



OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT

LAND AT ALBERT ROAD/BILBERRY CLOSE,
WHITEFIELD

ON BEHALF OF VENTURIA LIMITED

MARCH 2023

QUALITY, INTEGRITY, PROFESSIONALISM

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**LOCAL OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT
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INTRODUCTION

This report is a needs assessment in relation to an area of land currently laid out as an area of informal green space referred to as Land at Albert Road/Bilberry Close, Whitefield, Bury. The assessment is undertaken in relation to a proposal to redevelop the site for a scheme of 7 true bungalows.

This report is therefore an assessment of need to help determine whether the site is still required or whether it is surplus to requirements. It will demonstrate any likely surplus / deficiency in the area as a result of the proposed development.

SITE INFORMATION

The site is in the Whitefield area of Bury. It is included in the Greenspace Audit and Strategy (GSAS) by Bury Council (2015). Within the GSAS¹ it is referred to as Recreation Space at Albert Road (RP/WF023/00) and is identified in the township (i.e. analysis area) of Whitefield and Unsworth. Its typology is listed as informal recreation with a size of 0.331 hectares. It has a quality assessment rating as being good.

Image 1: Land at Albert Road Site



¹ Greenspaces Audit and Strategy Appendices, p172

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POLICY REVIEW

National Context

National Planning Policy Framework

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

It states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. It establishes that 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 96 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 97 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.

Local context

UDP: Policy RT1 – Existing provision for recreation in the urban area

Policy states the Council will protect and give favourable consideration to the improvement of existing recreational land and facilities within the urban area.

The policy seeks to safeguard recreation provision which is considered vital to the quality of life enjoyed by local residents and visitors and to ensure consistency with the aims of the UDP and the advice given in PPG17. Both stress the importance of protecting existing recreational facilities.

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UDP: Policy RT1/1 – Protection of recreation provision in the urban area

States that development will not be allowed where it would result in the loss of:

- Existing and proposed outdoor public or private recreation facilities, including playing fields, sports grounds, parks and gardens, children's play areas, allotments and golf courses;
- Recreation space within settlements located in the Green Belt;
- Indoor facilities for which there is a recreational need; and
- Any other unidentified recreation provision such as playing fields, sports grounds, parks and gardens, children's play areas, allotments and golf courses, including sites created during the period of the Plan.

It states exceptions to this policy may be permitted where:

- Sports and recreation facilities can best be retained and enhanced through the redevelopment of a small part of the site;
- Alternative provision of equivalent community benefit is made available; or
- It can be demonstrated that there is excess sports pitch provision and public open space in the area, taking account of the recreation and amenity value of such provision.

Greenspace Audit and Strategy (2015)

Table 1 details the total level of open space provision and the recommended provision standards for quantity and accessibility across Bury. Appendix 5 provides a breakdown of the provision per Township.

Informal recreation is included under the amenity greenspace typology. For amenity greenspace, the standards are set out in the following table:

Quantitative standard	Accessibility standard
0.5 hectares per 1,000 population	400m

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TECHNICAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Best practice guidance such as *Assessing Needs and Opportunities: A Companion Guide to PPG17* advocates the use of provision standards to help identify areas of deficiency. Paragraph 6.1 states local standards should include a component of quality, quantity and accessibility.

On this basis, the following paragraphs are an analysis of open space provision relative to the site and its proposed development.

Quality

The Land at Albert Road/Bilberry Close is included within the Bury Greenspace Audit and Strategy (2015) as an amenity greenspace. It is rated within the Strategy as being Good in terms of quality. The Bury Greenspace Audit and Strategy provides no further analysis on quality of provision. The site may have limited functionality due to its small size and lack of ancillary features but is still likely to provide a visual benefit/role.

Accessibility

It is necessary to establish the current amount of open space provision serving the local area. A number of other open space sites are identified within proximity to the Land at Albert Road /Bilberry Close site. Only sites with public access are identified. These are shown in Figure 1 and Table 2 on the next page.

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Figure 1: Map of Land at Albert Road with other open spaces

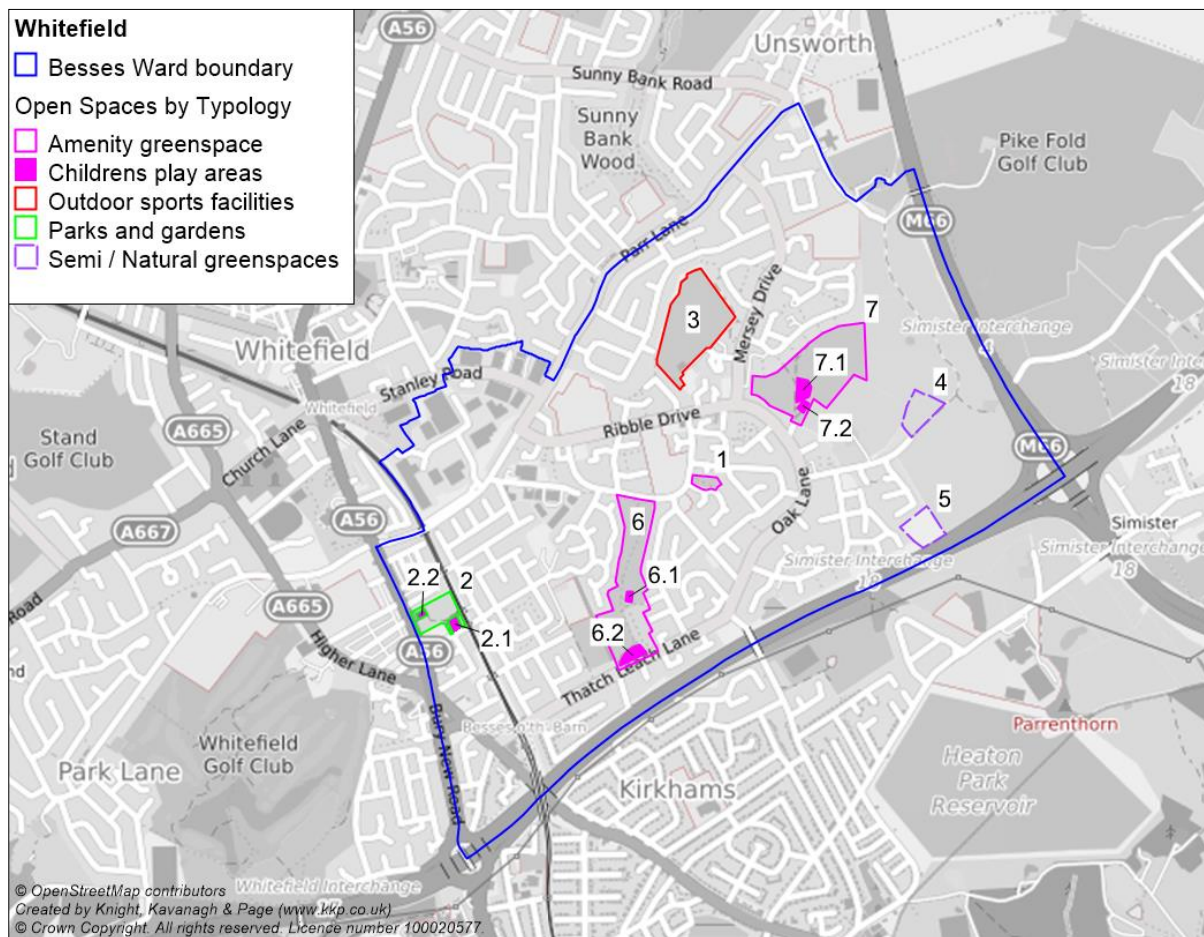


Table 2: Sites within proximity of Land at Albert Road

Map Ref	Site	Typology
1	Land at Albert Road	Amenity greenspace
2	Victoria Park (Besses)	Parks and gardens
2.1	Victoria Park Play Area	Play areas
2.2	Victoria Park MUGA	Play areas
3	Hillock Playing Fields, Mersey Close (Unsworth JFC)	Outdoor sports facilities
4	Mode Hill Lane	Semi/Natural greenspaces
5	Marston Close	Semi/Natural greenspaces
6	Fusiliers Meadow	Amenity greenspace
6.1	Fusiliers Meadow MUGA	Play areas
6.2	Fusiliers Meadow Play Area	Play areas
7	Boz Park	Amenity greenspace
7.1	Boz Park Play Area	Play areas
7.2	Boz Park MUGA	Play areas

As explained earlier, accessibility standards are set by Bury Council as part of the Greenspace Audit and Strategy. The different catchments utilised are set out in Table 3.

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Table 3: Accessibility catchments

Typology	Accessibility
Amenity greenspace	400m
Parks	400m
Natural greenspace	1,200m
Outdoor sports	800m
Children and young people play provision	400m

Figure 2 applies the catchment of 400m for amenity greenspace provision to relevant sites in the locality.

Figure 3 applies the catchments set out in Table 3 to the various open space sites within proximity to the Land at Albert Drive/Bilberry Close (identified within Table 2).

Figure 4 applies the catchment of 400m to children and young people play provision.

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Figure 2: Catchment mapping of amenity provision

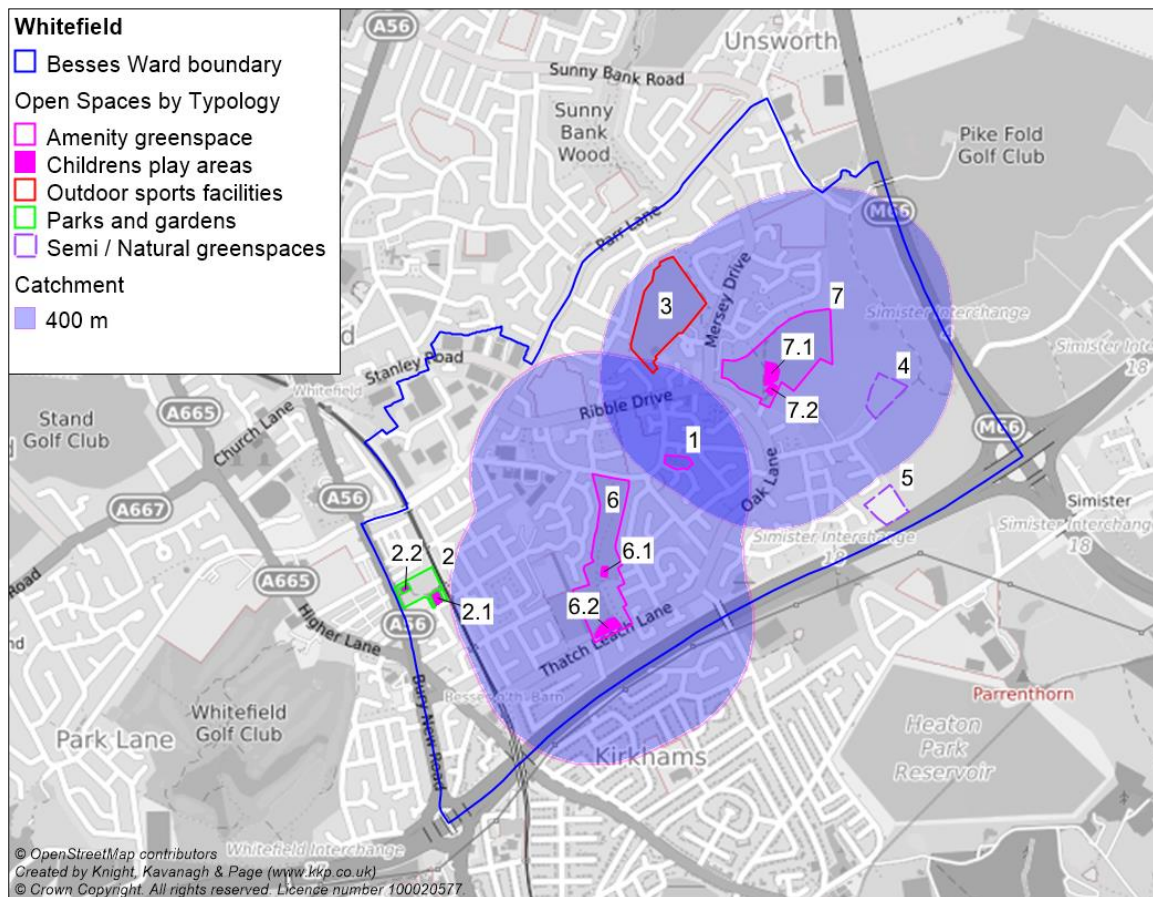
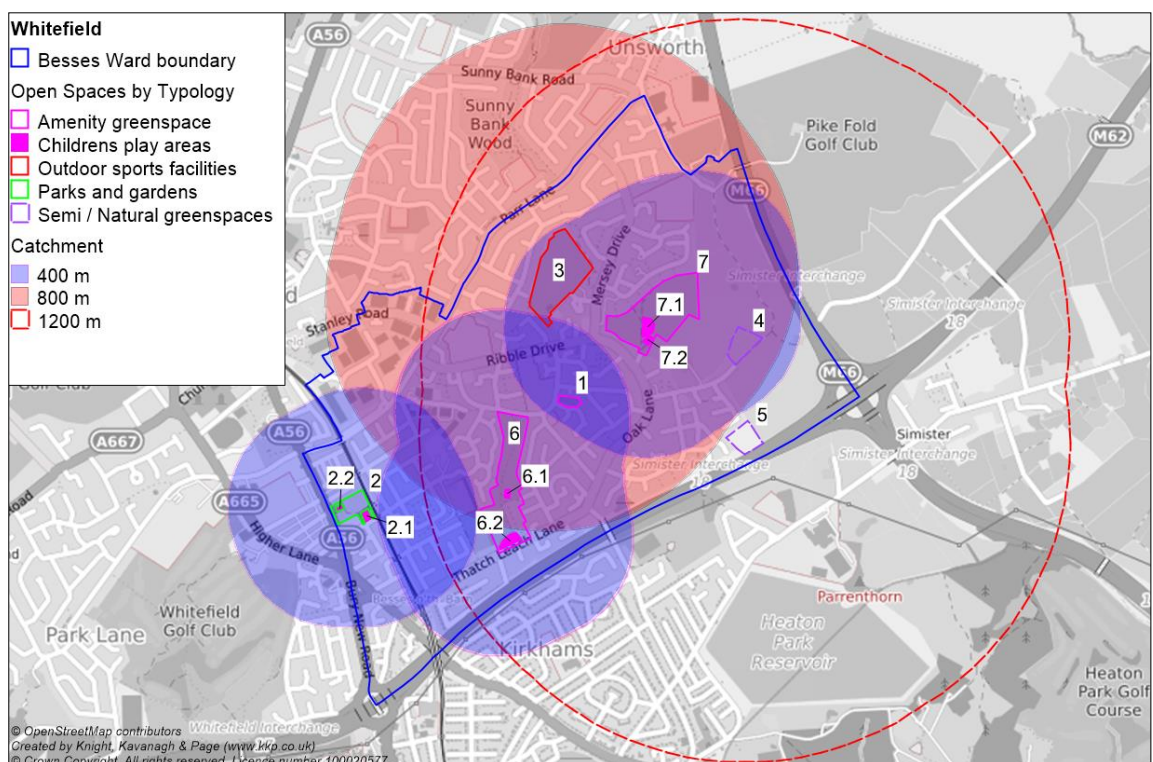


Figure 3: Catchment mapping of all open space provision



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It is necessary to compare the current provision levels in the area to the quantity standards set out in the 2015 Greenspace Audit and Strategy.

The Land at Albert Road/Bilberry Close Site is located within the Whitefield and Unsworth township area.

On this basis and using the total hectares by typology in the area cited in the Greenspace Audit and Strategy, it is possible to demonstrate current provision levels against the quantity standards. Table 4 sets out the comparison.

Table 4: Comparison of provision

Typology		Total provision (hectares)	Provision	Bury standards	+ / -
		Hectares per 1,000 population			
Amenity		26.73	0.89	0.50	+ 0.49
Natural		118.89	3.96	3.90	+ 0.06
Parks		6.38	0.21	0.73	- 0.52
Play	Children's	1.35	0.38	0.37	+ 0.01
	Youth	0.40	0.07	0.12	- 0.05
	Combined	1.76	0.25	0.25	level

Table 4 shows that the Whitefield and Unsworth area has a current provision level of 0.89 hectares per 1,000 population for amenity greenspace. This is well above the set standard of 0.50 hectares per 1,000 population.

The amenity greenspace figure for hectares in the Whitefield and Unsworth area (26.73 ha) does include the area of Land at Albert Road/Bilberry Close. With the exclusion of the hectares at Land at Albert Road/Bilberry Close (0.33 ha), the amenity greenspace provision would still be well above the quantity standard requirement (26.40 hectares against quantity standard requirement equivalent of 15.05 hectares). **Consequently, this demonstrates that the site is surplus to requirements on a quantity basis.**

Table 4 does however highlight that a quantity shortfall in parks and gardens, and it is also acknowledged there is an outdoor sports and allotments shortfall however given the limited size of the site and the constraints imposed by the sewer easements which affect the site the site is not considered suitable for the alternative uses.

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CONCLUSION

Notwithstanding the quality of the site is rated as good in the Bury Greenspace Audit and Strategy with no issues being reported. It is likely that the site has limited functionality due to its small size, the footpath which runs across centre of the site and the lack of ancillary features compared to other large sites nearby. However, it is acknowledged that it is still likely to have a limited visual benefit.

In terms of quantity, existing provision of amenity greenspace is equivalent to 0.89 hectares per 1,000 population. This is considerably greater than the comparable quantity standard figure set by Bury (0.50 hectares per 1,000 population).

Natural greenspace and children's play provision are also sufficient against the standards. However, deficiencies are noted in young people play provision and parks, however the site at Albert Road/Bilberry Close is not considered suitable for young people play provision or as a park due to its limited size, configuration being adjacent existing housing and roads and the underground services which cross the site limiting its useage.

The site is covered by the catchment area of two other amenity greenspace sites in proximity (i.e. Fusiliers Meadow and Boz Park). It is also covered by the catchment areas of other types of open space such as outdoor sports (i.e. Hillock Playing Fields) and natural and semi-natural greenspace (i.e. Mode Hill Lane and Marston Close).

On this basis, given the site is in an area sufficient in quantity of amenity greenspace and covered by the catchment areas of two other amenity greenspace sites, the site is considered to be surplus to requirements.

UDP: Policy RT1/1 (Protection of recreation provision in the urban area) states that development will not be allowed where it would result in the loss of provision. The exceptions to this policy may be permitted where:

1. Sports and recreation facilities can best be retained and enhanced through the redevelopment of a small part of the site;
2. Alternative provision of equivalent community benefit is made available; or
3. **It can be demonstrated that there is excess sports pitch provision and public open space in the area, taking account of the recreation and amenity value of such provision.**

An excess of amenity greenspace provision in the area has been clearly demonstrated, however a quantity deficiency in allotments, outdoor sport and parks and gardens does exists however the site would be unsuitable for such alternative provision for the reasons given above. On this basis, it is considered exception 3 of the policy has been satisfied.