

Appendix 9 – Open Space Strategy 2017

1 Audit Criteria: Environmental Value

| 1.1 Function: Provision of green streetscape; adding value to local character | |
|---|---|
| Does the site's position and visibility add value (or potentially add value) to the adjoining street network/urban area? | |
| <i>Score</i> | <i>Definition</i> |
| 1 | No frontage with public streets. Park not very visible from other public places |
| 2 | At least 25% of park boundary open to public streets |
| 3 | At least 50% of park boundary open to public streets |
| 4 | At least 75% of park open to public streets |
| 5 | All park boundary open to public streets or other public spaces |

| 1.2 Function: Provision of green refuge | |
|---|---|
| Does the site provide a green refuge from the urban area or outer urban areas? | |
| <i>Score</i> | <i>Definition</i> |
| 1 | Park very difficult to find and / or otherwise too hostile for comfort |
| 2 | Park reasonably quiet but difficult to find from most directions and /or too isolated, intimidating or too run down to be a relaxing space |
| 3 | Park reasonably easy to find, quiet without being too isolated for public safety, and reasonably well kept |
| 4 | Park easy to find and enter; quiet, comfortable places to sit, with pleasant green internal views |
| 5 | Park easy to find and enter, quiet, comfortable places to sit, with pleasant walks, a variety of natural elements such as water, trees wild areas and good vistas |

| 1.3 Function: Focal space; Urban and neighbourhood legibility as open space | |
|---|---|
| Is the site clearly public open space, and a focal point within the neighbourhood / community? | |
| <i>Score</i> | <i>Definition</i> |
| 1 | Space incidental to urban structure - left over space, not in focal position, provides no landmarks, low visibility |
| 2 | Space incidental to urban structure but visible at least in part |
| 3 | Space not focal but provides local landmarks and in some places important part of local landscape |
| 4 | Highly visible, a defining part of adjacent neighbourhoods and hub of local pedestrian and cycleway |
| 5 | At focal position in neighbourhood at convergence of important local routes. Major landmark at hub of neighbourhood activity and movement |

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| 1.4 Function: Foster local distinctiveness | |
|---|---|
| Does the site add distinctive local landscape character? | |
| <i>Score</i> | <i>Definition</i> |
| 1 | Invisible from public realm or so run down as to have negative impact on environmental quality |
| 2 | Visible from public realm but without distinction - could be anywhere and /or detracts from sense of place created by other landscape elements |
| 3 | Without reference to historical landscape character but generally in keeping with surrounding architectural/natural landscape and context |
| 4 | In keeping with architectural/natural context plus retaining or introducing reference to historical or future landscape character or land use |
| 5 | A leading element in creating a local sense of place. Design of space and surrounding buildings follow common terms of reference - for style, historical/futuristic landscape character |

| 1.5 Function: Biological diversity | |
|--|---|
| Does the site provide for biodiversity such as trees, hedges, water, long grass, scrub? Does it have potential to be biodiversity rich? | |
| <i>Score</i> | <i>Definition</i> |
| 1 | Mostly a monoculture of short mown grass |
| 2 | Mostly short mown improved grass but with some trees and hedges with long grass margins |
| 3 | No more than 75% short mown improved grass with a variety of non-specialised habitats in remaining space e.g. trees, hedges, water, long grass, scrub |
| 4 | Less than 50% short mown improved grass Large areas/large variety of rich, non-specialist habitats and /or some areas of priority habitat such as acid grassland, wetland |
| 5 | Site almost entirely semi-natural supporting significant areas of priority habitats |

| 1.6 Function: Special ecological value | |
|--|---|
| Does the site have any BAP Priority Species / wildlife designation, or potential for any? | |
| <i>Score</i> | <i>Definition</i> |
| 1 | Very little semi-natural habitat of any kind |
| 2 | A variety of valuable habitats and species but no Biodiversity Action Plan Priority species |
| 3 | At least one priority species or habitat plus a variety of valuable but non-priority habitats and species |
| 4 | One or more priority species and habitats a variety of valuable but non-priority habitats and species plus a designation of local importance SSCI/LNR |
| 5 | More than one priority species and habitat, a wide variety of other valuable but non-priority species and habitats plus a designation of national or international importance SSSI/Ramsar/SAC/SPA |

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| 1.7 Function: Biological sustainability: Green connections | |
|---|---|
| Does the site link with other open spaces to create corridor(s) of open space with biodiversity value? | |
| <i>Score</i> | <i>Definition</i> |
| 1 | Site very isolated from other areas with similar habitats and/or permanently and severely compromised by high level of uses incompatible with nature conservation |
| 2 | Site isolated from similar habitats. Some elements (timing, type, intensity etc.) of current use difficult to reconcile with nature conservation |
| 3 | Size of site and/or continuity with similar habitats reasonably good. Compromise with other uses necessary due to location and need for recreational open space or formal parks management |
| 4 | Wildlife conservation a secondary function of the space but fairly compatible with primary use. Both size of site and continuity with similar habitats conducive to sustaining biodiversity |
| 5 | Wildlife conservation the primary use of site or parts of the site. Both size and continuity with similar habitats conducive to sustaining biodiversity |

| 1.8 Function: Biological services, especially water management | |
|---|--|
| Does the site help to minimise impact on the storm water management within the urban area? (e.g. SUDS) | |
| <i>Score</i> | <i>Definition</i> |
| 1 | Site provides limited suitability for biological services |
| 2 | Plays a small part in wider scheme e.g. forms small part of flood plain |
| 3 | Site contains locally significant biological system e.g. retention basins |
| 4 | Major part of site contributes to flood attenuation |
| 5 | Site important for a variety of biological services - flood plain, SUDS, biomass production etc. |

| 1.9 Function: Managing the transition between town and country – green network | |
|--|---|
| Is the site part of major area of urban fringe or broad green corridor designed as positive interface between town and country, and part of green network providing access from urban centres to the countryside? | |
| <i>Score</i> | <i>Definition</i> |
| 1 | Site isolated and remote from other open spaces / countryside |
| 2 | Site separate from other green space but one of a number of 'stepping stones' from town to countryside |
| 3 | Part of linear green corridor - footpath cycleway linking town and country |
| 4 | Part of a series of green spaces leading from town to country, linked by footpaths/cycleways and transitional in character |
| 5 | Part of major area of urban fringe or broad green corridor designed as positive interface between town and country and part of green network providing access from urban centres to the countryside |

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2 Audit Criteria: Social Benefits

| 2.1 Function: Local community destination; Space suitable for socialising and refreshment | |
|--|--|
| Does the site allow for and empower social/community based activities to take place? | |
| <i>Score</i> | <i>Definition</i> |
| 1 | Nowhere to sit or rest, not at a convenient meeting place, no facilities available, no associated activities |
| 2 | Seating in a reasonably convenient position |
| 3 | Park seating/picnic area at pleasant focal point in park, close to well used pedestrian routes and plenty of space for informal games/play |
| 4 | Good seating in pleasant focal area close to well used routes with playground or other associated activities. Other facilities nearby |
| 5 | Pleasant focal area with associated outdoor/indoor activities, easily accessible and with good facilities e.g. refreshment and toilets in the park |

| 2.2 Function: Space for meetings and open air events | |
|--|--|
| Does the site accommodate space for formal and informal events? | |
| <i>Score</i> | <i>Definition</i> |
| 1 | Space relatively inaccessible with very limited opportunity |
| 2 | Sufficient space for events but access restricted and no on-site facilities |
| 3 | Room for events, good access by foot and cycle, some parking nearby. Few permanent facilities |
| 4 | Room for events, good access by foot, road and public transport. Some permanent facilities |
| 5 | Room for events, easily accessible by all means of transport. Permanent good facilities on site and permanent signposting to and around site |

| 2.3 Function: Local routes between key destinations -short daily journeys –pedestrian and cycle | |
|--|---|
| Does the site fit within a network of local routes, and provide off-road local alternatives for short, regular journeys, encouraging cycling and walking? | |
| <i>Score</i> | <i>Definition</i> |
| 1 | No routes across the site, linking public places, or no distinct paths, or entrances hard to find |
| 2 | Routes across the site but they do not link daily destinations, do not constitute shorter alternatives to the road or are not easily navigable or are otherwise hazardous due to isolation or concealed entrances |
| 3 | Routes across the site form pleasant shortcuts and alternatives to the road within residential areas, easily accessible and safe |
| 4 | Safe, pleasant routes link residential area with one or more local key destinations - shops, schools etc. |
| 5 | Space from hub of local pedestrian/cycle movement. Safe pleasant routes linking key destinations with each other and with residential areas |

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2.4 Function: Long routes connecting urban open spaces & to open countryside – pedestrian and cycle

Does the site fit within a network of local routes to other open spaces, and to open countryside, encouraging cycling and walking?

| <i>Score</i> | <i>Definition</i> |
|--------------|--|
| 1 | Site isolated from other green spaces or long distance pedestrian routes |
| 2 | Not continuous with long distance green routes, but is useful 'stepping stone' facilitating or enhancing pedestrian walks from town to long distance walk and countryside |
| 3 | Has direct green link, or is side branch, to a green long distance route between town and country |
| 4 | Linear space forming continuous green corridor between town and country or space continuous with green corridor providing opportunity for informal sport/children's play along the way |
| 5 | Space forms node between two or more continuous green corridors linking town centre and residential areas with the wider rural footpath network |

2.5 Function: Accommodation of formal and informal sports

Does the site provide quality space for sport?

| <i>Score</i> | <i>Definition</i> |
|--------------|--|
| 1 | Space very limited, with poor access and very close to neighbouring properties |
| 2 | Space usable for informal sports but use restricted due to size, access or other limitations e.g. neighbouring properties |
| 3 | Good sized safe and accessible space, plenty of scope for informal sport with seating for spectators, reasonable distance from residential properties |
| 4 | Plenty of accessible safe space with basic facilities for formal sport - standard pitch/court markings, free of charge for informal games or booking arrangements. Seating for spectators, good distance from residential properties |
| 5 | Concentration of formal sports of - ball games, wheeled sports etc. Changing facilities and refreshments available on site good spectator facilities and associated activities e.g. children's playground |

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| 2.6 Function: Space for children’s play and teenage meeting places | |
|---|---|
| Does the site provide quality provision for play? | |
| <i>Score</i> | <i>Definition</i> |
| 1 | Space difficult to find, too isolated or otherwise unsafe for children |
| 2 | Space reasonably well over looked and safe but too small to accommodate a formal playground |
| 3 | Space safe, overlooked and of sufficient size to accommodate a good sized formal playground |
| 4 | Space safe overlooked of sufficient size to accommodate playground and part of well used local footpath network |
| 5 | Space safe, overlooked, of sufficient size to accommodate a formal playground, part of well used local footpath network and with/close to supporting facilities - toilets, refreshments, informal/formal sports and shelter |

| 2.7 Function: Special interest – horticultural displays, landmark features, visitor attractions which offer cultural and heritage interest | |
|---|---|
| Is the sites history, archaeology or traditional landscape a defining feature? | |
| <i>Score</i> | <i>Definition</i> |
| 1 | Mostly short mown grass, poor internal views, no long views and nothing of historical or current interest |
| 2 | Landscape has some items of seasonal interest – e.g. spring bulbs, flowering shrubs, pleasant internal views |
| 3 | Landscape character enhanced by art, floral displays, wildlife areas, natural features or historical reference depending on nature of site |
| 4 | Site has landscape character or visible artefacts relating to history of area. Interpretation of site history aided by sympathetic planning of planting and hard landscape elements. |
| 5 | Site history, archaeology or traditional landscapes are a defining feature - significant enough to attract visitors or provide educational material. Suitable facilities e.g. visitor centre, car park. |

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2.8 Function: Community safety – how well is the site overlooked and designed for public safety in terms of access and off road routes

Does the site provide a safe environment (including perceived safety) for the whole community?

| Score | Definition |
|-------|---|
| 1 | No through routes, not well overlooked. Site unsafe for play/walking due to isolation or other hazards e.g. next to fast unfenced roads |
| 2 | Through routes not a convenient alternative to use of roads and/or space generally not overlooked and secluded, not safe for lone users outside times of peak use |
| 3 | One or more safe, convenient through routes, and safe space to play but of little importance as school routes and nothing of interest along the way |
| 4 | Site is part of well used and safe route to school and/or out of school clubs and activities. Some overlooking from adjacent properties and/or routes. |
| 5 | Site is at hub of safe, well-used and overlooked local footpath network providing safe routes to a several key destinations for children and providing appealing play space with seating etc. for accompanying adults |

2.9 Function: Inclusive space – public and neutral space for sharing, supporting the concept of common ground

Is the site free of all obstacles which would prevent use by any section of the community?

| Score | Definition |
|-------|---|
| 1 | Site hard to find, is not obviously public open space, private ownership boundaries ambiguous. And/or - some sections of public excluded – e.g. due to difficulty of access, culturally offensive features, cost of entry or use of facilities |
| 2 | Site reasonable easy to find and at least most of it is clearly public space - but is not welcoming or comfortable. Seasonally inaccessible for some, some facilities too expensive for less well off or facilities strongly biased towards use by a minority |
| 3 | Entire site obviously public space with no physical, cultural or financial obstacles to use as open space for informal recreation |
| 4 | Entire site obviously public space, welcoming entrances. Facilities designed to interest a wide cross-section of public at once and with an appreciation of those with special needs |
| 5 | Very public and universally welcoming space. Facilities and items of interest planned to engage full cross-section of society. Very user friendly features – e.g. highly graphic site interpretation, length and difficulty of walks indicated |

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| 2.10 Function: Community cohesion – a focus for community ownership and projects | |
|---|--|
| Does the site have (or potentially have) a strong sense of community ownership? | |
| <i>Score</i> | <i>Definition</i> |
| 1 | Space remote from residential communities or too small and limited to be of wide interest - or too daunting to be encouraging |
| 2 | Space relates well to a small definable residential area but too small, badly located or limited to be interesting |
| 3 | Space has fairly wide residential catchment, no inherent obstacle to community projects. Enough space to be interesting/rewarding or has potential to meet a particular local need e.g. activities for nearby school |
| 4 | Good potential to add value through community input and well defined projects local recreational needs or for enhancement of landscape or nature conservation. Positive outcomes easy to observe and measure |
| 5 | Value already established through community participation and projects e.g. Friends Group. Outcomes easy to observe and measure. Space of special importance to surrounding neighbourhoods e.g. contains features of particular local interest and with which local people strongly identify |

| 2.11 Function: Provision of educational resources | |
|---|---|
| Does the site allow for a wide range of educational material and facilities? | |
| <i>Score</i> | <i>Definition</i> |
| 1 | Limited resources for outdoor classroom and/or difficult to access by groups of children |
| 2 | Level of resources sufficient for single visit - or for a small number of short visits if within walking distance of school/college. Reasonable access for groups but no special facilities |
| 3 | Material sufficient to study single subject at depth or over the course of four seasons or material relating in less depth but relating to several study areas. No special facilities but access good |
| 4 | Wide range of educational material; good site access for groups. Basic facilities – e.g. pond dipping platforms, hides, toilets, shelter, clean water |
| 5 | Wide range of educational material. Good site access for groups. Basic facilities plus classroom and workshop facilities, exhibition space, refreshments and parking |

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3 Audit Criteria: Economic Benefits

| 3.1 Function: High quality residential environment that maintains the desirability of neighbourhoods | |
|---|--|
| Is the site highly visible and a focal point within the neighbourhood, with no intrusive facilities or opportunities for intrusive activities? | |
| <i>Score</i> | <i>Definition</i> |
| 1 | Invisible from residential streets and other public places. Residential boundaries entirely with rear gardens. Any facilities out of public sight but close to rear gardens |
| 2 | Less than 25% of boundary opens to public streets. Majority of space bounded by rear garden with any facilities within reasonable public view |
| 3 | Up to 75% of boundaries with streets and public places but visibility into open space restricted by tall hedges, walls or unbroken tree and shrub belts, or space comprising entirely short mown grass, or facilities for noisy or intrusive activities a reasonable distance from residences and in public view |
| 4 | Up to 75% of boundaries with streets and public places. Good visibility into space and good balance between trees and low level planting. Facilities for noisy, intrusive activities well away from residences |
| 5 | All of boundary opens to streets, house frontages and public places. At focal point in neighbourhood or a long linear feature with high edge to area ratio. Good balance between trees and low level vegetation. No facilities for noisy, intrusive activities close to houses |

| 3.2 Function: Supports the viability of commercial/cultural centres (shop, school, community centre), increasing attractiveness to visitors | |
|--|---|
| Does the site provide a high quality setting and over spill areas for cafes, indoor sports etc? | |
| <i>Score</i> | <i>Definition</i> |
| 1 | Distant from cultural/commercial centres with no green links by foot/cycle or by road |
| 2 | At some distance from Cultural/commercial centres but with green link by foot or cycle or by road |
| 3 | Close but not adjacent space forming part of neighbourhood or long distance green link connecting the centre to residential areas around it |
| 4 | Within the centre and provides a high quality setting for cultural/commercial buildings and overspill for cafes etc. |
| 5 | A substantial space within the centre providing a high quality setting and overspill areas for cafes etc. Part of continuous green links connecting the centre to it surrounding neighbourhoods and the town centre and countryside |

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3.3 Function: Concentration of outdoor recreational activities (to create economically sustainable centres)

Does the site meet the Hub approach concept, with a wide range of activities and facilities of high economic value?

| Score | Definition |
|-------|--|
| 1 | Space taken exclusively by small local facility e.g. single formally marked out football pitch. Level and seasonality of use insufficient to justify provision of supporting facilities |
| 2 | Site with small number of recreational activities that can share the same space e.g. informal different ballgames. Or formal pitch available for informal use when not being used for matches. No special facilities justified |
| 3 | Clustering of facilities for a single sport e.g. football, tennis. Some justification for small changing facilities but only seasonal use and expensive in relation to overall usage |
| 4 | A major centre for at least one outdoor sport with a number of secondary sports offered to give greater income and better spread of demand over the year. Sufficient use to make changing room and small refreshment area viable |
| 5 | A major centre for several outdoor sports with secondary sports catered for. Associated activities e.g. playground and indoor sports and activities to fully utilise associated facilities through day/week/year |

3.4 Function: Multifunctional space that maximises the environmental and social benefits from the capital and revenue investment

Does the site allow for a multiple number of recreational and social activities to take place at the same time or in a manageable manner, and is well located with diverse landscape character?

| Score | Definition |
|-------|--|
| 1 | Space of very little use due to small size or poor location |
| 2 | Mono-functional site e.g. single football pitch or playground |
| 3 | Mainly recreation area but mixed with other uses such as flood attenuation and nature conservation. Positive interface with adjacent urban fabric |
| 4 | Mainly recreational use; its location, topography, drainage and direct links with other green spaces have also led to use of site for flood retention and as major route and important wildlife corridor. Positive interface with surrounding urban area |
| 5 | A space combining all above with priority wildlife habitats, sustainable transport network and other environmental services e.g. sustainable urban drainage integrated water management and biomass production |

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| 3.5 Function: Open space based visitor (non-local) attractions | |
|---|---|
| Does the site provide quality space, facilities and character that will help attract visitors? | |
| <i>Score</i> | <i>Definition</i> |
| 1 | Low key visitor attraction e.g. specialist item with limited appeal |
| 2 | Restricted space, no facilities, single item of interest but with wide appeal e.g. Memorial |
| 3 | Limited space, items of significant interest or small range of attractions, no facilities, support short duration visits only |
| 4 | Space with landscape/ wildlife/ history of significant interest. Easy access. Good site interpretation and basic facilities e.g. small visitor centre |
| 5 | Site with several natural and historical attractions of wide public. Very good access by all means, permanent directions to and around site Value added by very good permanent visitor facilities and supporting activities e.g. play areas |

| 3.6 Function: Contributes to the 'branding' of Ashford with a strong, positive image as a green town | |
|---|---|
| Is the site highly visible and provides a diverse range of high quality landscape features which create a distinctive green 'offer'? | |
| <i>Score</i> | <i>Definition</i> |
| 1 | Area invisible from residential streets and other public places. |
| 2 | Area visible from a proportionately small number of locations, poorly used and of poor environmental quality |
| 3 | Contributes significantly to environmental quality of adjacent residential/commercial/cultural areas |
| 4 | Contributes significantly to environmental quality of adjacent residential/commercial/cultural areas. Forms part of extensive 'Green Grid' linking town centre, residential areas, employment areas and the wider countryside outside the town and establishing |
| 5 | All the above plus contributing to sustainable development through including integrated water management principles in open space design and providing raw materials (biomass) or sustainable energy production |