areas with a greater population density have reasonable access to provision. However, some gaps are identified due to the accessibility standard set for amenity greenspace being relatively small (as provision is often deemed to be locally significant).

There are some noticeable gaps over high population density areas in the Parr, Sutton & Bold and Earlestown & Newton areas. Furthermore, there are also some minor gaps to the West Park & Thatto Heath and Haydock & Blackbrook areas. It is unlikely that new forms of provision are required as these areas are well served by other types of open space such as parks and natural and semi-natural greenspace. No issues regarding a deficiency in amenity greenspace is highlighted from the consultation.

Council managed open spaces, including amenity greenspaces, are managed as part of the open spaces portfolio by SHC. Sites receive regular maintenance visits which include regimes such as grass cutting, weeding and general site preservation (e.g. bin emptying, bench refurbishment and path checks) as well as health and safety inspections. On average a site receives a visit every two weeks. At sites containing play equipment this is more frequent and almost a daily visit.

Maintenance of sites owned by parish councils such as Rainhill is contracted to SHC to undertake regular maintenance.

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## 6.4 Quality

In order to determine whether sites are high or low quality (as recommended by guidance); the scores from the site assessments have been colour-coded against a baseline threshold (high being green and low being red). The table below summarises the results of the quality assessment for amenity greenspaces in St. Helens. A threshold of 40% is applied in order to identify high and low quality. Further explanation of how the quality scores and thresholds are derived can be found in Part 2 (Methodology).

Table 6.3: Quality ratings for amenity greenspaces by analysis area

Analysis area	Scores			Spread	No. of sites	
	Lowest score	Average score	Highest score		Low <40%	High >40%
Billinge & Seneley Green	19%	42%	64%	45%	3	7
Earlestown & Newton	27%	45%	57%	30%	2	7
Eccleston & Windle	15%	38%	53%	38%	4	7
Haydock & Blackbrook	39%	51%	65%	26%	1	8
Moss Bank & Town Centre	27%	45%	61%	34%	3	10
Parr, Sutton & Bold	27%	45%	75%	48%	6	11
Rainford	28%	38%	56%	28%	2	1
Rainhill	34%	41%	48%	14%	2	5
West Park & Thatto Heath	29%	40%	50%	21%	4	4
<b>ST. HELENS</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>60</b>

Most amenity greenspace sites in St. Helens (69%) receive a quality rating above the threshold. In particular the Haydock & Blackbrook and Moss Bank & Town Centre areas have a higher proportion of site scoring above the threshold; with 89% and 77% respectively.

The West Park & Thatto Heath area has an equal number of sites to score above and below the threshold. Whilst Rainford has more sites that score low (two) than above (one). The sites in both areas have a lack of ancillary facilities and features.

In West Park & Thatto Heath no specific issues are highlighted; therefore sites in the area rate low for quality due to a lack of additional features.

In Rainford more sites are rated below the threshold (two sites) compared to above (one site). The two sites to score below the threshold are adjacent to one another. Both are observed as being poorly maintained with evidence of cars having been on site.

The lowest scoring amenity greenspace sites in St. Helens are:

- ✦ Crank Road Recreation Ground (28%)
- ✦ Herbert Street Open Space (27%)
- ✦ Red Brow Wood Open Space (27%)
- ✦ The Shires AGS1 (27%)
- ✦ Pebbles Close Open Space (19%)
- ✦ Christ Church Playing Field (15%)

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Most of the six sites are generally observed as being basic pockets of green space with a lack of ancillary facilities to encourage extensive recreational use. None of the sites are identified as having paths, bins or benches. Christ Church Playing Field was having works carried out by United Utilities at the time of site visiting. Therefore limited observations could be made.

Many of the sites scoring below the quality threshold are small, unattractive and without a reason for people to visit. However, it is important to recognise that despite scoring low for quality, sites may still have the potential to be of a high value to the community. For instance, if a site is the only form of open space in that local area it may potentially be of high value given it is the only provision of its type. It may also provide an aesthetically pleasing addition.

Further to those identified above, some specific issues were observed during the assessment visits at a number of sites. At the time of the visits the following sites were noted as showing evidence of issues/problems:

- ◀ Warburton Hey Public Open Space – fire damage
- ◀ Kingsway Open Space – fire damage
- ◀ Cromdale Grove Open Space – fire damage
- ◀ The Duckeries – fire damage
- ◀ Park Road Open Space – fire damage, broken glass
- ◀ Recreation Street Open Space – fire damage, litter
- ◀ Bosworth Field Open Space – fire damage
- ◀ St Peter's Church Hall – fire damage
- ◀ Watery Lane Open Space – fire damage
- ◀ Little Wood Open Space – fire damage, litter
- ◀ Frodsham Drive Open Space – broken glass

However, only three of the sites are assessed as being below the threshold. Recreation Street Open Space, St Peter's Church Hall and Watery Lane Open Space all rate below the threshold with quality scores of 29%, 37% and 37% respectively.

Despite some fire damage being noted at Little Wood Open Space and The Duckeries, the sites are still the highest scoring for quality with 75% and 71% respectively.

Both have a good amount and quality of ancillary facilities such as bins and benches as well as having excellent access to and throughout the site. The Duckeries is also identified as a Green Flag Award winning site.

Other high scoring sites include:

- ◀ Bosworth Field Open Space (65%)
- ◀ Downall Croft Doorstep Green (64%)
- ◀ Waring Avenue Open Space (62%)
- ◀ Kendall Drive Open Space (61%)

Sites score highly due to the range of ancillary facilities available as well as the high standard of appearance and maintenance. Features such as these contribute to their overall quality and help to create more opportunities and reasons for people to access provision. The Downall Croft Doorstep Green is also a Green Flag Award winner along with The Duckeries site.

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## 6.5 Value

In order to determine whether sites are high or low value (as recommended by guidance); the scores from the site assessments have been colour-coded against a baseline threshold (high being green and low being red). The table below summarises the results of the value assessment for amenity greenspace in St. Helens. A threshold of 20% is applied in order to identify high and low value. Further explanation of the value scoring and thresholds can be found in Part 2 (Methodology).

Table 6.4: Value ratings for amenity greenspace by analysis area

Analysis area	Scores			Spread	No. of sites	
	Lowest score	Average score	Highest score		Low <20%	High >20%
Billinge & Seneley Green	11%	25%	49%	38%	3	7
Earlestown & Newton	23%	27%	39%	16%	-	9
Eccleston & Windle	11%	29%	48%	37%	3	8
Haydock & Blackbrook	18%	35%	45%	27%	1	8
Moss Bank & Town Centre	23%	34%	48%	25%	-	13
Parr, Sutton & Bold	22%	37%	55%	33%	-	17
Rainford	11%	22%	44%	33%	2	1
Rainhill	23%	24%	28%	5%	-	7
West Park & Thatto Heath	18%	27%	34%	16%	1	7
<b>ST. HELENS</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>74</b>

Similar to quality, more amenity greenspaces are rated as being above the threshold for value (88%). There are more sites rated as high value than high quality. A total of 10 sites receive a low value rating of below 20%.

Although there are only three sites, proportionally Rainford has a greater number of sites below the threshold than any other area. Both sites also score low for quality. As noted earlier, the two sites are adjacent to one another and are observed as being poorly maintained with evidence of cars having been on site. Subsequently they are not believed to currently have much use or value to people.

In general, all sites scoring below the threshold for value are essentially viewed as grassed areas with no other noticeable features hence their low value scores. However, they are acknowledged as providing some form of visual amenity to their locality.

Of the 10 sites to score below the threshold for value, nine also score below the threshold for quality. Nearly all of these (eight sites) are identified as being some of the smaller size sites i.e. all are below 0.8 hectares. In general a site's small size and lack of facilities to be found on site are contributors to a low value score.

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The nine sites to score low for quality and value are:

- ◀ Hawes Avenue Open Space (12%)
- ◀ Crank Recreation Ground (11%)
- ◀ Roby Well Way Open Space (17%)
- ◀ Pebbles Close Open Space Area (11%)
- ◀ Windlehurst Youth Centre (16%)
- ◀ Seddon Road Amenity Space (17%)
- ◀ Christ Church Playing Field (11%)
- ◀ St Matthew's Drive Open Space (18%)
- ◀ Pewfall Recreation Ground (18%)

All the sites are identified as having no provision of seating or bin provision. Furthermore, there is a general lack of other features such as fencing or controls to prevent misuse. It is important to keep in mind that the main role for some sites is to simply act as a grassed area, providing breaks in the urban form. Subsequently such sites are likely to score lower compared to others.

As highlighted earlier, the majority of amenity greenspace sites (88%) score high for value. The highest scoring sites for value in St. Helens are:

- ◀ Little Wood Open Space (55%)
- ◀ The Duckeries (55%)
- ◀ Downall Croft Doorstep Green (49%)
- ◀ New Bold Green (49%)
- ◀ Watery Lane Open Space (49%)

Three of these sites (the three listed first) are also rated as being some of the highest scoring sites for quality as well. All three sites are recognised for the accessible recreational opportunities they offer. In addition, added value is also provided through the sites containing forms of play area provision.

In general the role amenity greenspaces play as a form of open space provision is supported by the fact the majority of sites score high for value. Compared to quality where 69% of sites score above the threshold. This suggests even though a number of sites may score low for quality, they still receive a high value. Often the visual and environmental benefits these sites provide are recognised.

Amenity greenspaces should also be recognised for their multi-purpose function, offering opportunities for a variety of leisure and recreational activities. They can often be used for informal recreational activity such as casual play and dog walking. Many amenity greenspaces in St. Helens have a dual function and are used as amenity resources for residents but also provide visually pleasing areas.

These attributes add to the quality, accessibility and visibility of amenity greenspace. The greater these features, combined with the presence of facilities (e.g. benches, landscaping, trees), the greater sites are respected and valued by the local community.

## 6.6 Summary

### **Amenity greenspace summary**

- ◀ A total of 87 amenity greenspace sites are identified in St. Helens, totalling over 164 hectares of amenity space provision.
- ◀ The Parr, Sutton & Bold area has the most amenity greenspace sites (17). It also has the greatest amount of provision proportionally per 1,000 populations with 1.85 (compared to 0.94 for St. Helens as a whole).
- ◀ An accessibility catchment of a 5 minute walk time is set. Gaps in provision are observed in Parr, Sutton & Bold as well as Earlestown & Newton. However, gaps are served by other open space typologies such as parks and natural and semi-natural provision.
- ◀ Overall the quality of amenity greenspaces is positive. The majority of sites (69%) are rated as high for quality in the site visit audit. Often a site with a below threshold quality score is due to its size and nature and therefore it lacks any form of ancillary feature. However, fire damage is noted at a handful of sites.
- ◀ In addition to the multifunctional role of sites, amenity greenspace provision is, in general, particularly valuable towards the visual aesthetics for communities. This is demonstrated by the 88% of sites rating above the threshold for value. The contribution these sites provide as a visual amenity and for wildlife habitats should not be overlooked.



**PART 7: PROVISION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

**7.1 Introduction**

The typology of provision for children and young people includes areas designated primarily for play and social interaction involving children and young people, such as equipped play areas, ball courts, skateboard areas and teenage shelters.

Provision for children is deemed to be sites consisting of formal equipped play facilities typically associated with play areas. This is usually perceived to be for children under 12 years of age. Provision for young people can also include equipped sites that provide more robust equipment catering to older age ranges. It can include facilities such as skate parks, BMX, basketball courts, youth shelters, MUGAs and informal kick-about areas.

Whilst not included within the typology it is important to recognise the role other forms of open space provide, such as amenity greenspace, in meeting the needs of informal children's play.

**7.2 Current provision**

A total of 74 sites for provision for children and young people are identified in St. Helens. This combines to create a total of more than nine hectares. The table below shows the distribution of provision in St. Helens by area. No site size threshold has been applied and as such all provision is identified and included within the audit.

*Table 7.1: Distribution of provision for children and young people by area*

Analysis area	Provision for children and young people		
	Number	Size (ha)	Current provision (ha per 1,000 population)*
Billinge & Seneley Green	4	0.16	0.02
Earlestown & Newton	13	2.02	0.09
Eccleston & Windle	10	1.95	0.11
Haydock & Blackbrook	5	1.19	0.05
Moss Bank & Town Centre	11	0.86	0.04
Parr, Sutton & Bold	12	1.14	0.03
Rainford	4	0.98	0.09
Rainhill	5	0.35	0.03
West Park & Thatto Heath	10	0.65	0.03
<b>ST. HELENS</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>9.35</b>	<b>0.05</b>

Play areas can be classified in the following ways to identify their effective target audience utilising Fields In Trust (FIT) guidance. FIT provides widely endorsed guidance on the minimum standards for play space.

- ◀ LAP - a Local Area of Play. Usually small landscaped areas designed for young children. Equipment on such sites is specific to age group in order to reduce unintended users.

\* Based on ONS 2013 Mid-term population of 176,221



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- ◀ LEAP - a Local Equipped Area of Play. Designed for unsupervised play and a wider age range of users; often containing a wider range of equipment types.
- ◀ NEAP - a Neighbourhood Equipped Area of Play. Cater for all age groups. Such sites may contain MUGA, skate parks, youth shelters, adventure play equipment and are often included within large park sites.
- ◀ Youth provision - These include areas providing only forms of provision for young people such as skate parks/basketball courts/games walls

Play provision in St. Helens is summarised using the (FIT) classifications below.

*Table 7.2: Distribution of provision for children and young people by FIT category*

Analysis area	Provision for children and young people				
	LAP	LEAP	NEAP	Youth/casual	TOTAL
Billinge & Seneley Green	2	2	-	-	4
Earlestown & Newton	6	3	3	1	13
Eccleston & Windle	-	4	5	1	10
Haydock & Blackbrook	-	4	1	-	5
Moss Bank & Town Centre	1	5	1	4	11
Parr, Sutton & Bold	2	4	3	3	12
Rainford	-	2	2	-	4
Rainhill	-	4	1	-	5
West Park & Thatto Heath	1	6	-	3	10
<b>ST. HELENS</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>74</b>

More play provision across St. Helens (46%) is identified as being of LEAP classification, which is often viewed as sites with a wider amount and range of equipment designed to predominantly cater for unsupervised play.

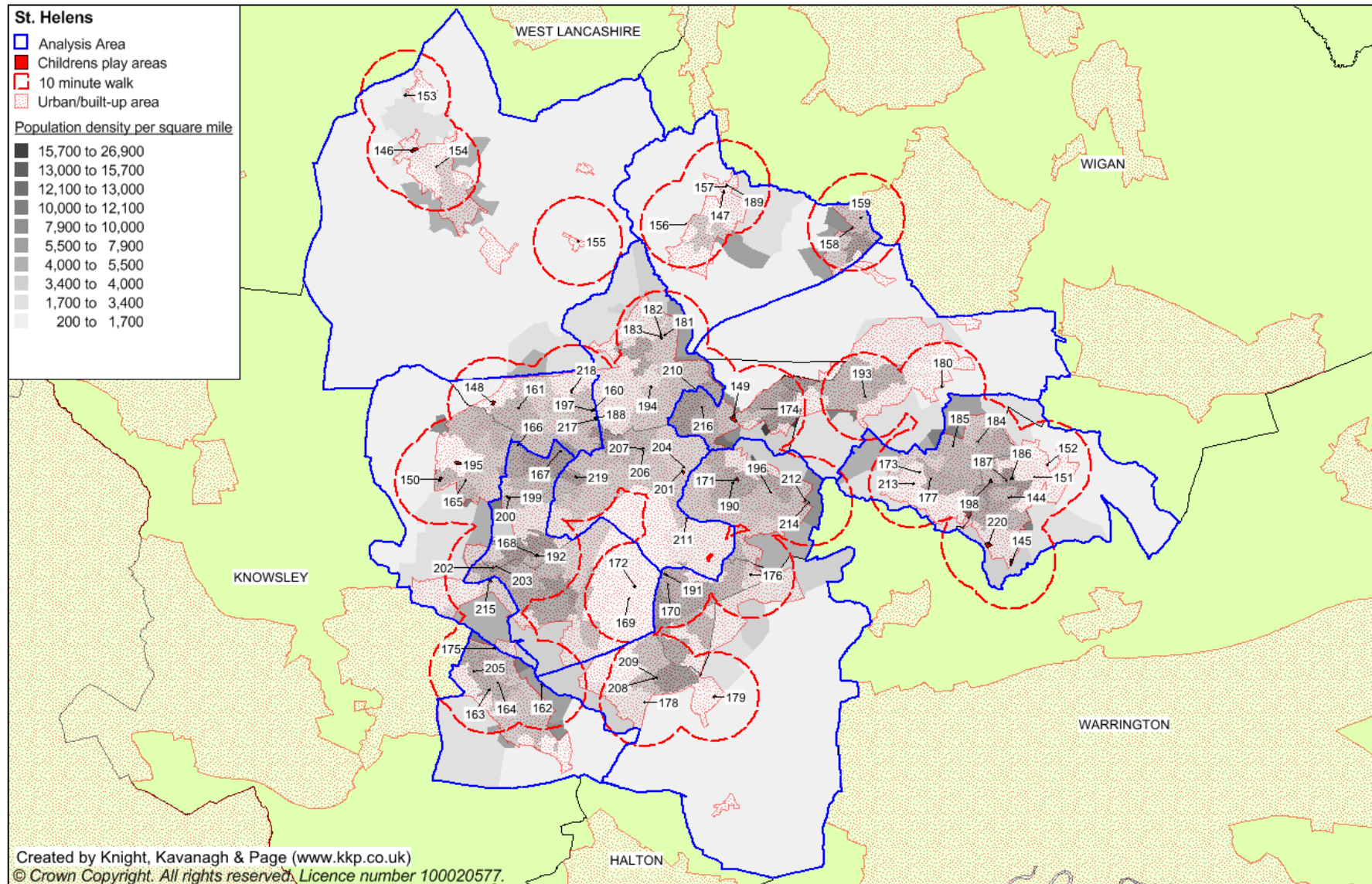
For youth/casual provision, sites only identified as specific standalone forms of provision are identified. There may also be instances of sites classified as LEAP or NEAP which may also contain equipment catering for older age groups.

### 7.3 Accessibility

An accessibility standard of a 10 minute walk time has been set across St. Helens for play provision. This is based on the recommended standards in the Core Strategy as derived from the previous open space study for St. Helens. Figure 7.1 shows the standards applied to help inform where deficiencies in provision may be located.

# ST. HELENS COUNCIL OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT

Figure 7.1: Provision for children and young people mapped against analysis areas



# ST. HELENS COUNCIL OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT

Table 7.3: Key to sites mapped with quality and value scores

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Quality score	Value score
144	Laurel Avenue Play Area	Earlestown and Newton	57%	47%
145	Vulcan Play Area	Earlestown and Newton	49%	38%
146	Bridge Inn Play Area	Rainford	54%	38%
148	Lynton Way Play Area	Eccleston and Windle	73%	73%
149	O'Sullivan Crescent Play Area	Haydock and Blackbrook	78%	64%
150	Gillars Green Play Area	Eccleston and Windle	57%	51%
151	Mesnes Park Play Area no 1	Earlestown and Newton	55%	42%
152	Willow Park Play Area	Earlestown and Newton	54%	47%
153	North End Play Area	Rainford	53%	47%
154	Old Hall Estate Play Area	Rainford	81%	38%
155	Ex Crank School Play Area	Rainford	53%	47%
156	John Eddleston Trust Play Area	Billinge and Seneley Green	55%	38%
158	Birch Grove Play Area	Billinge and Seneley Green	54%	38%
159	Downall Croft Doorstep Green Play Area	Billinge and Seneley Green	70%	47%
161	Dartmouth Drive Pay Area	Eccleston and Windle	76%	55%
162	Rainhill Playing Fields Play Area	Rainhill	37%	20%
163	Old Lane Recreation Ground	Rainhill	60%	24%
164	Warbuton Hey Play Area	Rainhill	53%	24%
165	Play Area Opp Eccleston Mere School	Eccleston and Windle	53%	38%
166	Dodd Avenue Play Area	West Park and Thatto	73%	38%
167	Queens Recreation Ground Play Area	West Park and Thatto	53%	65%
168	Thatto Heath Park Play Area	West Park and Thatto	73%	24%
169	Sherdley Park Play Area	West Park and Thatto	68%	47%
170	Sutton Park Play Area	Parr, Sutton and Bold	56%	20%
171	Gaskell Park Play Area	Parr, Sutton and Bold	88%	73%
172	Sherdley Park Play Area 2	West Park and Thatto	69%	38%
173	Dingle Green Play Area	Earlestown and Newton	62%	47%
174	Fosters Park Play Area (off Fosters Road)	Haydock and Blackbrook	79%	73%
175	Amanda Road Play Area	Rainhill	53%	38%
176	Percy Street/Frederick Street Play Area	Parr, Sutton and Bold	52%	55%
177	St John's Open Space Play Area	Earlestown and Newton	53%	47%
178	King George V Playing Field Play Area	Parr, Sutton and Bold	52%	29%
179	Lindsay Street Playing Field Play Area	Parr, Sutton and Bold	85%	20%
180	Vista Road Playing Field Play Area	Haydock and Blackbrook	51%	38%
181	Kentmere Park Ball Court	Moss Bank and Town Centre	76%	73%
182	Kentmere Park Play Area	Moss Bank and Town Centre	83%	73%
183	Kentmere Park Skatepark	Moss Bank and Town Centre	77%	73%
184	Frawley Avenue Play area	Earlestown and Newton	56%	38%

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Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Quality score	Value score
185	Makerfield Drive Play Area	Earlestown and Newton	62%	47%
186	Mesnes Park Skate Park	Earlestown and Newton	54%	38%
187	Mesnes Park Play Area no2	Earlestown and Newton	62%	42%
188	Victoria Park Skate Park	Eccleston and Windle	74%	56%
189	Bankes Park Play Area	Billinge and Seneley Green	86%	47%
190	Gaskell Park Ball Court	Parr, Sutton and Bold	55%	73%
191	Sutton Park, Ball Court/adventure play area	Parr, Sutton and Bold	52%	33%
192	Thatto Heath Ball Court	West Park and Thatto	48%	29%
193	King George V	Haydock and Blackbrook	68%	51%
194	Haresfinch Park	Moss Bank and Town Centre	80%	82%
195	The Spires Play Area	Eccleston and Windle	80%	38%
196	The Duckeries Play Area	Parr, Sutton and Bold	81%	73%
197	Victoria Park Play Area	Eccleston and Windle	77%	65%
198	Pipit Avenue	Earlestown and Newton	74%	38%
199	Taylor Park Ball Court	West Park and Thatto	51%	20%
200	Taylor Park Play Area	West Park and Thatto	70%	64%
201	Nanny Goat Park Mini Pitch/adventure p.g	Moss Bank and Town Centre	66%	82%
202	KGVGrange Park MUGA	West Park and Thatto	55%	45%
203	KGV Grange Park Play Area	West Park and Thatto	53%	29%
204	Nanny Goat Park Play Area	Moss Bank and Town Centre	87%	73%
205	Holt Lane Play Area	Rainhill	53%	20%
206	Fosters Park Play Area (off Railway Street)	Moss Bank and Town Centre	72%	55%
207	Fosters Park Ball Court (off Railway Street)	Moss Bank and Town Centre	56%	55%
208	Chester Lane Play Area	Parr, Sutton and Bold	54%	20%
209	Chester Lane Ball Court	Parr, Sutton and Bold	51%	29%
210	Chain Lane Play Area	Moss Bank and Town Centre	78%	64%
211	Sunshine Park Play Area	Moss Bank and Town Centre	47%	13%
212	Littlewood MUGA	Parr, Sutton and Bold	51%	73%
213	Dingle Play Area	Earlestown and Newton	33%	29%
214	Littlewood Play Area	Parr, Sutton and Bold	51%	73%
215	Scholes Lane	Eccleston and Windle	27%	25%
216	Bosworth Road Play Area	Haydock and Blackbrook	78%	73%
217	Victoria Park Adventure Playground	Eccleston and Windle	53%	47%
218	Hard Lane Quarry Play Area	Eccleston and Windle	36%	51%
219	Pigot Street Play Area	Moss Bank and Town Centre	54%	25%
220	Tyrer Road Play Area	Earlestown and Newton	52%	47%

There is generally a good spread of provision across St. Helens. The greatest areas of population density (i.e. main settlements) are in general within walking distance of a form of play provision. However, a geographical gap is noted in West Park & Thatto Heath.

Consultation highlights that some specific settlements and areas are perceived to be lacking in equipment/facilities.

## ST. HELENS COUNCIL OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT

New Bold Estate Residents Association highlight a lack of general play provision in the area; although it is thought to be a particular deficiency for smaller children.

Billinge Parish Council highlights a potential need for additional play area provision to the south of Billinge (around Douglas Avenue). Catchment mapping also supports this and shows a minor gap in that area. Billinge East & West Residents Association further supports this need. The group cites a lack of play provision particularly catering for older age ranges. It is currently trying to raise money and access funding in order to create a form of provision for teenagers such as a skate park.

A lack of provision catering for teenagers is also highlighted by Church Estate Tenants & Residents Association. The group signals this as a priority and hopes it may help to address the use of some other open space sites by youths for drinking/loitering etc.

### 7.4 Quality

In order to determine whether sites are high or low quality (as recommended by guidance); the scores from the site assessments have been colour-coded against a baseline threshold (high being green and low being red). The table below summarises the results of the quality assessment for play provision for children and young people in St. Helens. A threshold of 50% is applied in order to identify high and low quality. Further explanation of the quality scoring and thresholds can be found in Part 2 (Methodology).

Quality assessments of play sites do not include a detailed technical risk assessment of equipment. For an informed report on the condition of play equipment the Council's own inspection reports should be sought.

Table 7.4: Quality ratings for provision for children and young people by analysis area

Analysis area	Scores			Spread	No. of sites	
	Lowest score	Average score	Highest score		Low <50%	High >50%
Billinge & Seneley Green	54%	66%	86%	32%	-	4
Earlestown & Newton	33%	55%	74%	41%	2	11
Eccleston & Windle	27%	61%	80%	53%	2	8
Haydock & Blackbrook	51%	71%	79%	28%	-	5
Moss Bank & Town Centre	47%	71%	87%	40%	1	10
Parr, Sutton & Bold	51%	61%	88%	37%	-	12
Rainford	53%	61%	81%	28%	-	4
Rainhill	37%	51%	61%	24%	1	4
West Park & Thatto Heath	49%	62%	73%	24%	1	9
<b>ST. HELENS</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>67</b>

The majority of sites (91%) are assessed as above the threshold for quality against the site visit criteria. However, there is a significant spread between the highest and lowest scoring sites, particularly when looking across St. Helens as a whole.



## ST. HELENS COUNCIL OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT

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For instance, the Scholes Lane site scores 27% compared to the Gaskell Park Play Area which scores 88%. The low score for the Scholes Lane site is a reflection of its isolated position and poor quality of play equipment. At the time of the survey the site was noted to contain a set of swings with no seats and a zip wire that is not able to be used due to being broken.

In contrast, Gaskell Park Play Area receives the highest score in the area due to its wide range and excellent condition of play equipment. The site also benefits from additional features such as seating, bins and fencing. Its position and role as a play site in a wider park site means it is a popular and well used facility. Other sites to receive particularly high scores for quality include:

- ◀ Nanny Goat Play Area (87%)
- ◀ Bankes Park Play Area (86%)
- ◀ Lindsay Street PF Play Area (85%)
- ◀ Kentmere Park Play Area (83%)
- ◀ Old Hall Estate Play Area (81%)
- ◀ The Duckeries Play Area (81%)

These sites are all noted as having an excellent range and imaginative forms of equipment catering for different ages. In addition, the equipment is generally in great condition as are the other features on site such as benches and bins. Sites such as Nanny Goat Play Area still score highly despite being noted as having some forms of provision out of use due to them being removed. Only seven sites score below the threshold for quality.

- ◀ Vulcan Play Area (49%)
- ◀ Thatto Heath Ball Court (49%)
- ◀ Sunshine Park Play Area (47%)
- ◀ Rainhill PF Play Area (37%)
- ◀ Hard Lane Quarry Play Area (36%)
- ◀ Dingle Play Area (33%)
- ◀ Scholes Lane (27%)

These tend to rate lower compared to other sites due to a less extensive range and quality of play equipment.

Similarly, a lack in range of equipment is also noted for some of the sites that rate below the threshold. The range and lack of alternative forms of play equipment and space found at a site will limit its potential for use; subsequently this will impact on its overall quality.

The Sunshine Park Play Area was observed at the time of the site visits as being locked and inaccessible. It was also noted as having been heavily vandalised with fire damage and broken glass present. Due to this it is the only site to score below the threshold for quality and value.

Fire damage was also noted at a few other sites including Hard Lane Quarry Play Area which scores low for quality. Other sites such as Warburton Hey Play Area and Bosworth Road Play Area also had fire damage observed; despite this the sites still score highly for quality overall.

# ST. HELENS COUNCIL OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT

## 7.5 Value

In order to determine whether sites are high or low value (as recommended by guidance); the scores from the site assessments have been colour-coded against a baseline threshold (high being green and low being red). The table below summarises the results of the value assessment for children and young people in St. Helens. A threshold of 20% is applied in order to identify high and low value. Further explanation of the value scoring and thresholds can be found in Part 2 (Methodology).

Table 7.5: Value ratings for provision for children and young people by analysis area

Analysis area	Scores			Spread	No. of sites	
	Lowest score	Average score	Highest score		Low <20%	High >20%
Billinge & Seneley Green	38%	43%	47%	9%	-	4
Earlestown & Newton	29%	42%	47%	18%	-	13
Eccleston & Windle	26%	50%	73%	47%	-	10
Haydock & Blackbrook	38%	60%	73%	35%	-	5
Moss Bank & Town Centre	13%	61%	82%	69%	1	10
Parr, Sutton & Bold	20%	47%	73%	53%	-	12
Rainford	38%	43%	47%	9%	-	4
Rainhill	20%	25%	38%	18%	-	5
West Park & Thatto Heath	20%	39%	66%	46%	-	10
<b>ST. HELENS</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>73</b>

All play provision, with the exception of one site, is rated as being of high value in St. Helens. This demonstrates the role such provision provides in allowing children to play but also the contribution sites can offer in terms of creating aesthetically pleasing local environments, giving children and young people safe places to learn and to socialise with others.

The one site to score below the threshold for value is the Sunshine Park Play Area. It is also the only site to score below the threshold for quality and value. As detailed earlier the site was locked at the time of visiting. In addition, it was noted as being heavily vandalised with fire damage and broken glass present. Upon further investigation it may be worthwhile discounting the site from catchment mapping and standards if it is not available for use.

Two of the highest scoring sites for value are Harefinch Park Play Area and Nanny Goat Park Adventure Play Ground. Both sites score 82% for value due to the range of equipment on offer. The latter for example has equipment that caters for a variety of age groups as it contains a skate park, MUGA and youth shelter.

Consultation with local groups recognises the role and quality of play provision located at more strategic sites especially parks. Sites such as Sutton Park, Sherdley Park, KGV and Bankes Park are all cited as being popular with good forms of play provision. It is important that these sites are maintained to a high standard given their roles as key facilities for St. Helens.

It is also important to recognise the benefits that play provides in terms of healthy, active lifestyles, social inclusion and interaction between children plus its developmental and educational value. It is essential that parents, carers and members of the public are made aware of the importance of play and of children's rights to play in their local communities.

### 7.6 Summary

#### **Provision for children and young people summary**

- ◀ There are a total of 74 sites across St. Helens identified as play provision.
- ◀ St. Helens contains a higher proportion of LEAP (medium) sized play areas, many of which score high for quality and value.
- ◀ Proportionally the Eccleston & Windle, Earlestown & Newton and Rainford areas have the highest amount of provision per 1,000 population.
- ◀ St. Helens is generally well covered against the 10 minute walk time accessibility standard. However, some gaps in provision are noted in the West Park & Thatto Heath area. Furthermore, consultation also suggests some areas lacking in play provision mostly for older age ranges.
- ◀ The majority of play sites (91%) are assessed as being overall above the threshold for quality. Although there are seven sites which score low for quality. Often these sites are assessed as low due to general appearance and lack in range and quality of equipment.
- ◀ A handful of sites are observed as having evidence of misuse such as fire damage.
- ◀ All play provision, except one site, is rated as being of high value from the site visit audit. The Majority of play sites score high for quality and value; reflecting their role in providing coordinated access across St. Helens.



# ST. HELENS COUNCIL OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT

## PART 8: ALLOTMENTS

### 8.1 Introduction

Allotments is a typology which covers open spaces that provide opportunities for those people who wish to do so to grow their own produce as part of the long term promotion of sustainability, health and social interaction. This may include provision such as allotments, community gardens and city farms.

### 8.2 Current provision

There are 19 sites classified as allotments in St. Helens, equating to just less than 20 hectares. No site size threshold has been applied to allotments and as such all provision is identified and included within the audit.

*Table 8.1: Distribution of allotment sites by analysis area*

Analysis area	Allotments		
	Number	Size (ha)	Current provision (ha per 1,000 population)*
Billinge & Seneley Green	-	-	-
Earlestown & Newton	4	3.91	0.17
Eccleston & Windle	2	4.52	0.25
Haydock & Blackbrook	-	-	-
Moss Bank & Town Centre	2	1.72	0.08
Parr, Sutton & Bold	5	4.91	0.14
Rainford	2	1.39	0.13
Rainhill	-	-	-
West Park & Thatto Heath	5	3.55	0.15
<b>ST. HELENS</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>19.99</b>	<b>0.11</b>

The Parr, Sutton & Bold and West Park & Thatto Heath areas have the greatest number of sites with five each. Not surprisingly, the former has the most hectareage with 4.9 hectares. This is closely followed by the 4.5 hectares of provision in Eccleston & Windle.

Overall, there are a combined total of circa 629 plots, including half plots, identified at sites across St. Helens. Sites with the single largest number of plots include Rob Lane Allotments (88) in Earlestown & Newton and Cabbage Hall (62) in Eccleston & Windle.

The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG) suggests a national standard of 20 allotments per 1,000 households (i.e. 20 allotments per 2,000 people based on 2 people per house) or 1 allotment per 200 people. This equates to 0.025 hectares per 1,000 population based on an average plot-size of 250 square metres.

Based on the current population of 176,221 (ONS 2013 mid-term estimates) St. Helens, as a whole, does meet the NSALG standard. Furthermore, all individual analysis areas with existing provision are above the standard. Using the suggested national standard, the minimum amount of allotment provision for St. Helens is 4.41 hectares. The existing provision of 19.99 hectares therefore meets the standard.

\* Based on ONS 2013 Mid-term population of 176,221

## ST. HELENS COUNCIL OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT

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Table 8.2 details the number of sites and plots located within St. Helens. In total there are 629 plots identified across St. Helens. The need for additional allotment provision is evident from the 633 individuals that are identified on waiting lists; suggesting supply is not meeting demand. It is feasible that an individual could be on more than one list at a time. However, the council's centralised management of plot provision is intended to reduce this.

*Table 8.2: Allotment sites and plots*

Sites	Number of plots	Waiting list
19	629	633

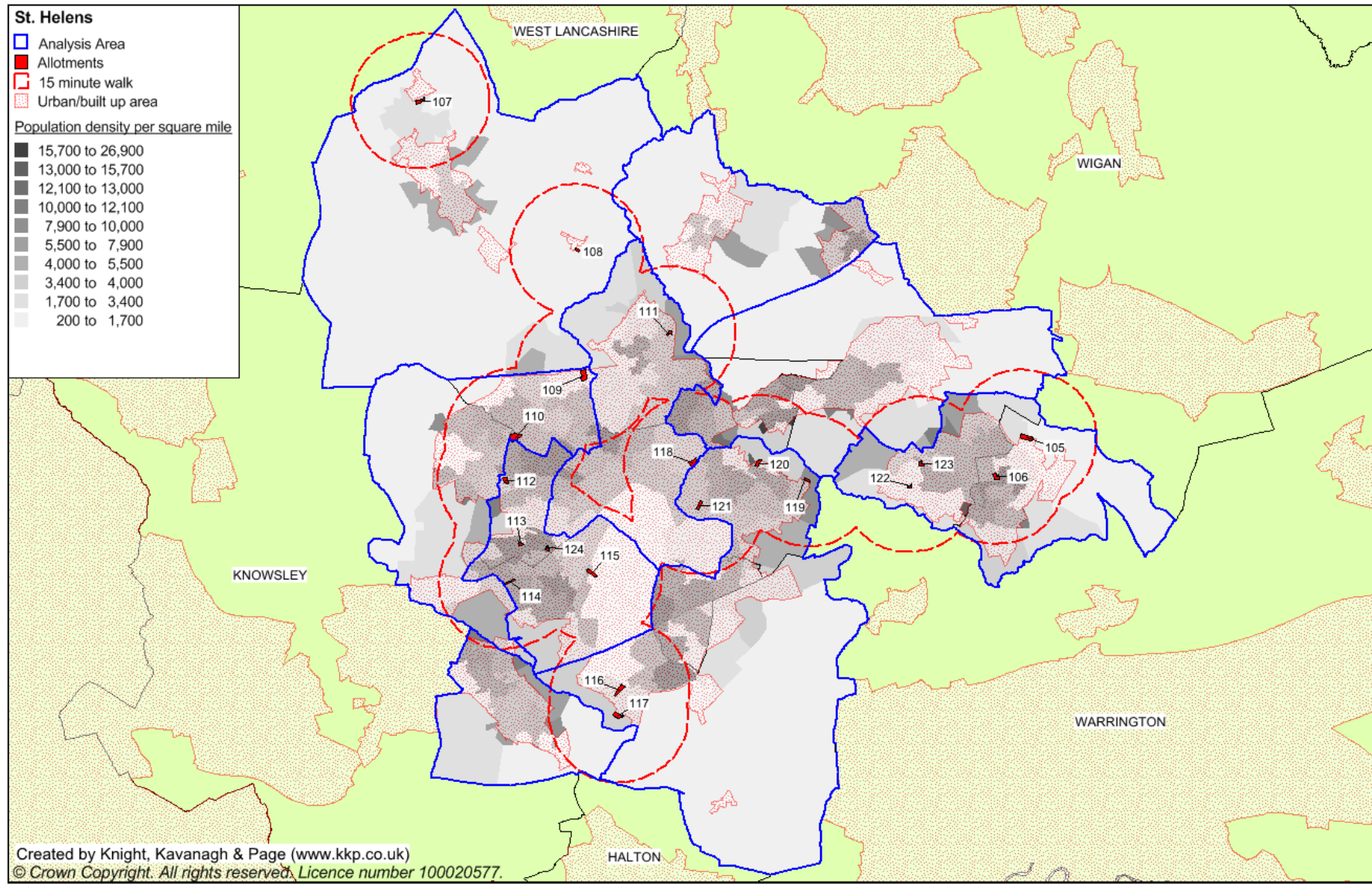
The waiting list figure does not include the number of individuals waiting for a plot on any of the private or self managed sites in St. Helens. Subsequently the actual number of people waiting for a plot is likely to be higher than the number recorded.

### **8.3 Accessibility**

An accessibility standard of a 15 minute walk time has been set across St. Helens for allotments. This is based on the recommended standards in the Core Strategy as derived from the previous open space study for St. Helens. Figure 8.1 shows the standards applied to allotments to help inform where deficiencies in provision may be located.

# ST. HELENS COUNCIL OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT

Figure 8.1: Allotments mapped against analysis areas



## ST. HELENS COUNCIL OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT

Table 8.3: Key to sites mapped with quality and value scores

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Quality score	Value score
105	Rob Lane Allotments	Earlestown and Newton	50%	33%
106	Mesnes Park Allotments, Sanderling Road	Earlestown and Newton	53%	28%
107	Rainford Junction Allotments	Rainford	46%	31%
108	Allotments, Crank Road	Rainford	37%	24%
109	Cabbage Hall ,Windle Drive	Eccleston and Windle	73%	57%
110	Pilkingtons Allotment Gardens, Alder Hey Road	Eccleston and Windle	49%	52%
111	Kentmere Allotments, Carr Mill	Moss Bank and Town Centre	54%	51%
112	Allotments, Eccleston Old Lane	West Park and Thatto	50%	46%
113	Private Allotments rear of 30-62 Lugsmore Lane	West Park and Thatto		
114	Nutgrove Main Avenue Allotments	West Park and Thatto	44%	36%
115	Harlow Allotments	West Park and Thatto	49%	37%
116	Allotment Site, Walkers Lane	Parr, Sutton and Bold	53%	37%
117	Milton Street Allotments	Parr, Sutton and Bold	51%	29%
118	Recreation Street Allotments,Parr	Moss Bank and Town Centre	63%	57%
119	Havannah Lane Allotment Gardens	Parr, Sutton and Bold	73%	52%
120	Ashtons Green Allotments, Malvern Road	Parr, Sutton and Bold	66%	52%
121	Parr Depot Allotments, Bedford Street	Parr, Sutton and Bold	59%	67%
122	Allotment Gardens, off Earle Close	Earlestown and Newton		
123	Bertram Street allotments	Earlestown and Newton	48%	37%
124	Elm Road allotments	West Park and Thatto	35%	27%

The private site at Lugsmore Lane and the Allotment Gardens off Earle Close could not be assessed for quality or value due to being inaccessible at the time of the site visits.

Nearly all areas are covered by the 15 minute walk time catchment standard. Although there are gaps in the Rainhill, Billinge & Seneley, Haydock & Blackbrook and the eastern border of Parr, Sutton & Bold.

Billinge Parish Council identifies that a new allotment site will be opening at Eddleston Fields on Rainford Road in the near future. The site will have approximately 36 plots and will help to meet the gap identified from the catchment mapping above.

Potential expansion is highlighted at three existing sites; Ashton Green Allotments, Cabbage Hall Allotments and Rob Lane Allotments. In the winter the Rob Lane allotment association plans to improve an area of derelict land on the site which was the old access road. The area is currently overgrown. Plans are to make it a wildlife area with wild flowers and a variety of bushes in order to encourage different flora and fauna.

## ST. HELENS COUNCIL OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT

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The association at Cabbage Hall also plans to create a wildlife area as part of an expansion project to the site. In conjunction with the mental health charity MIND, the project plans to make use of an area of land within the existing site. The area will look to introduce three raised beds available for community use and are intended for individuals/groups with mental health issues to use. In addition, the association is also looking to access funding in order to provide fencing and a compost toilet as part of the work on site.

Once this stage has been complete, plans are then to develop a wildlife area at the bottom of the site. This will act as a reflection/contemplation area and will feature paths, benches and a pond. The association is looking for local organisations that may be able to assist in helping to clear and develop the site.

Ashton Green Community Allotments also highlights the potential availability of a piece of land adjacent to the site. It is keen to develop the area as a wild flower meadow. The group are in discussions with Lancashire Wildlife Trust about best practice as well as the Council about the possibility of using the land.

### ***Ownership/management***

St. Helens Council owns and manages the majority of sites in the area. Three of these are self managed by association (Harlow, Rainford and Rob Lane). In addition, there are also three sites that are privately owned (Crank Road, Pilkingtons and the Allotments rear of Lugsmore).

Consultation highlights a steady increasing demand for the continuing provision of allotment sites and plots across St. Helens. Currently demand appears to outweigh supply; demonstrated by waiting lists being present at sites within the audit. Currently there is a combined waiting list of circa 633 people. This is likely to reflect the trend in having an allotment, not only from a healthy living aspect but also as a way for saving money.

Allotments in St. Helens are operating at 100% capacity with few vacant plots identified. Eccleston Old Lane is highlighted as having some vacant plots. However, these require cleaning before they can be allocated.

Consultation identifies that there are five plots at the Havannah Lane site and two plots at the Milton Street site that are temporarily unavailable due to issues with drainage. The Council plans to reinstate these once work has been undertaken to rectify the issue.

SHC operates a policy for its allotments whereby any new plots that become available are split into half plots (where possible) in order to help meet demand and reduce the waiting time for plots.

Three sites report incidents of vandalism or misuse in the last 12 months. Rob Lane highlights the site suffered a major break-in before Christmas with 22 huts being broken into. The Cabbage Hall site also suffered break-ins and equipment theft from plot holders sheds. Minor break-ins were also reported at Eccleston Old Lane in the last 18 months.

# ST. HELENS COUNCIL OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT

## 8.4 Quality

In order to determine whether sites are high or low quality (as recommended by guidance); the scores from the site assessments have been colour-coded against a baseline threshold (high being green and low being red). The table below summarises the results of the quality assessment for allotments in St. Helens. A threshold of 45% is applied in order to identify high and low quality. Further explanation of how the quality scores and thresholds are derived can be found in Part 2 (Methodology).

Table 8.4: Quality ratings for allotments by analysis area

Analysis area	Scores			Spread	No. of sites	
	Lowest score	Average score	Highest score		Low <45%	High >45%
Billinge & Seneley Green	-	-	-	-	-	-
Earlestown & Newton	48%	50%	53%	5%	-	3
Eccleston & Windle	49%	61%	73%	24%	-	2
Haydock & Blackbrook	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moss Bank & Town Centre	54%	59%	63%	9%	-	2
Parr, Sutton & Bold	51%	61%	73%	22%	-	5
Rainford	37%	42%	46%	9%	1	1
Rainhill	-	-	-	-	-	-
West Park & Thatto Heath	44%	45%	50%	6%	2	2
<b>ST. HELENS</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>15</b>

In terms of quality, the majority of the allotment sites in St. Helens (83%) score above the threshold. The highest scoring sites are Cabbage Hall Allotments and Havannah Lane Allotment Gardens. Both sites receive a score of 73% each for quality. The sites score well due to their general appearance and maintenance (e.g. tidy, good paths and signage). Furthermore, Havannah Lane is observed as having had drainage and anti-vandal fencing recently installed.

There are three allotment sites across St. Helens that rate below the threshold for quality; Crank Road Allotments, Nutgrove Avenue Allotments and Elm Road Allotments. The latter two are both Council owned and managed. Observations from the site assessments note that these sites tend to be smaller in size and without certain features compared to other sites such as signage or seating.

A few associations highlight a desire for improvements to the pathways on site. Both Eccleston Old Lane and Kentmere Avenue state a desire for improving the quality and frequency of maintenance of paths. Currently SHC is responsible for maintaining such elements.

Mesnes Park Community Allotments Association are looking at the potential to extend the existing bottom end car park on site. The area is not suitable for growing and the group is currently exploring options.



## ST. HELENS COUNCIL OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT

### 8.5 Value

In order to determine whether sites are high or low value (as recommended by guidance); the scores from the site assessments have been colour-coded against a baseline threshold (high being green and low being red). The table below summarises the results of the value assessment for allotments in St. Helens. A threshold of 20% is applied in order to identify high and low value. Further explanation of how the value scores and thresholds are derived can be found in Part 2 (Methodology).

Table 8.5: Value ratings for allotments by analysis area

Analysis area	Scores			Spread	No. of sites	
	Lowest score	Average score	Highest score		Low <20%	High >20%
Billinge & Seneley Green	-	-	-	-	-	-
Earlestown & Newton	28%	33%	37%	9%	-	3
Eccleston & Windle	52%	55%	57%	5%	-	2
Haydock & Blackbrook	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moss Bank & Town Centre	51%	54%	57%	6%	-	2
Parr, Sutton & Bold	29%	47%	67%	28%	-	5
Rainford	24%	28%	31%	7%	-	2
Rainhill	-	-	-	-	-	-
West Park & Thatto Heath	27%	36%	46%	19%	-	4
<b>ST. HELENS</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>18</b>

All allotments that have been visited in St. Helens are assessed as high value. This is a reflection of the associated social inclusion and health benefits, amenity value and the sense of place offered by such types of provision. The value of allotments is further demonstrated by the existence of waiting lists identified at sites.

Allotments in St. Helens are generally well used. Most are identified as being managed by SHC meaning the ability and frequency to re-designate any vacant plots is best placed. However, demand does outweigh supply.

## 8.6 Summary

### Allotments summary

- ◀ A total of 20 sites are classified as allotments in St. Helens, equating to more than 19 hectares. The majority of sites are owned and managed by the Council. However, three council sites are self managed. There are also three privately owned allotment sites.
- ◀ The current provision of 19.9 hectares is above the nationally recommended amount. However, there are waiting lists at sites across St. Helens suggesting demand for allotments is not currently being met by supply.
- ◀ There are a couple instances unused plots identified. However, these are in the minority and are due to issues with drainage. Once rectified they will be reinstated for use.
- ◀ The majority of allotments (83%) score above the threshold for quality. The exception are three sites; Crank Road, Nutgrove Avenue and Elm Road. Sites score lower due to a lack of seating and signage compared to other sites.
- ◀ All allotments in St. Helens are assessed as high value reflecting the associated social inclusion and health benefits, amenity value and the sense of place offered by provision.
- ◀ Waiting list numbers suggest that continuing measures should be made to provide additional plots in the future where possible.



# ST. HELENS COUNCIL OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT

## PART 9: CEMETERIES/CHURCHYARDS

### 9.1 Introduction

Cemeteries and churchyards include areas for quiet contemplation and burial of the dead, often linked to the promotion of wildlife conservation and biodiversity.

### 9.2 Current provision

There are 19 sites classified as cemeteries/churchyards, equating to 48 hectares of provision in St. Helens. No site size threshold has been applied and as such all provision identified is included within the audit.

*Table 9.1: Distribution of cemeteries by analysis area*

Analysis area	Cemeteries	
	Number	Size (ha)
Billinge & Seneley Green	3	3.30
Earlestown & Newton	4	6.24
Eccleston & Windle	2	28.35
Haydock & Blackbrook	2	1.95
Moss Bank & Town Centre	1	0.89
Parr, Sutton & Bold	4	5.17
Rainford	1	1.07
Rainhill	2	1.03
West Park & Thatto Heath	-	-
<b>ST. HELENS</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>48.00</b>

The largest contributor to burial provision in St. Helens is the St. Helens Cemetery and Crematorium equating to 27 hectares. It is located in Eccleston & Windle and is one of two cemetery sites provided and maintained by SHC. The other site is Newton-le-Willows Cemetery.

Another significant burial provision site is St Peter's Cemetery in the Parr, Sutton & Bold area. This is managed by the Diocese of Liverpool.

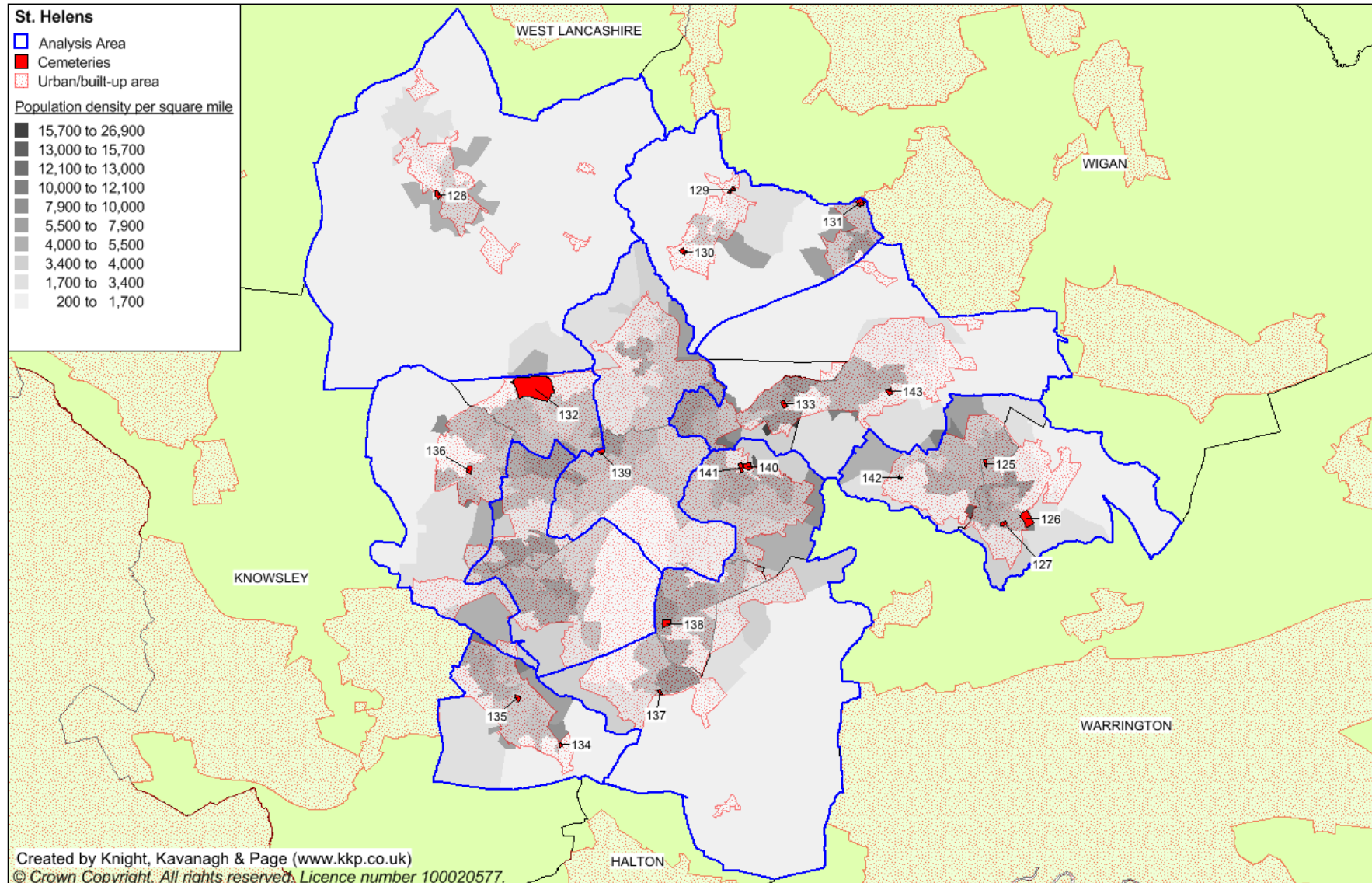
Within the identified provision there are a number of closed churchyard sites. These are sites that are no longer able to accommodate any new burials.

### 9.3 Accessibility

No accessibility standard is set for the typology of cemeteries and churchyards. Furthermore, there is no realistic requirement to set accessibility standards for such provision. Instead provision should be based on burial demand. Figure 9.1 shows cemeteries and churchyards mapped against analysis areas.

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Figure 9.1: Cemetery sites mapped against analysis area



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Table 9.2: Key to sites mapped with quality and value score

Site ID	Site name	Analysis area	Quality score	Value score
125	St.Mary's Church	Earlestown and Newton	46%	33%
126	Newton-le-Willows Cemetery	Earlestown and Newton	55%	28%
127	Emmanuel Church	Earlestown and Newton	45%	33%
128	All Saints Church	Rainford	53%	39%
129	St Aidens Churchyard/Cemetery	Billinge and Seneley Green	52%	44%
130	Birchley St.Mary's	Billinge and Seneley Green	57%	34%
131	Holy Trinity Church Graveyard	Billinge and Seneley Green	50%	43%
132	St.Helens Cemetery & Crematorium	Eccleston and Windle	84%	55%
133	St.Mark's Graveyard	Haydock and Blackbrook	65%	45%
134	Land at St Bartholomews Church	Rainhill	49%	28%
135	St Ann's Church Grounds	Rainhill	51%	28%
136	Christ Church Cemetery	Eccleston and Windle	50%	38%
137	St Teresa's Church Grounds	Parr, Sutton and Bold	36%	22%
138	St Nicholas Churchyard	Parr, Sutton and Bold	51%	44%
139	Lowe House RC Church Grounds	Moss Bank and Town Centre	55%	48%
140	St Peters Cemetery and Field	Parr, Sutton and Bold	55%	35%
141	St Peters Church Cemetery	Parr, Sutton and Bold	50%	35%
142	St Patrick's RC Church Grounds	Earlestown and Newton	49%	23%
143	St.James Church Churchyard	Haydock and Blackbrook	53%	38%

In terms of provision, mapping demonstrates it is fairly evenly distributed across the area. As highlighted earlier the need for additional cemetery provision should be driven by the requirement for burial demand and capacity.

SHC is responsible for the management and maintenance of two cemetery sites in the area; St. Helens Cemetery and Crematorium and Newton-le-Willows Cemetery. In addition, SHC also maintains Emanuel Church and St Ann's Church Ground. Both are closed sites that no longer provide any new burial provision.

St. Helens Cemetery and Crematorium has recently had a new extension. Therefore in terms of burial capacity there understood to be a sufficient amount to cope with demand for the foreseeable future.

All other forms of churchyards in St. Helens are understood to be maintained by the churches themselves.

## ST. HELENS COUNCIL OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT

### 9.4 Quality

In order to determine whether sites are high or low quality (as recommended by guidance); the scores from the site assessments have been colour-coded against a baseline threshold (high being green and low being red). The table below summarises the results of the quality assessment for cemeteries in St. Helens. A threshold of 45% is applied in order to identify high and low quality. Further explanation of how the quality scores and threshold are derived can be found in Part 2 (Methodology).

Table 9.3: Quality ratings for cemeteries by analysis area

Analysis area	Scores			Spread	No. of sites	
	Lowest score	Average score	Highest score		Low <45%	High >45%
Billinge & Seneley Green	52%	53%	57%	5%	-	3
Earlestown & Newton	45%	49%	55%	10%	1	3
Eccleston & Windle	50%	67%	84%	34%	-	2
Haydock & Blackbrook	53%	59%	65%	12%	-	2
Moss Bank & Town Centre	55%	55%	55%	-	-	1
Parr, Sutton & Bold	36%	48%	55%	19%	1	3
Rainford	53%	53%	53%	-	-	1
Rainhill	50%	51%	51%	1%	-	2
West Park & Thatto Heath	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>ST. HELENS</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>17</b>

The majority of cemeteries and churchyards in St. Helens (89%) are rated as being of above the threshold for quality.

The highest scoring site for quality is the St. Helens Cemetery and Crematorium which receives a quality score above the threshold of 84%. This is due to it being maintained to an excellent level with attractive landscaping. The general access to and on site is also noted as being good.

Observations from the site visits highlight the general high level of provision overall. A large proportion of the sites are noted as being well cared for and therefore have a good quality of appearance.

However, there are two sites that score below the quality threshold; Emmanuel Church and St. Teresa Church Grounds. The latter has no noticeable graveyards. Furthermore, access and use of the site may also be an issue. Emmanuel Church is a closed churchyard maintained by SHC. Site observations note a recent bonfire had occurred and that evidence of misuse was also present.

# ST. HELENS COUNCIL OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT

## 9.5 Value

In order to determine whether sites are high or low value (as recommended by guidance); the scores from the site assessments have been colour-coded against a baseline threshold (high being green and low being red). The table below summarises the results of the value assessment for cemeteries in St. Helens. A threshold of 20% is applied in order to identify high and low value. Further explanation of how the value scores and threshold are derived can be found in Part 2 (Methodology).

Table 9.4: Value ratings for cemeteries by analysis area

Analysis area	Scores			Spread	No. of sites	
	Lowest score	Average score	Highest score		Low <20%	High >20%
Billinge & Seneley Green	34%	40%	44%	10%	-	3
Earlestown & Newton	23%	29%	33%	10%	-	4
Eccleston & Windle	38%	47%	55%	17%	-	2
Haydock & Blackbrook	38%	42%	45%	7%	-	2
Moss Bank & Town Centre	48%	48%	48%	-	-	1
Parr, Sutton & Bold	22%	34%	44%	22%	-	4
Rainford	39%	39%	39%	-	-	1
Rainhill	28%	28%	28%	-	-	2
West Park & Thatto Heath	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>ST. HELENS</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>19</b>

All cemeteries and churchyards are assessed as being of high value, reflecting the role they provide in communities lives. In addition, the cultural/heritage value of sites and the sense of place they provide to the local community are acknowledged in the site assessment data. Sites also receive a score for value from their contribution to wildlife/habitats or sense of place to the local environment.

Cemeteries and churchyards are important resources, offering both recreational and conservation benefits. As well as providing burial space, cemeteries and churchyards can also offer important low impact recreational benefits (e.g. dog walking, wildlife watching).

## 9.6 Summary

### Cemeteries summary

- ◀ St. Helens is identified as having 19 sites classified as cemeteries, equating to 48 hectares.
- ◀ Management of the two main active cemetery sites is undertaken by SHC. Maintenance of most other churchyards is carried out by the churches.
- ◀ There is a fairly evenly distribution of provision across the area. However, the need for additional burial provision should be driven by the requirement for demand and capacity.
- ◀ As the main provision for future burial capacity, the St. Helens Cemetery site is noted as having a sufficient amount of burial capacity remaining.
- ◀ The majority of cemeteries and churchyards are rated as high quality. Two sites rate below the quality threshold. Emanuel Church is observed as having issues such as vandalism.
- ◀ All cemeteries are assessed as high value, reflecting that generally provision has cultural/heritage value and provide a sense of place to the local community.