



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol
MERTHYR TUDFUL
MERTHYR TYDFIL
County Borough Council

Merthyr Tydfil Open Space Strategy

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Open spaces which are well-designed and maintained make a significant contribution to the quality of life. In recognition of this, the Merthyr Tydfil Open Space Strategy has been prepared in order to provide a long term framework to protect and develop a network of high-quality open spaces that deliver a range of social, economic and environmental benefits.
- 1.2 The Strategy has been prepared by the Council's Town Planning department in line with national planning policy (PPW, Edition 8, 2016) and Technical Advice Note (TAN) 16: Sport, Recreation and Open Space (2009). In the absence of detailed specific guidance for Wales on the preparation of such strategies, the '*Open space strategies – Best practice guidance*' prepared by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) has been followed. In particular, CABE's six stage process has been adopted as a suitable approach to preparing the Strategy (see **Appendix 1**).
- 1.3 The Strategy identifies the different types of open space which are locally important and sets out locally derived quantity, quality and access standards. The current level of provision of these locally important open spaces has been established through the gathering of evidence by extensive site surveys and audits. Recommendations for the improvement in the quantity, quality and accessibility of open spaces are made through associated Action Plans, which have been prepared for each ward within the County Borough. These recommendations are based on the key themes and aims of the Strategy.

Purpose

- 1.4 The Strategy will be used to inform and help interpret the Council's local development plan (LDP) policies relating to the provision of open space in new developments and the protection of existing open space. It will also be used to inform the site-management of open spaces, and as a mechanism for directing funding to appropriate sites where improvements to the quantity, quality and accessibility of open spaces can be made. The Strategy will ensure a coordinated approach is taken to meeting MTCBC's open space needs and protecting and developing the County Borough's network of open spaces.

What is Open Space and Why is it Important?

- 1.5 Open space is defined in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as land laid out as a public garden, or used for the purposes of public recreation, or land which is a disused burial ground. Open spaces come in a range of forms, but for the purposes of this Strategy, eight types of locally important open spaces have been determined as being: allotments and community growing space, amenity greenspace, children

and young people's space, civic space, green leisure corridors, multifunctional green space, natural/semi natural greenspace, outdoor sports areas and pitches and public parks and gardens.

- 1.6 There has been international and national recognition in recent years of the continuing importance of open spaces to the health and wellbeing of the population. This space does not always have to be 'green', but provide the opportunity for local people to be active and to be given the choice to access such spaces.
- 1.7 The value of open space has been proven to be more than recreational with demonstrable benefits to general health (including obesity), mental health, urban regeneration, the economic potential of tourism, leisure and cultural activities, biodiversity and ecological habitats, local food production, and the mitigation and adaptation to climate change. In relation to the latter, trees and vegetation can reduce the impacts of climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. They can also ameliorate the warming effects of climate change through evapotranspiration and direct shading, and help cope with the increased frequency of sudden heavy rainfall by reducing runoff and increasing rainfall capture.

Key Themes and Aims

- 1.8 Based on a detailed review of the core literature¹ relating to open space and population data for Merthyr Tydfil, the key themes of the Merthyr Tydfil Open Space Strategy are:

-  Health and Wellbeing,
-  Economy, and
-  Environment

- 1.9 These themes were then developed into aims for the strategy; these being to:

-  Improve the health and wellbeing of local communities within Merthyr Tydfil through increased opportunities for residents to improve their physical and mental health with better access to open space.
-  Raise the profile of Merthyr Tydfil through improvements and pride in open space, therefore improving the external perception of the area for inward investment.
-  Improve the natural environment and biodiversity through increased habitat area and opportunities for species movement.

¹ Please see background paper entitled "Policy Review".

- 🌳 Develop a network of green infrastructure where there is connectivity between different types of good quality open spaces which together enable the delivery of multiple benefits.

Approach to Identifying and Assessing Open Spaces

- 1.10 The assessment of suitable open space within the County Borough was intentionally limited to publicly accessible sites and considered the quality and type of the space in question. Further details of the definition of types of open space and accessibility criteria are provided in **Appendix 2**. Each open space included within the Strategy has been assigned an overall type from the classification list, such as a public park and garden or a civic space. Private spaces, such as gardens, farmland or privately owned sports pitches, were not included within the Strategy, although the locations of the sites have been noted for completeness.
- 1.11 Each site was surveyed to establish a range of factors concerning its qualities and levels of accessibility. A pro forma with set criteria was completed with a decision made on whether or not the site should be considered for further inclusion within the Strategy. An example of the pro forma can be found in **Appendix 3**.
- 1.12 The onsite assessment of existing open spaces was an important step in preparing the Strategy; it enabled a first-hand understanding of the baseline data regarding the quantity and quality of various types of open space. This data has become a useful tool to help explain to the public the state of play with regards to existing open space provision and elicit a response in terms of demand and need.
- 1.13 Public consultation² activities took place in 2013 as follows:
- 🌳 School visits – presentation and interactive activities
 - 🌳 Youth clubs – presentations and interactive activities
 - 🌳 Public events – consultation and questionnaires
 - 🌳 Internet questionnaire
 - 🌳 Interest group consultation and interactive activities.
- 1.14 Evidence gathered through site assessments, public consultation and an examination of existing demographics completed the understanding of demand and need. The application of national standards, comparative studies and this understanding of need enabled the setting of local standards for quantity,

² Further information on the various events and public consultation undertaken can be found within the background document entitled “*Public Consultation*”.

accessibility and quality of local provision³. An application of these standards has been used to inform this Strategy and produce a series of 11 Action Plans; one for each ward within the County Borough (See Figure 1). The Strategy, audit of sites and Action Plans will be reviewed and updated every four years in line with the LDP review process.

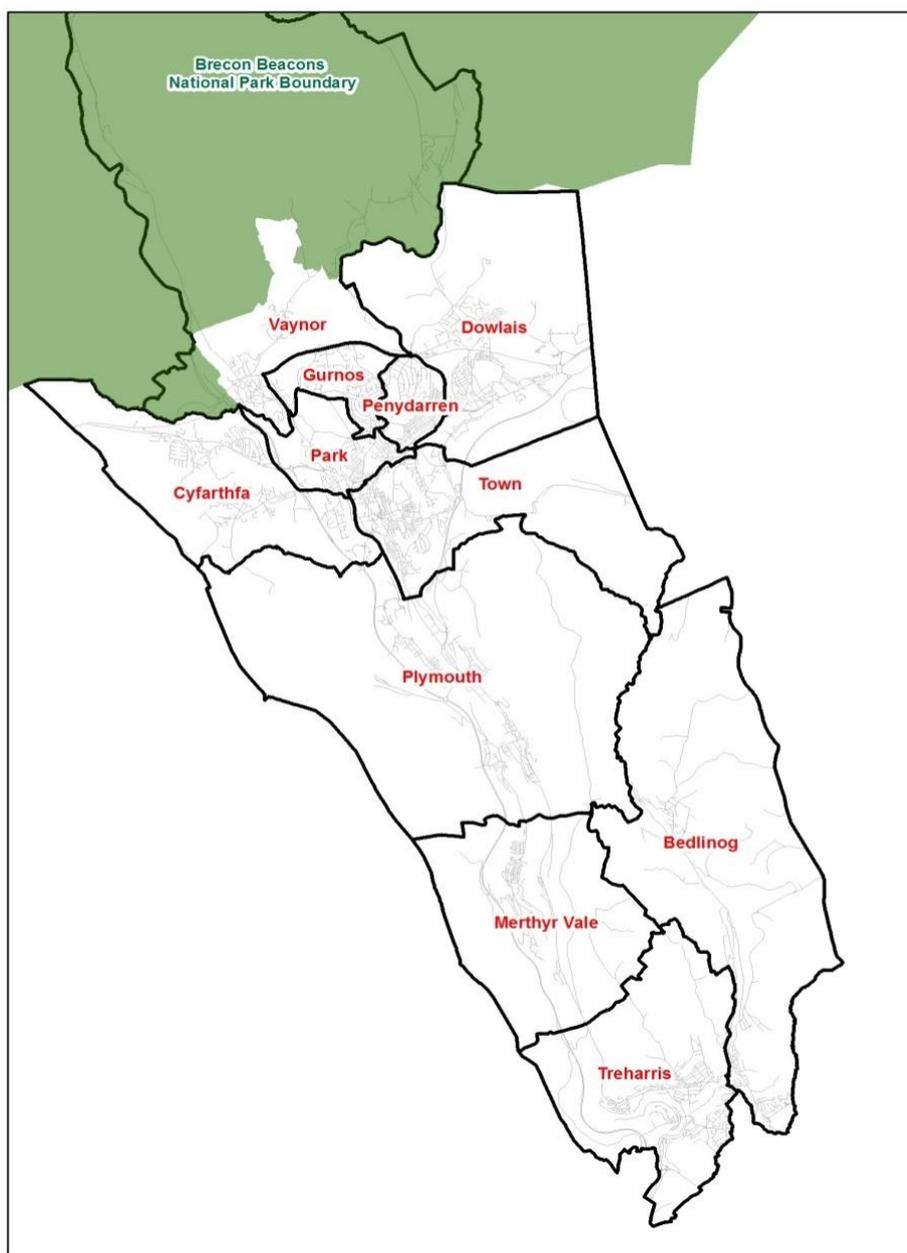


Figure 1: Wards within Merthyr Tydfil.

³ For a detailed account of how the standards were derived, please refer to the background document entitled “Standards for Quality, Quantity and Accessibility”.

2.0 Current Provision, Standards & Demand

Historical Context

2.1 Open spaces within Merthyr Tydfil have been established in the following ways:

- ✚ Land has been bequeathed to the County Borough by wealthy individuals for the good of the residents, e.g. Cyfarthfa Park.
- ✚ Through planning contributions for new development, whereby new amenity space and children's play areas are included in the development, or existing spaces are incorporated into the development and the quality of equipment improved.
- ✚ Creation of open spaces to meet specific leisure and functional needs, such as playing fields and children's playing fields.
- ✚ Creation of open spaces through the extensive slum clearance programme of the 1960s and 1970s.
- ✚ Reclamation of former industrial heritage sites.
- ✚ More recently through regeneration projects, often in the form of new civic spaces.

Overview of Open Space Provision

2.2 The background work to the Strategy has identified 139 sites across the County Borough, which equates to 493 hectares of publicly accessible open space. This equates to 8.38 hectares of accessible open space per 1000 population.

2.3 The proportional make-up of the different types of open space within the County Borough is shown in Figure 2 below. The largest type of open space within the County Borough (by number) is Natural/Semi Natural Greenspace, while the least represented type of open space is Parks and Gardens.

2.4 In terms of access to open spaces, the following percentage of households meet the accessibility standards for the different types of open space:

- ✚ 37% of households are within 600m walking distance of Children and Young People's Play Space;
- ✚ 80% of households are within 400m - 2000m walking distance of Public Parks and Gardens;
- ✚ 80% of households are within 1200m walking distance of Outdoor Sports Pitches;
- ✚ 56% of households are within 400m walking distance of Natural - Semi Natural Greenspace;

- 🌳 58% of households are within 720m walking distance of Multifunctional Greenspace;
- 🌳 36% of households are within 600m walking distance of Allotment and Community Growing Areas;
- 🌳 31% of households are within 720m walking distance of Civic Spaces;
- 🌳 18% of households are within 240m walking distance of Amenity Greenspace; and
- 🌳 40% of households are within 300m walking distance of Green Leisure Corridors.

2.5 With regard to the provision of open space within wards, Treharris is the best provided for with 87 ha of open space, whereas Penydarren has the least provision with only 14.5 ha of open space.

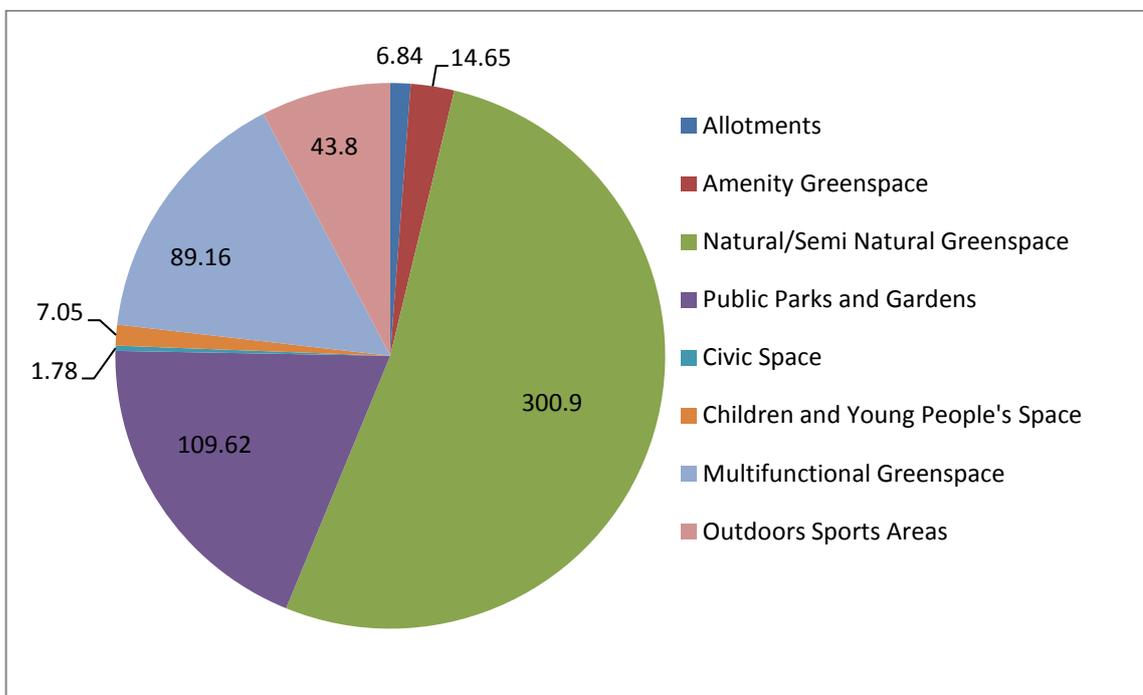


Figure 2 – Proportional make up of open space within the County Borough (by hectare)⁴

⁴ Please note that green leisure corridors are excluded from the pie chart as they represent strategic connection corridors which are most appropriately measured in kilometres.

Overview of Types of Open Space

- 2.6 As previously outlined, there are 9 types of open space defined by this Strategy. A brief overview of each type of open space is outlined below, providing an insight into the type of open space found within Merthyr Tydfil and some of the key findings common to each type of open space. In particular, the number of each type of open space within each ward is highlighted, as well as the amount of open space (hectare) per 1000 of the population. The latter allows a comparison to be made with the adopted minimum standard which is also identified.
- 2.7 The quality of open spaces is also an important consideration for an open space strategy. As a consequence, a broad assessment of the quality of every site was undertaken at the site survey stage, followed by a more detailed quality assessment based on the principles of the 'Green Flag' Award Scheme standards. The latter were adapted depending on the type of the open space as certain elements of the 'Green Flag' standards do not apply to every type of open space. Therefore each type of open space has a set list of quality criteria that would ideally be met for that type of open space. A number of sample sites have been assessed for each type of open space in each ward and the findings, along with the adopted quality standards for each type of open space⁵, can be found in the background document entitled "*Open Space Quality*".
- 2.8 Finally, the distance or time it takes to walk to a space is another important consideration as this can have a major influence over someone's ability to access that space. The accessibility standard for each type of open space is set out below which recommends the time (mins)/distance (m) from a given type of open space within which the population must live to be deemed to have adequate access⁶. An example of an accessibility map for children and young people's space can be found in **Appendix 4**.

Allotments & Community Growing Space

- 2.9 Allotments are defined as areas of land (primarily within local authority ownership) used solely for the purpose of cultivating food crops for consumption by the occupier or their family. They do not include private gardens or commercial premises. Allotments have a role to play in the wider environment through the enhancement of ecology and environment, the promotion of health and social inclusion and the contribution they make towards the economy and the generation of wealth. This type of space may also include community gardens.

⁵ Quality standards are based on Green Flag Criteria.

⁶ Further information on the background assessment of site accessibility and how the criteria were set can be found in the background document entitled "*Standards for Quality, Quantity and Accessibility*".



Royal Crescent Allotments, Penydarren

2.10 The standard for quantity is **0.25 Ha per 1000 of population** as set by the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners based on average plot size of 250 m². Allotments are distributed as follows throughout the County Borough:

Ward Area	Population all ages 2011	Number of Sites	Current Provision Ha	Ha per 1,000 pop
Bedlinog	3,277	1	0.28	0.08
Cyfarthfa	6,869	1	0.62	0.09
Dowlais	6,926	1	0.39	0.05
Merthyr Vale	3,831	2	0.51	0.13
Penydarren	5,419	1	3.34	0.61
Treharris	6,356	2	1.80	0.28
Vaynor	3,551	1	0.16	0.04
Gurnos	5,280	0	0	0.00
Park	4,326	0	0	0.00
Town	7,671	0	0	0.00
Plymouth	5,296	0	0	0.00
Merthyr Tydfil	58,802	9	6.84	0.11

2.11 The accessibility standard for allotments and community growing space has been set at a maximum of 600m or a 10 minute walk.

2.12 Aside from the opportunity that allotments offer for home grown fruit and vegetables, there are recognised links between these activities and personal health and wellbeing through active and regular use of the outdoors.

Amenity Greenspace

2.13 Amenity greenspace offers opportunity for informal recreation activity, often located close to home or work. Amenity greenspace can enhance the appearance of an area and also serve as a meeting place and/or focal point for communities. Facilities are not always present in such spaces, which often consist of no more than mown grass, a bench and a few trees. A number of sites that have been classified as amenity green space have arisen as a result of wholesale demolition and slum clearance, and are rarely considered as significant. However, amenity greenspace has a role in providing green spaces within the built environment for informal uses, and while the qualities of the spaces themselves are often uninspiring they often afford setting and quality to the built environment and offer informal opportunities for children's play where there are no other facilities.



Amenity Greenspace Bethesda Gardens

2.14 The standard for quantity is set at **0.8Ha per 1000 of population** based on the National Playing Fields Association (Fields in Trust) standard for play space. Amenity greenspaces are distributed as follows throughout the County Borough:

Ward Area	Population all ages 2011	Nos. of Sites	Current Provision Ha	Amenity Ha per 1,000 pop
Bedlinog	3,277	0	0	0
Cyfarthfa	6,869	0	0	0
Dowlais	6,926	10	7.43	1.07
Merthyr Vale	3,831	1	0.07	0.01
Penydarren	5,419	0	0	0

Treharris	6,356	5	1.40	0.22
Vaynor	3,551	3	1.52	0.42
Gurnos	5,280	2	1.06	0.20
Park	4,326	8	2.82	0.65
Town	7,671	2	0.21	0.02
Plymouth	5,296	1	0.10	0.01
Merthyr Tydfil	58,802	32	14.65	0.24

2.15 The accessibility standard for amenity greenspace has been set at a maximum of 240m or a 5 minute walk.

2.16 The public survey results showed that more than half those surveyed used amenity greenspace on a regular basis. This may be attributed to the fact that amenity green space is predominantly found in urban / residential areas where a larger proportion of the population reside. The aesthetic and landscape benefits of amenity green space offer much value to residents apart from the providing for informal recreation, including biodiversity and ecology opportunities.

Children and Young People's Space

2.17 The Welsh Government defines play as behaviour which is: freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated and performed for no external goal or reward. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons.

2.18 Children's and young people's play space is not restricted to the conventional type of playground with swings and slides; it can take many other forms, such as adventure playgrounds, designated 'free play' or 'unstructured play' areas, skateboard parks, and designated equipped 'hang out' areas / teenage shelters. These areas are often enclosed and sometimes include play equipment and an area of mown grass.

2.19 The Welsh Assembly recognise the importance of play for health and wellbeing of children and young people, and for physical, social, mental and emotional aspects of life. It considers that the closer play facilities are to home, the more likely children are to use them.

2.20 Field's in Trust (2009) have defined three main types of designated play areas, these being:

- ✿ **The Local Area for Play (LAP) or Doorstep Play Space** - The LAP is a small area of open space specifically designated and primarily laid out for very young children to play close to where they live i.e. within 1 minute walking time. The LAP requires no play equipment as such, relying more on demonstrative features indicating that play is positively encouraged.

🌿 The Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP) - The LEAP is an area of open space specifically designated and laid out with features including equipment for children who are beginning to go out and play independently close to where they live, usually within 5 minutes walking time. Experience has indicated that to provide equipped LEAPs within a 5 minute walk of all houses in a new development can on occasion be impractical and difficult to achieve. An alternative to the LEAP is therefore to provide a Local Landscaped Area for Play (LLAP).

🌿 The Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP)

The NEAP is an area of open space specifically designated, laid out and equipped mainly for older children but with play opportunities for younger children as well. Located within 15 minute walk from home, the NEAP is sufficiently large to enable provision for play opportunities that cannot be provided within a LAP or LEAP. The NEAP can provide a greater variety of opportunity for both active and passive play. It can provide play equipment, and a hard surface area for ball games, or wheeled activities such as roller skating or cycling.



Play area at Cyfarthfa Park

2.21 The following standards for quantity are taken from the Fields in Trust (National Playing Fields Association) Six Acre Standard:

- 🌿 **0.25Ha per 1000 of population** for 'designated equipped play space (LAP's)
- 🌿 **0.55 Ha per 1000 of population** for 'Informal Playing Space' (LEAP's)
- 🌿 **0.8Ha per 1000 of population** for 'Children's Playing Space' (NEAP's)

2.22 The distribution of children’s and young people’s play space is as follows throughout the County Borough:

Ward Area	Populati on all ages 2011	Number of Sites	Current Provision Ha	Ha per 1000 pop
Bedlinog	3,277	4	0.41	0.12
Cyfarthfa	6,869	10	1.96	0.28
Dowlais	6,926	7	1.11	0.16
Merthyr Vale	3,831	5	0.81	0.21
Penydarren	5,419	3	0.38	0.07
Treharris	6,356	5	0.40	0.06
Vaynor	3,551	3	0.32	0.09
Gurnos	5,280	4	0.71	0.13
Park	4,326	0	0.00	0.00
Town	7,671	2	0.37	0.04
Plymouth	5,296	3	0.58	0.10
Merthyr Tydfil	58,802	45	7.05	0.11

2.23 The accessibility standard for children’s and young people’s playspace has been set as follows:

-  **‘Designated equipped play space’ (LAP’s)** – a walking distance of 100m or straight line distance of 60m.
-  **‘Informal Playing Space’ (LEAP’s)** - a walking distance of 400m or straight line distance of 240m.
-  **‘Children’s Playing Space’ (NEAP’s)** - a walking distance of 1000m or straight line distance of 600m.

Civic Space

2.24 Civic spaces provide a setting for civic buildings and monuments, and offer opportunities for public gathering/demonstrations or community events. They often define the character of the urban environment and act as public areas that provide a focus for pedestrian activity. Examples include squares, market squares, monuments, memorials and other hard surfaced community areas designed for pedestrians.



St Tydfil's Church & Fountain, Merthyr Tydfil

2.25 Civic spaces can be important to the identity of towns and villages because they are where people can experience a shared sense of pride and ownership. Civic spaces can also provide space for relaxation and can be particularly instrumental in the regeneration of town centres.

2.26 A standard for quantity has not been set for this type of open space; however, the closest measure that can be practically utilised is the need to provide, where possible, a space for each community that gives a community focus, an identity for the town or village and a shared sense of pride and ownership. The distribution of civic space is as follows throughout the County Borough:

Ward Area	Population all ages 2011	Number of Sites	Current Provision Ha	Ha per 1,000 pop
Bedlinog	3,277	2	0.233	0.071
Cyfarthfa	6,869	0	0.00	0.00
Dowlais	6,926	0	0.00	0.00
Merthyr Vale	3,831	3	0.35	0.091
Penydarren	5,419	0	0.00	0.00
Treharris	6,356	1	0.07	0.011
Vaynor	3,551	1	0.02	0.005
Gurnos	5,280	0	0.00	0.00
Park	4,326	0	0.00	0.00
Town	7,671	3	1.11	0.140
Plymouth	5,296	0	0.00	0.00
Merthyr Tydfil	58,802	10	1.783	0.178

2.27 With regards to accessibility, there is no realistic means by which catchments for such a type of open space can be easily influenced, and as such, no standard has

been set. However, a bench mark of 15 minute walk to any civic space was used to establish how well distributed existing civic spaces are within the County Borough. This bench mark reflects the upper limits of an acceptable walking distance.

2.28 It was noted from the site survey work that civic spaces are generally hard landscaped with little greenery, or consist of soft landscaping that would be of little benefit to the local flora or fauna. The ability to improve this situation would often be difficult due to the urban location of these sites.

Green Leisure Corridors

2.29 Green leisure corridors are defined as publicly accessible routes that include river paths, cycle ways, rights of way and old railway lines. They often link different areas within towns, and are typically used for walking, cycling and horse riding. Green leisure corridors can also connect towns to their surrounding countryside or country parks, and can link green or other defined spaces together. In certain circumstances, they can form part of a designated trail or long distance path, such as the Taff Trail.

2.30 In addition to improving sustainability, green leisure corridors represent an important opportunity to promote sustainable transport by cycle and on foot. The provision, use and maintenance of green corridors will be a key determinant in the achievement of increased physical activity and participation.

2.31 There is no quantity standard for green leisure corridors as the need is primarily driven by the promotion of environmentally sustainable forms of transport within urban areas. The relationship and connectivity between different land uses is an important consideration and will vary between areas. This makes the setting of standards difficult and somewhat inappropriate.

Ward Area	Population all ages 2011	Taff Trail (KM)	Trevithick Trail (KM)	Celtic Trail (KM)	HOV Cycle Route (KM)	Other Corridors (KM)	KM per 1000 of population
Bedlinog	3,277	nil	nil	1.26	nil	1.73	0.91
Cyfarthfa	6,869	1.25	nil	nil	0.31	0.07	0.23
Dowlais	6,926	2.19	nil	nil	1.27	nil	0.49
Merthyr Vale	3,831	3.76	3.49	nil	nil	1.21	2.20
Penydarren	5,419	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	-
Treharris	6,356	5.11	0.26	1.21	nil	0.93	1.18
Vaynor	3,551	2.43	nil	nil	nil	0.11	0.71
Gurnos	5,280	nil	nil	nil	nil	0.79	0.14
Park	4,326	0.15	nil	nil	0.11	1.45	0.39
Town	7,671	0.12	0.40	nil	nil	nil	0.06
Plymouth	5,296	5.14	4.28	nil	nil	1.20	2.00
Merthyr Tydfil	58,802	20.15	8.43	2.47	1.69	7.49	0.68

- 2.32 Planning policies are seen as the most appropriate means to promote the use of green corridors as a means of linking residential areas to national cycle networks; town and local centres; community facilities, such as schools, shops, community centres and sports facilities; and places of employment. In this sense, green corridors are demand-led and dependant on the layout of new developments and the ability to re-use established linear routes, such as disused railways.
- 2.33 As with the quantity standard for this type of open space, no minimum accessibility standard for green leisure corridors has been formally adopted, although a 'minimum standard of access' has been utilised to identify those areas which are not well served by this type of open space.
- 2.34 It is evident that some of the least well provided wards for route connectivity are also those with the densest concentrations of population, such as Penydarren and Gurnos. Whilst the ward based figures give a general overview, they cannot be solely relied upon due the nature of the urban geography in certain areas. For example, Bedlinog ward appears to be relatively well connected; however, geographically the green leisure corridors occur principally in the south towards Trelewis, leaving the community of Bedlinog to the north with little provision.

Multifunctional Greenspace

- 2.35 Multifunctional greenspaces contain two or more other clearly defined types of open space. An example of a multifunctional greenspace in Merthyr Vale is shown below, which contains both formal play equipment and a playing field.
- 2.36 There are a number of benefits in providing multifunctional space including informal recreation value and the provision of a meeting place and/or a focal point for communities. It is also important to recognise and take account of the secondary functions of multifunctional green space, particularly the visual benefits and biodiversity benefits which depend on the combination of spaces. Visual benefits are often particularly important within urban areas.
- 2.37 Multifunctional greenspace is a composite type of open space closest to parks and gardens but often containing an outdoor sports pitch and informal play space forming the function of district or local park facility. The quantity standard set at **1.7 Ha per 1000 of population** and has been calculated by combining the standards of outdoor sports pitches and informal play spaces.



Multifunctional Greenspace at Merthyr Vale

2.38 The distribution of multifunctional greenspace throughout the County Borough is shown in the table below.

Ward Area	Population all ages 2011	Number of Sites	Current Provision Ha	Ha per 1,000 pop
Bedlinog	3,277	2	13.38	4.08
Cyfarthfa	6,869	1	2.55	0.37
Dowlais	6,926	5	22.85	3.29
Merthyr Vale	3,831	3	11.69	3.05
Penydarren	5,419	2	10.84	2.00
Treharris	6,356	3	1.26	0.19
Vaynor	3,551	3	1.58	0.44
Gurnos	5,280	2	4.83	0.91
Park	4,326	0	0	0
Town	7,671	1	8.20	1.06
Plymouth	5,296	3	11.98	2.26
Merthyr Tydfil	58,802	25	89.16	1.51

2.39 The accessibility standard for multifunctional greenspace uses the accessibility standard set for parks and gardens (see Public Parks and Gardens standard below), which is a maximum of 720m (a 15 minute walk) to a major multifunctional greenspace or 400m (a 10 minute walk) to a small multifunctional space.

Natural/Semi Natural Greenspace

2.40 Natural/semi natural greenspace is defined as an area of undeveloped land with residual natural habitat or which has been planted or colonised by vegetation and

wildlife. Examples include woodland, wetland and scrubland areas, all with public access and in close proximity to the population. Although natural/semi natural open space plays a key role in wildlife conservation and biodiversity, the recreational opportunities provided by these spaces are also important. It is essential that an appropriate balance between recreational use, biodiversity and conservation is achieved.

2.41 The 'Green Space Toolkit' launched by the Countryside Council for Wales in May 2006 sets a minimum quantity standard for natural/semi natural green space at **2 Ha per 1000 of the population**. This standard has been adopted for this Strategy.

2.42 The distribution of natural/semi natural greenspace throughout the County Borough is shown in the table below.

Ward Area	Population all ages 2011	Nos. of Sites	Current Provision Ha	Ha per 1,000 pop
Bedlinog	3,277	0	0.00	0.00
Cyfarthfa	6,869	4	25.42	3.70
Dowlais	6,926	8	67.04	9.67
Merthyr Vale	3,831	1	4.13	1.07
Penydarren	5,419	1	5.95	1.09
Treharris	6,356	5	45.04	7.08
Vaynor	3,551	2	45.60	12.84
Gurnos	5,280	3	22.86	4.32
Park	4,326	1	24.39	5.63
Town	7,671	5	29.16	3.80
Plymouth	5,296	7	22.55	4.25
Merthyr Tydfil	58,802	38	300.9	5.11

2.43 The accessibility standard for natural and semi-natural green space requires at least one natural and semi-natural green space of 20 Ha or more within 2 km of every home.



Semi Natural Greenspace at Cwm Blacs, Twynrodyn

Outdoor Sports Areas and Pitches

- 2.44 Outdoor sports areas/pitches are large and generally flat areas of grassland used primarily for designated sports. Such spaces are often a focal point of a local community, functioning as a recreational and amenity resource in addition to a formal sports facility. This is particularly true of pitches, which often have a secondary function of a local dog walking and kick about area.
- 2.45 The Strategy only includes outdoor sports areas/pitches that are publicly accessible. As a consequence, bowling greens, golf courses and football/rugby pitches that have restricted access, or are solely used or leased by clubs for the benefit of their members, have been excluded.
- 2.46 The Fields in Trust set a quantity standard for outdoor sports areas/ pitches for an area such as Merthyr Tydfil at **1.15Ha per 1000 of population**. This standard has been adopted for this Strategy.
- 2.47 The distribution of outdoor sports areas/pitches throughout the County Borough is shown in the table below.

Ward Area	Population all ages 2011	Freely accessible sites	Current Provision Ha	Ha per 1000 population
Bedlinog	3,277	4	4.0	1.22
Cyfarthfa	6,869	3	3.2	0.46
Dowlais	6,926	2	1.4	0.20
Merthyr Vale	3,831	3	11.4	2.97
Penydarren	5,419	2	3.6	0.66
Treharris	6,356	2	1.1	0.17
Vaynor	3,551	3	2.9	0.81
Gurnos	5,280	2	3.1	0.58
Park	4,326	0	0	0.00
Town	7,671	3	5.9	0.76
Plymouth	5,296	4	7.2	1.35
Merthyr Tydfil	58,802	28	43.8	0.74

2.48 The accessibility standard for outdoor sports areas/pitches set by The Fields In Trust, and adopted for this Strategy, requires no household in a major housing area to be more than 1.2km away from such a facility.



Sports Pitch in Troedyrhiw, Merthyr Tydfil

Public Parks and Gardens

2.49 Public parks and gardens are typically areas land which are designed, managed and maintained for their specific function. This type of open space includes urban parks and formal gardens that provide opportunities for various informal recreation and community events. Parks often contain a variety of facilities and amenities,

including some that fall within different classifications of open space, e.g. children's play facilities, sport pitches and wildlife areas⁷.

2.50 Parks provide a sense of place and focus for the local community and help to address social inclusion issues within the wider society. For many people, these places are the only way to experience the health and well-being benefits of the outdoors and contact with nature. Lack of time, money or transport may prevent people from travelling far from where they live or work in order to enjoy the outdoors, making the provision of quality, accessible parks and gardens critical to increasing participation.

2.51 As well as the recreational opportunities offered by parks, such large green spaces also provide structural and landscape benefits in otherwise built up areas. Urban parks bring ecological benefits in built up areas by breaking up urban landscapes in an ever more increasing manner. In respect of climate change the tempering effect of parks on the heat island effect in urban areas can be readily realised when excessive temperatures are reached in summer months while modifying winter temperatures also.

2.52 All parks and gardens within the County Borough with the exception of Cyfarthfa Park (which is leased to Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Trust) are managed and maintained by the County Borough Council. Three types of parks and gardens have been identified, namely strategic parks and gardens, major parks and gardens and small local parks and gardens. The current provision of each is set out below.

2.53 There are two strategic parks or gardens:

-  Cyfarthfa Park
-  Parc Taff Bargoed

2.54 There are four major parks or gardens:

-  Aberfan Park
-  Thomastown Park
-  Treharris Park
-  Trelewis Park

2.55 There are three small local parks or gardens:

-  Dowlais Engine House
-  Troedyrhiw Park

⁷ It should be noted that the different types of open space found within a public park or garden are considered to be an integral part of that particular public park or garden, and accordingly, are not counted separately under their respective type of open space.

🌳 St. Tydfil's Hospital Park (former cemetery)



Troedyrhiw Park

2.56 The standard for quantity was reached by comparing provision with similar authorities and adjusting the current provision up by the high number (33%) of consulted respondents who wished to see more Parks and Gardens.

2.57 The minimum quantity standards have been set as follows:

- 🌳 Strategic Public Parks or Gardens: **2.04Ha per 1000 population**
- 🌳 Smaller and Major Public Parks or Gardens: **0.54Ha per 1000 population**

2.58 The distribution of public parks and gardens throughout the County Borough is shown in the table below.

Ward Area	Population of all ages (2011)	Nos of Sites	Current Provision Ha	Ha per 1,000 pop
Bedlinog	3,277	1	29.77	9.08
Cyfarthfa	6,869	0	0.00	0.00
Dowlais	6,926	1	0.57	0.82
Merthyr Vale	3,831	1	2.50	0.65
Penydarren	5,419	0	0.00	0.00
Treharris	6,356	1	7.39	1.16
Vaynor	3,551	0	0.00	0.00
Gurnos	5,280	0	0.00	0.00
Park	4,326	1	61.08	14.11
Town	7,671	2	7.28	0.94
Plymouth	5,296	1	1.03	0.19
Merthyr Tydfil	58,802	9	109.62	1.86

2.59 The following accessibility standards for public parks and gardens have been set based on distance measures set out in the 'Green Space Toolkit' launched by the Countryside Council for Wales (now Natural Resources Wales) in May 2006.

Public Parks and Garden	Distance (as the crow flies)	Estimated walking time (minutes)
Strategic Park or Garden	2km	n/a
Major Park or Garden	720m	15
Small Local Park or Garden	400m	10

3.0 Ward Analysis Overview

3.1 The following section provides an overview of the key open space facts and figures for each ward within the County Borough. This section does not provide any recommendations or draw conclusions; it is purely a presentation of facts⁸. Figure 3 below provides an overview of the distribution of open space within the County Borough. Individual ward maps highlighting different types of existing open spaces within each ward can be found in **Appendix 5**.

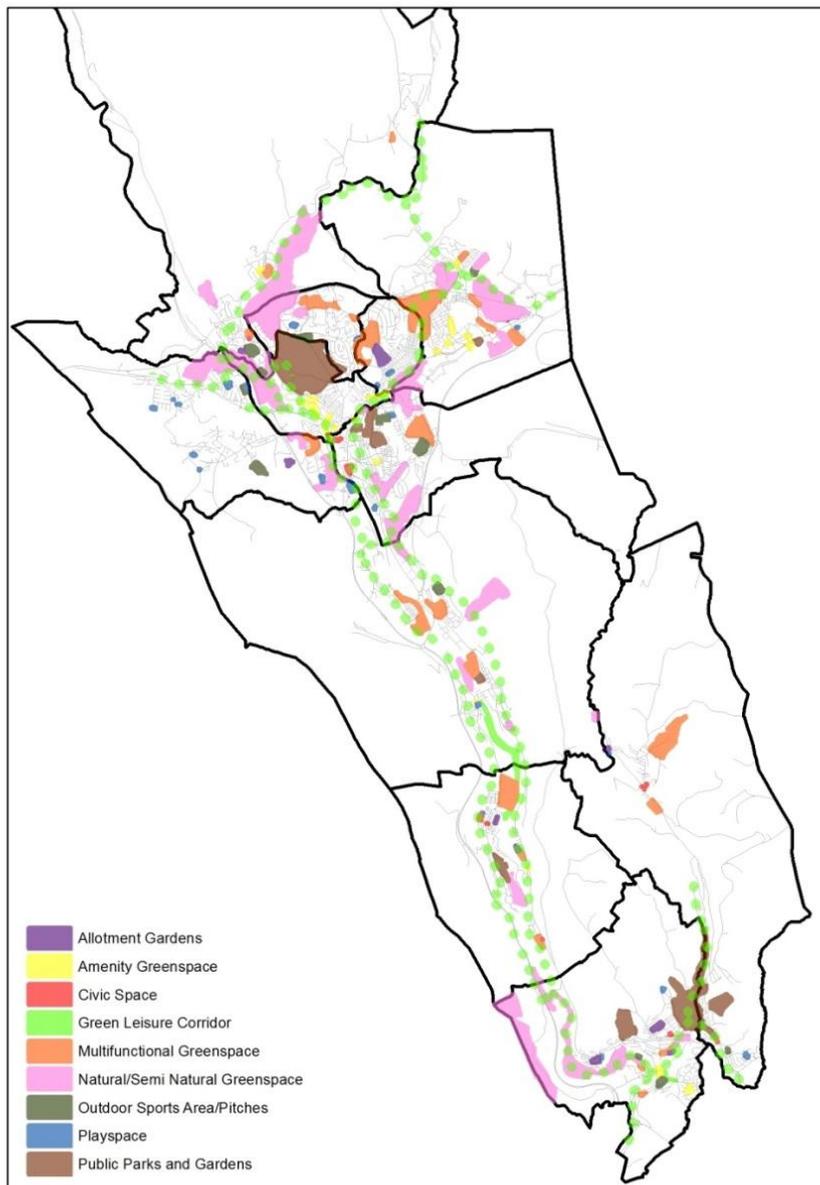


Figure 3: Overview of open space distribution within the County Borough.

⁸ Please refer to ward specific action plans for a more detailed analysis of open space provision within wards and the actions proposed in order to address identified shortfalls.

Bedlinog

- 3.2 There are generally very few open space sites within Bedlinog Ward, although those that do exist are relatively large and complex, incorporating a number of types of open space. The total amount of open space within the ward is 20 hectares with the most abundant type of space being outdoor sports pitches and public parks and gardens. Both types of open space are accessible to approximately 60% of the ward's population.
- 3.3 In terms of under provision within the ward, there is a particular under supply of amenity greenspace and natural/semi natural greenspace.

Cyfarthfa

- 3.4 There are 28 hectares of open space within Cyfarthfa ward, with the most accessible types of space being outdoor sports pitches and public parks and gardens. In terms of access, 100% and 95% of the ward's population are served by these types of open space respectively.
- 3.5 There are six types of open space within Cyfarthfa ward where more than 50% of the ward's population do not have access; these being green leisure corridors, amenity greenspace, civic spaces, allotment and community growing space, multifunctional greenspace and 'natural/semi natural greenspace. The worst case being amenity greenspace, where almost 100% of the ward's population do not have access to this type of open space.

Dowlais

- 3.6 There are 79 hectares of open space within the ward of Dowlais, with the most accessible types of open space being natural/semi natural greenspace and outdoor sports pitches. Both types of open space are accessible to over 90% of the ward's population.
- 3.7 There is no civic space within the ward of Dowlais, resulting in local residents having to access this type of open space outside of the ward and beyond the recognised accessibility distance. Children and young people's play space is also significantly under represented with only 10% of the population having access to this type of open space.

Gurnos

- 3.8 There are 28 hectares of open space within Gurnos ward, with the most accessible spaces being public parks and gardens and outdoor sports pitches. Both types of open space serve 100% of the ward's population.

3.9 Conversely, the least accessible space within the ward is amenity greenspace, with the entire ward population failing to meet the accessibility standard set for this type of open space.

Merthyr Vale

3.10 There are 36 hectares of open space within the ward of Merthyr Vale, with the most accessible space being green leisure corridors. Approximately 95% of the population have access to this type of open space, primarily due to the Taff and Trevithick Trails running through this ward. In addition, approximately 75% of the population are within the recommended accessibility distance to public parks and gardens.

3.11 Despite having good accessibility to some types of open space within the ward, there remains under provision/poor accessibility to outdoor sports pitches, amenity green space and children and young people's play space, natural/semi natural greenspace. Less than 50% of the population have adequate access to each of these types of open space.

Park

3.12 There are 88 hectares of open space within Park ward, with the most accessible type of open space being public parks and gardens and outdoor sports pitches. Both are accessible to 100% of the ward's population.

3.13 There are four types of open space within Park ward that are not accessible to more than 50% of the ward's population; namely allotment and community growing space, which is only accessible to 15% of the ward's population; green leisure corridors, which are only accessible to 35% of the ward's population; natural/semi natural greenspace, which is only accessible to 50% of the ward's population and children and young people's play space, which is only accessible to 20% of the population.

3.14 Park ward is heavily reliant on Cyfarthfa Park to fulfil the majority of its open space requirements.

Penydarren

3.15 There are 14.48 hectares of open space within the ward of Penydarren, with the most accessible types of space being public parks and gardens and multifunctional greenspace. Both types of open space are accessible to 100% of the population.

3.16 Civic space and amenity greenspace perform particularly poorly when compared to the accessibility standards of space per population, with only 10% of the ward's population meeting the standards. There are also no green leisure corridors within the ward.

Plymouth

3.17 There are 32 hectares of open space within Plymouth ward, with the most accessible type of open space being multifunctional greenspace and green leisure corridors. The latter is primarily due to the Taff and Trevithick Trails passing through the ward. Both types of open space are adequately accessed by approximately 90% of the ward's population.

3.18 Despite good access to some types of open space within the ward, there are five types of open space that are under provided within Plymouth ward; namely allotment and community growing space, civic space, amenity greenspace, children and young people's play space and public parks and gardens. Less than 50% of the population have adequate access to each of these types of open space.

Town

3.19 There are 45 hectares of open space within Town ward, with the most accessible type of open space being public parks and gardens, outdoor sports pitches and natural/semi Natural Greenspace. Each of these open spaces is accessible to over 85% of the ward's population.

3.20 There is no provision of allotment and community growing space within the ward, and there is also poor accessibility to children and young people's play space with almost 60% of Town ward's population not having access to this type of space within the recommended distance.

Treharris

3.21 There are 87 hectares of open space within Treharris ward, with the most accessible type of spaces being public parks and gardens and outdoor sports pitches. Both types of open space are accessible to 100% of the ward's population.

3.22 Amenity greenspace is poorly provided for within the ward, with 80% of the population not being within the recommended accessible distance for this type of open space. Parc Taff Bargoed contains some amenity greenspace; however, the amount is not enough to meet the required quantity standard of provision for the ward's population.

3.23 It should be noted that Parc Taff Bargoed provides access to a wide choice of open spaces and is responsible for meeting the majority of its open space requirements within the ward of Treharris.

Vaynor

3.24 There are 51 hectares of open space within the ward of Vaynor, with the most accessible type of space being natural/semi natural greenspace and public parks and gardens. Both types of open space are accessible to over 80% of the ward's population. There is also sufficient access to natural/semi natural greenspace due to the rural location of the ward.

3.25 Vaynor ward has poor access to children's and young people's play space and multifunctional greenspace, with a very low percentage of the ward's population within the recommended accessibility distances. The level of amenity greenspace is also poor, with only 20% of the ward's population within the recommended accessibility distance.

4.0 Implementation and the Way Forward

Delivery

- 4.1 The standards and proposals put forward through this Strategy will help to prioritise actions that will have most benefit for residents and help rectify the Council's most pressing open space needs. It is not expected that all open space standards will be met in every location; there will be areas where this will be unachievable due to the layout of existing development and local geography.
- 4.2 It is fully acknowledged that the Strategy has been prepared at a time of decreasing resources in the public sector, and it is not envisaged that the Strategy's objectives and standards will be achieved, or that all the recommended actions will be delivered, in the short term. On the contrary, it is recognised that this is a medium to long term strategy with many recommended actions only being undertaken when sources of funding become available. Having the Strategy and associated Action Plans in place, will, however, ensure that when funding becomes available, it is directed towards identified areas of need where the greatest benefits can be realised.
- 4.3 It is anticipated that the Strategy will be implemented through a variety of means, including both directly by the Council and through external organisations and their funding sources. Planning obligations secured through Section 106 Agreements and funding secured via the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) will also contribute to the delivery of the Strategy. The level and timing of any contributions will, however, depend on the rate of development coming forward and the ability to secure funding through this process.
- 4.4 Section 106 agreements can either secure funding or directly deliver facilities to assist in mitigating the impact of a development. Any obligation secured through a Section 106 Agreement must be directly related to the development it has been secured on, such as onsite play space or amenity space.
- 4.5 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a levy charged on certain types of new development on a per square metre basis. The money received by the Council can be pooled together to spend on various infrastructure projects across the County Borough. CIL funding has greater flexibility than S106 contributions and could be used to implement larger priority schemes identified in this Strategy, if considered appropriate.
- 4.6 It should also be noted that certain benefits can be realised through actions involving simple changes to management practices which have the potential to be cost neutral or even help realise cost savings. For example, certain areas of open

space would benefit from reduced levels of grass cutting, saving the Council money while improving local biodiversity.

Loss of Open Space

- 4.7 Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan (LDP) *Policy BW16: Protecting / enhancing the network of leisure facilities* sets out the criteria for assessing development proposals which would involve the loss of open space. The policy reads as follows:

The Council will protect and support the enhancement of the County Borough's network of leisure facilities including outdoor play space, public open space and public rights of way in order to ensure their continued use for recreation and amenity. Development proposals that result in the loss of an existing facility will not normally be permitted unless:

- ***Alternative provision of at least equivalent value to the local community can be provided nearby, or***
 - ***It can be demonstrated that existing provision is inappropriate or surplus to the needs of the community and is no longer required, or***
 - ***In the case of commercially based leisure facilities, it can be demonstrated there is no longer a viable leisure use for the facility.***
- 4.8 This Strategy will be used to inform the use of policy BW16, particularly in relation to the first and second criteria. In respect of the latter, a surplus of open space will only exist where it can be demonstrated that the loss of open space in question would neither create a deficiency in terms of the recommended standards (see Section 2) nor remove an opportunity to address an existing deficiency or need identified in this Strategy. No open space should be lost from the Strategy until full consideration has been given to the potential alternative open space uses for the site in order to redress identified shortfalls in that ward.
- 4.9 Where it becomes clear that certain open spaces are not functioning as intended, consideration should initially be given to the making of minor amendments to the open space to improve its functionality or exploring the possibility of changing the use to another type of open space. If neither action proves beneficial, consideration should be given to the disposal of the site. The Strategy should therefore be seen as an aid to assist in the decision making process ensuring that the disposal of assets is made in an informed manner.
- 4.10 There may be occasions where improvements to open space will be delivered through built development on open space. Although this action would result in less open space overall, it would enable higher quality open spaces which better meet the standards and needs identified in this Strategy.

4.11 Certain allocated housing sites within the LDP contain existing open spaces, such as children and young people's play space. The LDP has accounted for this by requiring the replacement provision of play space on site as part of any new housing development (See *LDP Policy AS17: New outdoor sport/ play space*). Given that existing open spaces on allocated housing sites are unlikely to remain in their current form, they have not been included in the Open Space Strategy. Their inclusion will, however, be reconsidered after the housing development has been delivered and as part of a future review to the Strategy.

Relationship between the Open Space Strategy and Action Plans

4.12 The Merthyr Tydfil Open Space Strategy and Action Plans have been produced with the intention that the two documents will be used in conjunction with each other. The Strategy provides an overview of the background work undertaken, identifies locally important open spaces, highlights the baseline position for the provision of open space and sets the key objectives and the standards to be met. Alongside this, the Action Plans provide a more detailed analysis of each of the 11 wards within the County Borough and make recommendations for improvements to priority sites that have the most potential to assist with identified shortfalls. For ease of use, each action plan follows the same format, with the following types of action proposed:

-  Creating and improving access to existing spaces.
-  Introducing new types of open spaces within existing spaces.
-  Making a strategically significant improvement to an open space.
-  Create new open spaces, often provided as part of new built development.
-  Changing management practices.

4.13 Each action plan commences with an introduction to the ward, with a brief description of the ward's profile highlighting the main communities within the ward, and key facts that aid in the understanding of the ward's open space needs, such as the ward population, size in hectares, total hectares of open space within the ward and the current short fall of open space in hectares across all types of open space.

4.14 Using data from the 2011 Census a few of the significant demographics for the ward are highlighted, such as key age groups that are dominant in the ward, any noticeable health statistics and car availability. These statistics were chosen due to their link between the three themes of the Strategy (Health, Economy and the Environment), and the link between these statistics and the likely demand/ use of open space in the ward. For example, it would be anticipated that a ward with a large number of children under the age of 11 years old would require more access to children and young people's play space, than a ward that consisted of more elderly residents.

- 4.15 Initial issues and opportunities are then outlined within the action plans; these primarily derive from the observations made during the site survey work and key statistics identifying need.
- 4.16 The assessment of open space provision within the wards has been made against the standards set out in Section 2 above, relating to:
- ✎ the ability of the wards population to access open space within defined distances,
 - ✎ the quantity of open space, and
 - ✎ the quality of the open space.
- 4.17 In terms of access to open spaces, the Action Plans highlight the percentage of households in a particular ward that have access to each type of open space. Both the Strategy and Action Plans recognise that accessibility shortfalls are best addressed by introducing a given type of open space to an existing open space, rather than a completely new site being sourced. However, where there is insufficient capacity or there is no available existing site, it is recommended that the provision of a new site is sought, if feasible.
- 4.18 It should also be noted that the addition of a new site or the introduction of a new type of open space to an existing site can improve the level of access for the population of a neighbouring ward. In these instances, the additional provision of open space would benefit at least two wards and potentially a greater number of people, making the investment per head of population less and a more economical option. Where this is the case, an action plan's recommendations have highlighted the sites outside of the identified ward.
- 4.19 The quantity of open space within a given ward is measured against the amount of a given type of space (in hectares) per 1000 of population. The Action Plans illustrate, in percentage terms, the current provision for each type of open space within each ward, and recommendations are made to improve the amount of provision. The latter generally involve recommendations to expand existing spaces, only where such work is practically feasible, appropriate and where the budget or funding exists.
- 4.20 The adopted quality standards for each type of open space are discussed in Section 2 above. Although the Action Plans recommend these standards be met, it is recognised that not every site is suitable to accommodate all of the recommended improvements, and that the implementation of these recommendations depends on budgets or external funding being targeted at a site.

- 4.21 The recommended improvements to priority sites put forward by the Action Plans are those which will help address current deficiencies and have the most benefit to the ward. A ward map is provided with each action plan, highlighting the location of each priority site within the ward.
- 4.22 Despite the priority sites being identified as having the most potential for addressing identified shortfalls, there remains scope for other changes to be implemented should specific needs arise or specific funding options dictate the location for funding to be spent. Should this situation arise, this Strategy, the Action Plans and the supporting documents will be able to provide a detailed evidence base to make an informed decision on the type of improvements needed or which type of open space should be provided.

Appendix 1

CABE Guidance: Stages in preparing an open space strategy

Stage 1: Prepare the scoping study and brief	Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ secure elected member support ▪ define the scope and purpose of the strategy ▪ develop the management structure for strategy preparation ▪ determine resources for strategy preparation ▪ review work undertaken to date and the relationship to other plans ▪ secure availability and use of GIS ▪ agree engagement and communication strategy ▪ determine draft vision, initial aims/objectives and timetable 	scoping report, to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ preliminary vision, aims and objectives ▪ work programme ▪ consultation strategy
Stage 2: Review the context	Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ review national, regional and local context ▪ identify key characteristics of the area ▪ review current management and funding of open spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ summary of local open space context
Stage 3: Understand the supply	Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ identify all open spaces ▪ categorise open spaces by function and size ▪ do an on-site audit of open space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ GIS database of open space data and key information
Stage 4: Understand demand and need	Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ take an inclusive approach to understanding demand and need ▪ consider existing demographic and similar information ▪ review existing consultation information and find out how consultations are done ▪ consult and survey to assess demand and need 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ summary of demand and need
Stage 5: Analysis and identify objectives	Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ analysis of supply and demand ▪ set standards for quantity, quality and accessibility ▪ identify deficiency areas and opportunities for redressing them ▪ update themes, aims, objectives and vision in light of analysis ▪ identify priorities for open space improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ draft planning and management policies for open space ▪ local standards for quantity, quality and accessibility
Stage 6: Prepare the strategy and action plan	Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ prepare draft strategy ▪ prepare action plan ▪ consult on both ▪ complete and adopt strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ draft strategy and action plan ▪ public consultation ▪ final strategy

Appendix 2

Identification of Open Spaces

An audit of open spaces within the local authority area, regardless of ownership, was made on inception of the Open Space Strategy. Following the consideration of accessibility (both physical access and ownership/exclusive leasehold restrictions) certain sites, land uses and types of open space were excluded from the Strategy, due to the inflexible nature of current use and/or access limitations.

In terms of access, three categories were identified which were based on the Countryside Council for Wales's document entitled "Providing Accessible Natural Greenspace in Towns Cities" (January 2006). The three categories are as follows:

- **Full Public Access** – Entry to the site is possible without restrictions.
- **Conditional Public Access** – A public right of entry exists which is subject to or affected by one or more restriction or condition. For example, a park with opening hours and gates locked at specific times, but otherwise open to the public.
- **No Public Access** – Either no physical right of access exists or the site is only available to prescribed individuals and organisations. For example, sites with no public access and within private ownership, or site with exclusive use leaseholds.

Sites that have *no public access* are not considered sufficiently accessible to satisfy the needs of the Strategy; sites must either be *fully* or *conditionally* accessible.

Certain land uses or types of open space were also excluded from the Strategy, and the reasons for their exclusion are set out in the table below.

Type of space	Reasons for Exclusion
Church Yards / Cemeteries	Limited alternative uses due to formal set up of current use. Perception of such sites does not appeal to public for general recreational uses.
Steep Valley Sides	Vast area of land with limited use due to gradient. Accessibility issues. Predominantly in private ownership. Predominantly used for upland grazing where gradient allows.

Golf Courses and Tennis Courts	Limited alternative uses due to formal set up of current use. Access often restricted to members. Access restricted to opening hours. Fee often charged for use of facility.
Agricultural Land	Generally in private ownership. Limited opportunities due to existing use.
Common Land	Limited ability for formal uses / management. Commoners associations. Accessibility issues.
School Playing Fields	No consistent approach across schools to availability of facilities to the public. Limited access outside of school hours.

Omitting the above types of open space / land uses from the Strategy does not however detract from the value of these sites to the people of Merthyr Tydfil. While not being included as part of the Strategy at this stage, the location of these sites has been recorded for reference purposes. This will enable opportunities to be taken in future to identify, and address, where possible, factors inhibiting the use of the sites with no public access.

The types of open space taken forward in the Open Space Strategy are identified in the table below. Their respective definitions area also provided.

Type of space	Definition
Allotments	Area of land used (primarily within local authority ownership) solely for the purpose of cultivating food crops for consumption by the occupier or their family. This does not include private gardens or commercial premises.
Amenity Greenspace	Commonly found in residential areas at the end of terraces or between buildings. No facilities provided but are clearly used by local people for amenity purposes.

Civic Spaces	Public areas predominantly of hard landscaping that provide a focus for pedestrian activity, i.e. squares, monuments and memorials.
Green Leisure Corridor	Routes include rivers, cycleways and rights of way and old railway lines, all with public access. Linking different areas within towns and used for walking, cycling or horse riding, or linking towns to their surrounding countryside or country parks. These may link green spaces together, or pass through other defined open spaces, often forming part of a designated trail or strategic path.
Multifunctional play space	An area that contains two or more other clearly defined types of open space. For example, formal play equipment and a playing field.
Natural/semi natural Greenspace	Areas of undeveloped land with residual natural habitat or which have been planted or colonised by vegetation and wildlife, including woodland and wetland areas, with public access and in close proximity to the population.
Outdoor Sports Areas/ Pitches	Large and generally flat areas of grassland used primarily for designated sports, i.e. playing fields; these areas must have open access. Excludes pitches that have restricted access, or solely used by clubs.
Playspace for Children and Young People	Equipped areas providing safe and accessible opportunities for children's play often linked to housing areas. Including adventure playgrounds, designated 'free play' areas, skateboard parks, and designated equipped 'hang out' areas/ teenage shelters). Areas often enclosed. Often includes play equipment and an area of mown grass.
Public Parks and Gardens	Areas of land normally enclosed, designed, constructed, managed and maintained as a public park or garden; often with opening hours.

For each type of open space included in the Strategy, the Council has recorded the location of the open space and its area in hectares. Each open space has been visited and surveyed using a standard pro forma.

Appendix 3

Site Pro Forma

General Site Information

Ward: Date:

Site No: Weather:

Site Name: Surveyed By:

Typology: Additional

Site Access: Does the site have? Full public access Conditional public access No public access

Use: Does the site have a specific/obvious use? Yes No Reason for discontinuing
(If no; do not proceed and give a reason)

Geography

Topography: What kind of topography does the land occupy?
(Include a brief site description)

Boundary

Boundary: Does the site have a clearly defined boundary treatment? Yes No

If yes: what does the boundary consist of and on which side does it occur?

N	<input type="text"/>
S	<input type="text"/>
E	<input type="text"/>
W	<input type="text"/>

Context and land use

Context: In what context is the site located? Urban Rural Industrial Fringe Other

Land use: What are the neighbouring land uses?
(residential, railway, industrial, river, roads, wasteland etc)

N	<input type="text"/>
S	<input type="text"/>
E	<input type="text"/>
W	<input type="text"/>

Vegetation & Water

Vegetation Cover: What kind of vegetation is found on the site?

Cut grass Long grass Hard Water Planted Beds Veteran Trees
Single trees Marsh Scrub Woodland Other (specify)

Vegetation Comments:

Water: Does the site contain any water courses or water bodies? Water body Watercourse No

Facilities

Site facilities: Does the site contain any of the following facilities?

Waste facilities Toilets Artificial surfaces Info. Sign Other
Lighting Seating Refreshments None Play Equip

Facilities comments:

Access

Roads: Is the site in close proximity to roads? Yes No

Crossings: If Yes; is there a safe crossing to enable access to the site? Yes No

Accessibility: Which of the following are barriers to gaining site access?

Steps Fences Rough path Water Stiles Kissing gate
Gates Overgrown Ramps None Other

Accessibility Comments:

Footpaths: Is the site linked to pavements/highway footpaths? Yes No

Strategic cycleway: Is the site in close proximity to a strategic footpath / cycleway? Yes No

Public transport: Is the site within 100 m of a bus stop or bus route? Yes No

Management

Management: What type of management occurs on site?

Grass cutting	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tree work	<input type="checkbox"/>	Water	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ditch clearance	<input type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>
Path clearance	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fence care	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hedge laying	<input type="checkbox"/>	Litter picking	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

Management comments:

Vanadalism: Is there vandalism / anti social behavior on the site? Yes No

Vandalism comments:

Erosion / flooding: Is there evidence of erosion, flooding or subsidence? Yes No **Dogs:** Is there evidence of dog fouling? Yes No

Invasive Species:

Variagated Yellow Archangel	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bracken	<input type="checkbox"/>	Japanese Knotweed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cotoneaster	<input type="checkbox"/>
Giant Hogweed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Himalayan Balsam	<input type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unable to distinguish	<input type="checkbox"/>

Incidental Green space: Does the site form incidental green space? Yes No

Sensory: **Views:** Does the site command expansive views? Yes No **Sense of place:** Does the site have a strong sense of place? Yes No

Cultural / Historic: Any obvious cultural / historic elements to the site? Yes No

Cultural / Historic Comments

Nature: Does the site have the potential to be used for nature conservation purposes? 0 1 2 3
On a scale of:

Other

Confirm Typology: Does the site concur with the allocated typology? Yes No

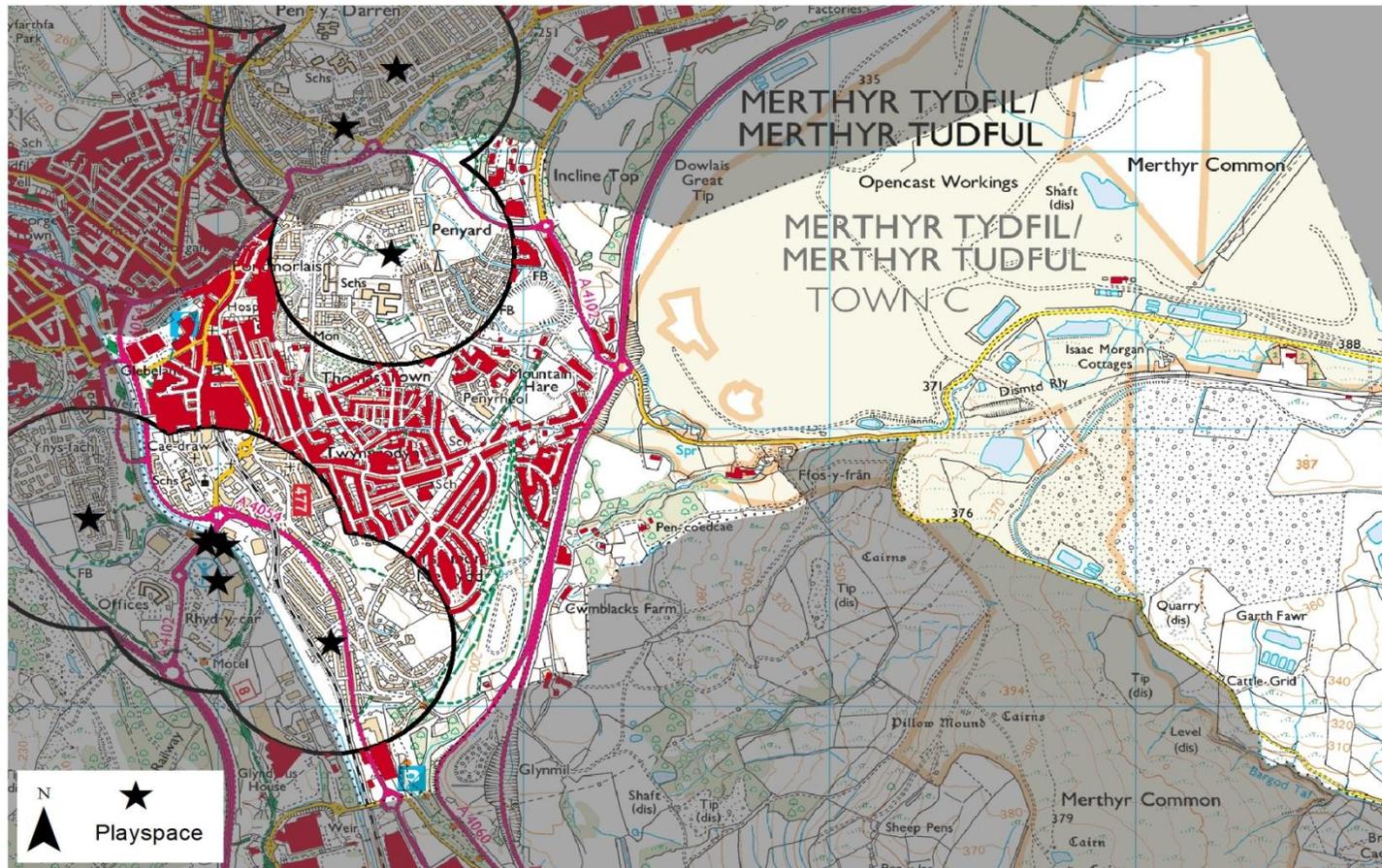
Confirm Typology comments

Overall Impression: As an overall impression of the site would you say that it is improving or declining?  Decline Improvement 
 -2 -1 0 1 2

Comments

Appendix 4

An example of an accessibility map for children and young people's play space in Town Ward



(Note – All properties coloured red fall outside the accessibility standard for children and young people's play space)

Appendix 5

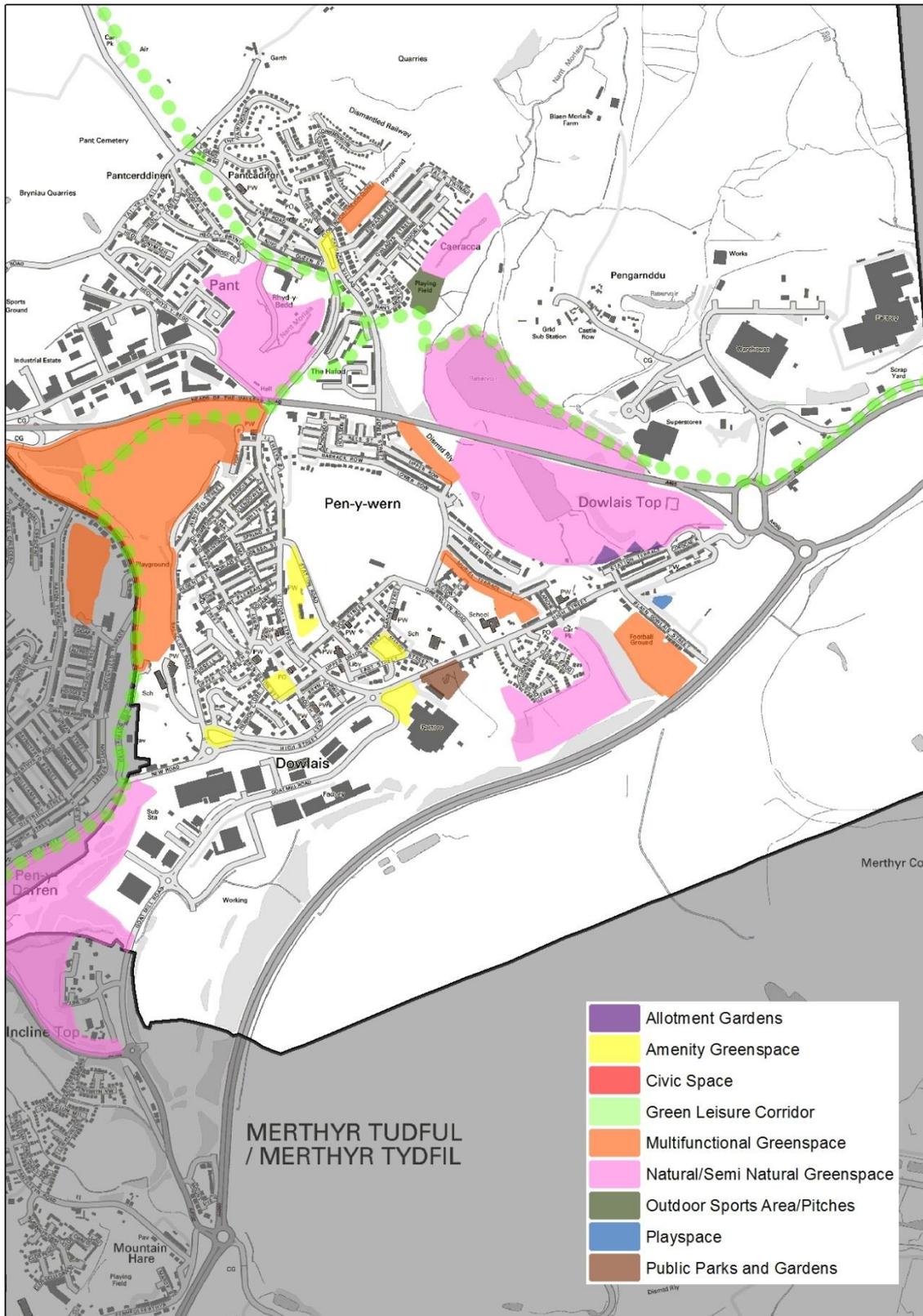
Overview of open space within each ward⁹

Ward maps are provided in the following order:

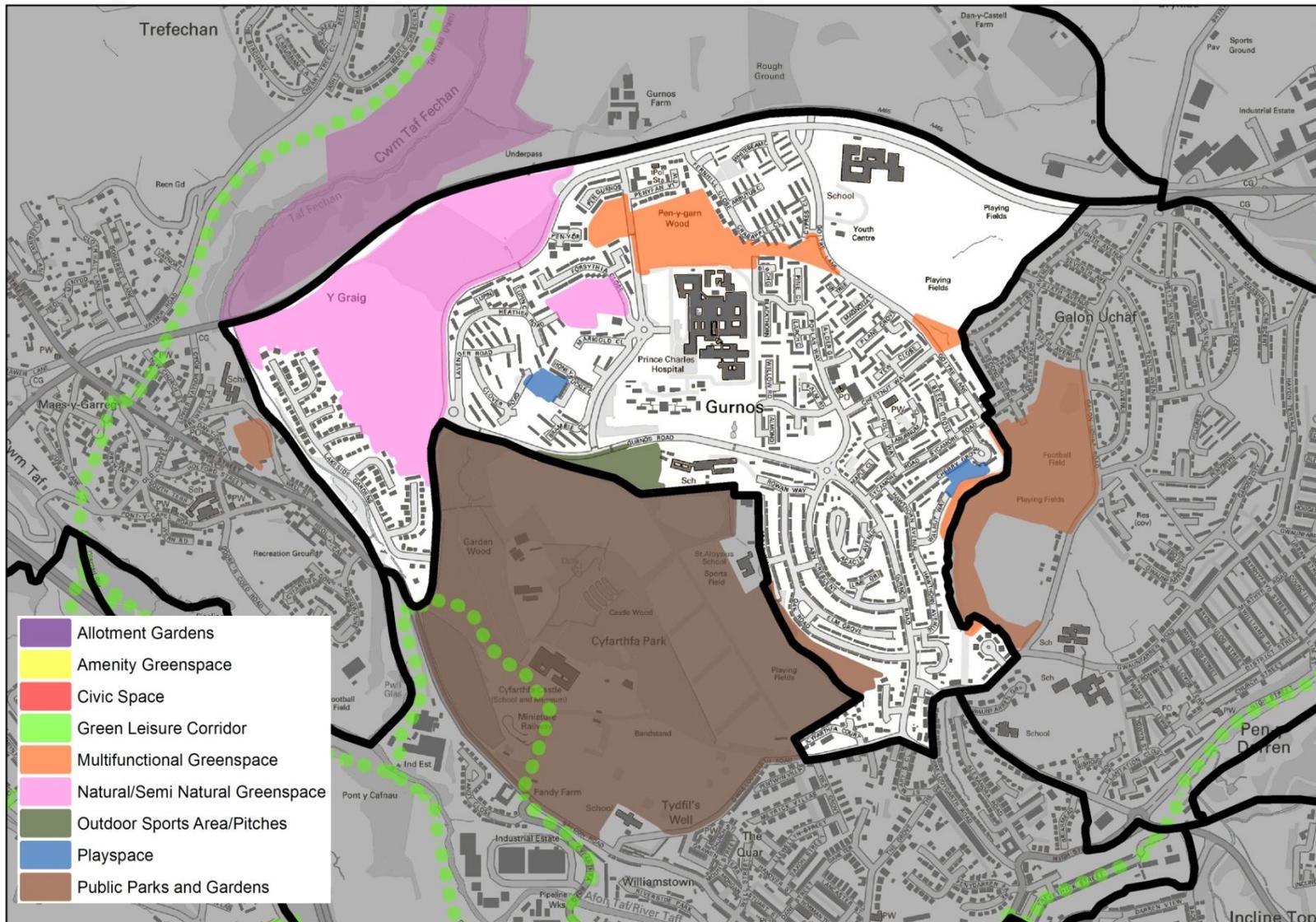
- Bedlinog
- Cyfarthfa
- Dowlais
- Gurnos
- Merthyr Vale
- Park
- Penydarren
- Plymouth
- Town
- Treharris
- Vaynor

⁹ Please note the following maps are Crown copyright and database rights 2015 Ordnance Survey 100025302. You are not permitted to copy, sub-licence, distribute or sell any of this data to third parties in any form.

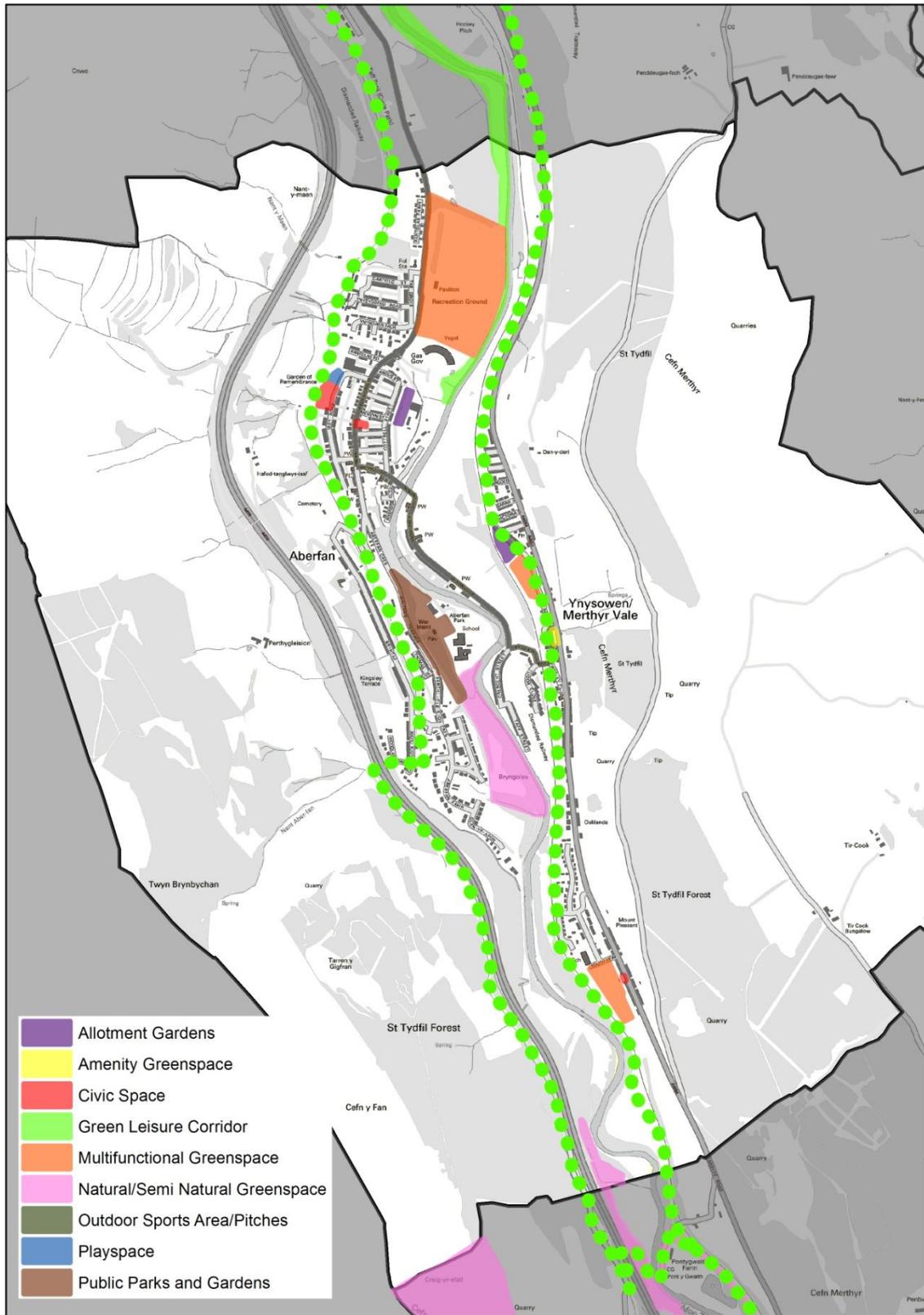
Dowlais Ward



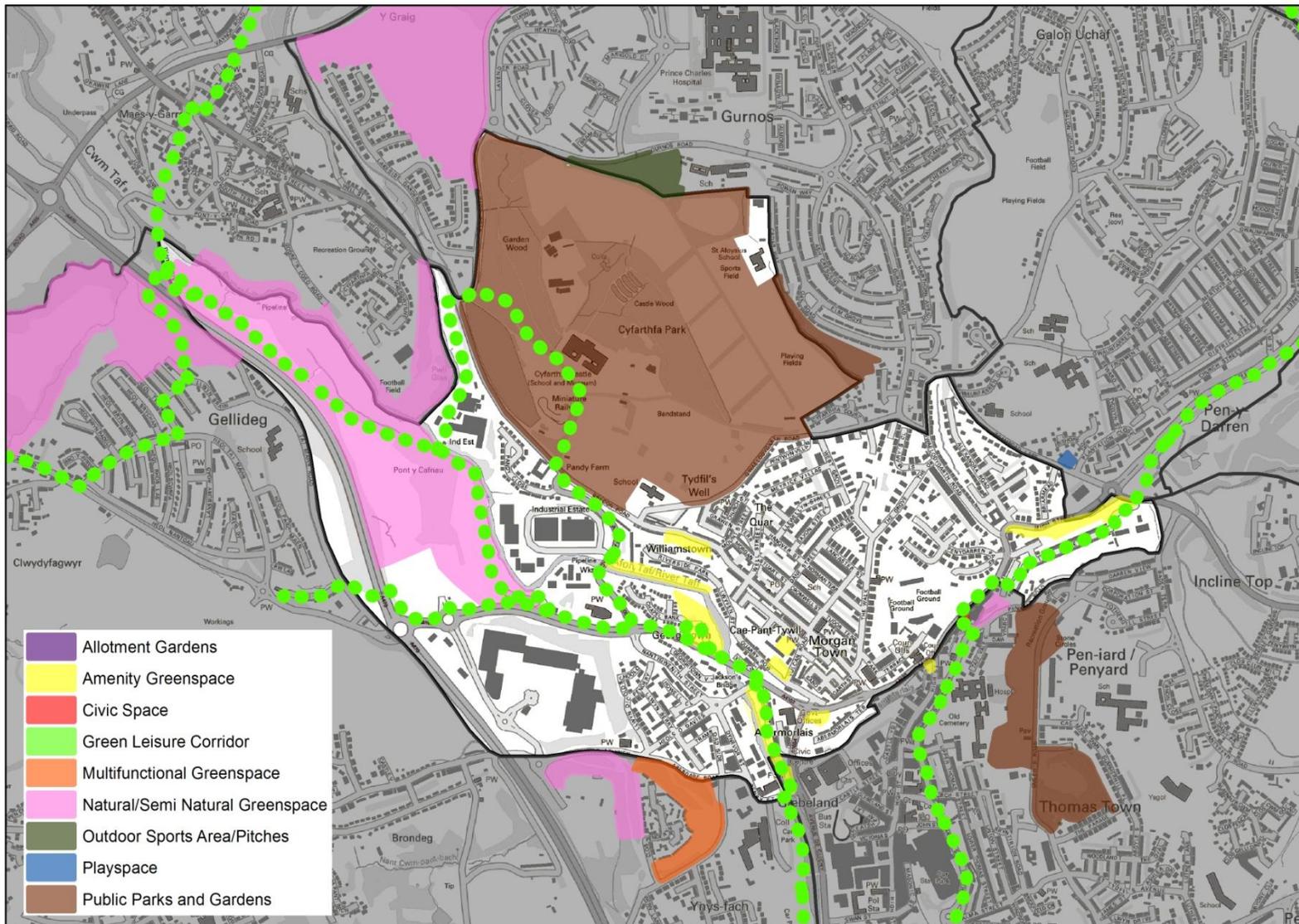
Gurnos Ward



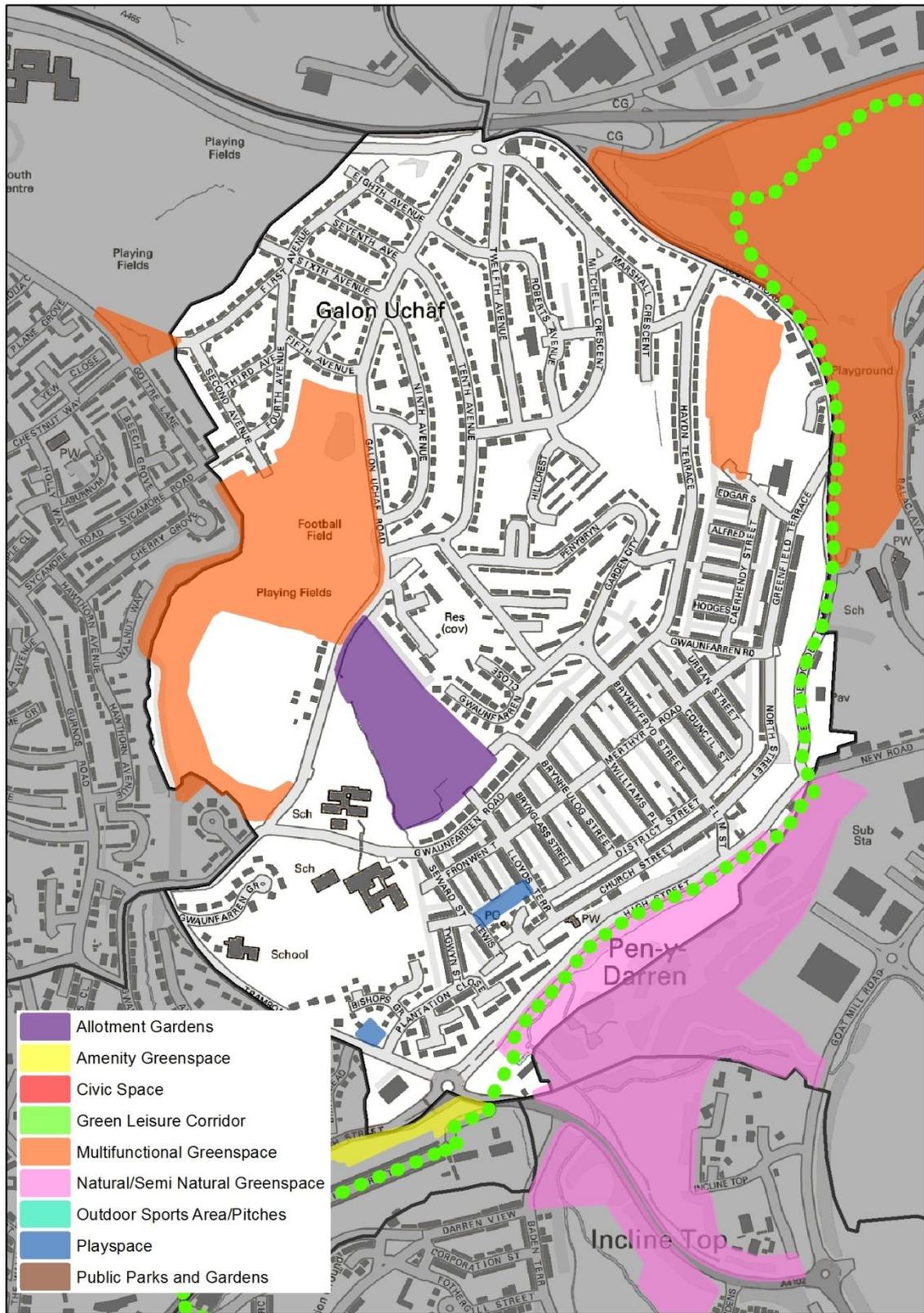
Merthyr Vale Ward



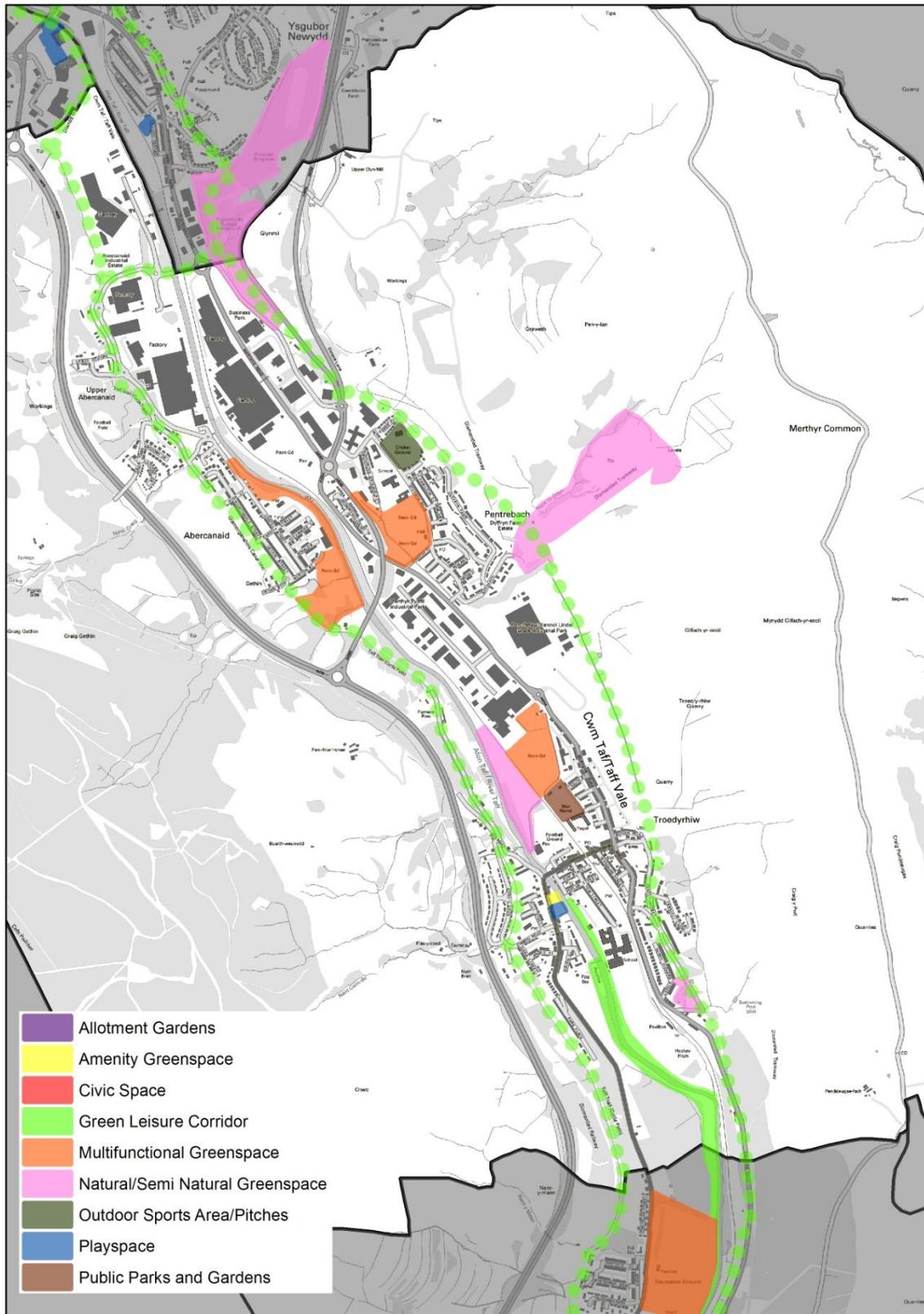
Park Ward



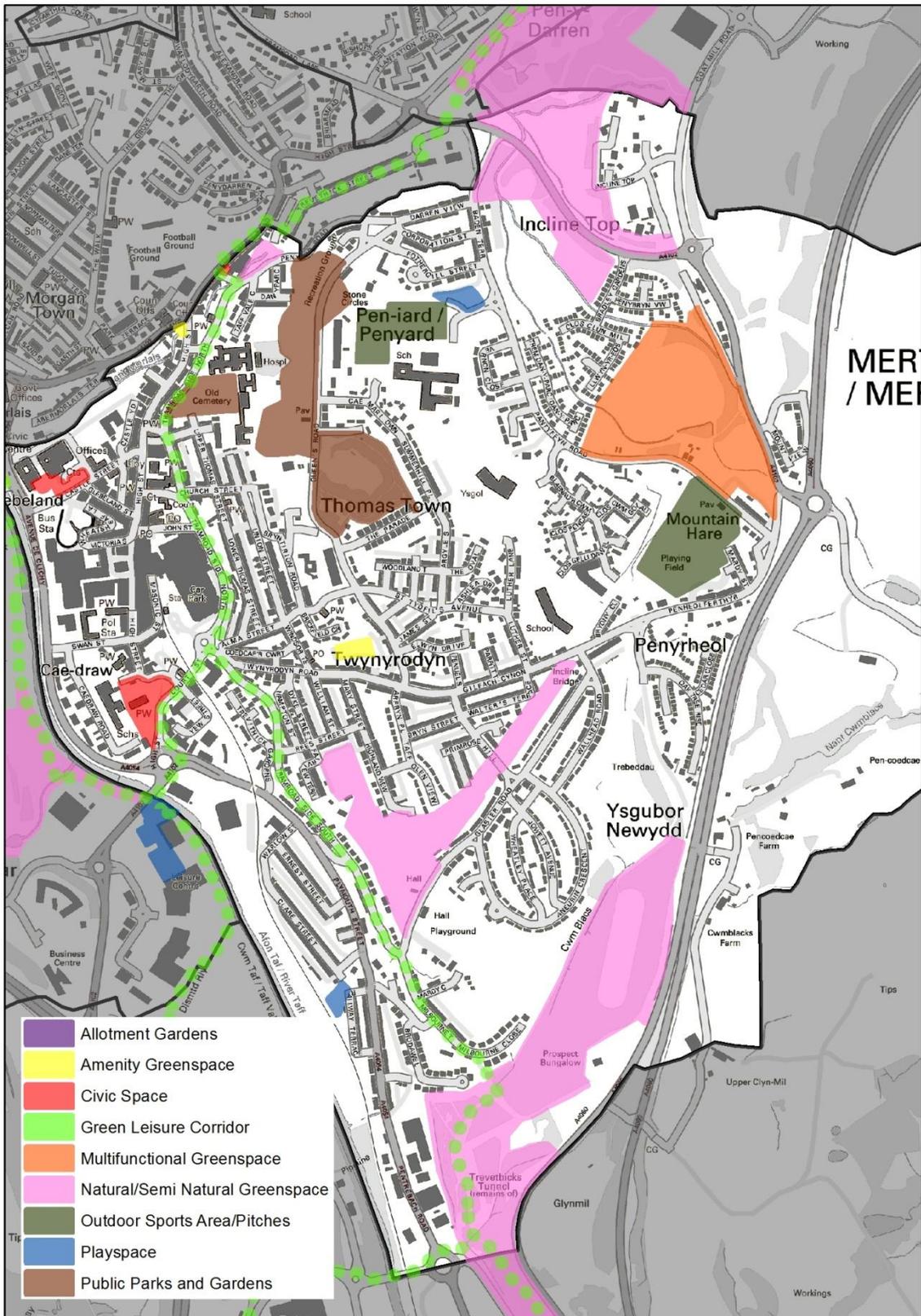
Penydarren Ward



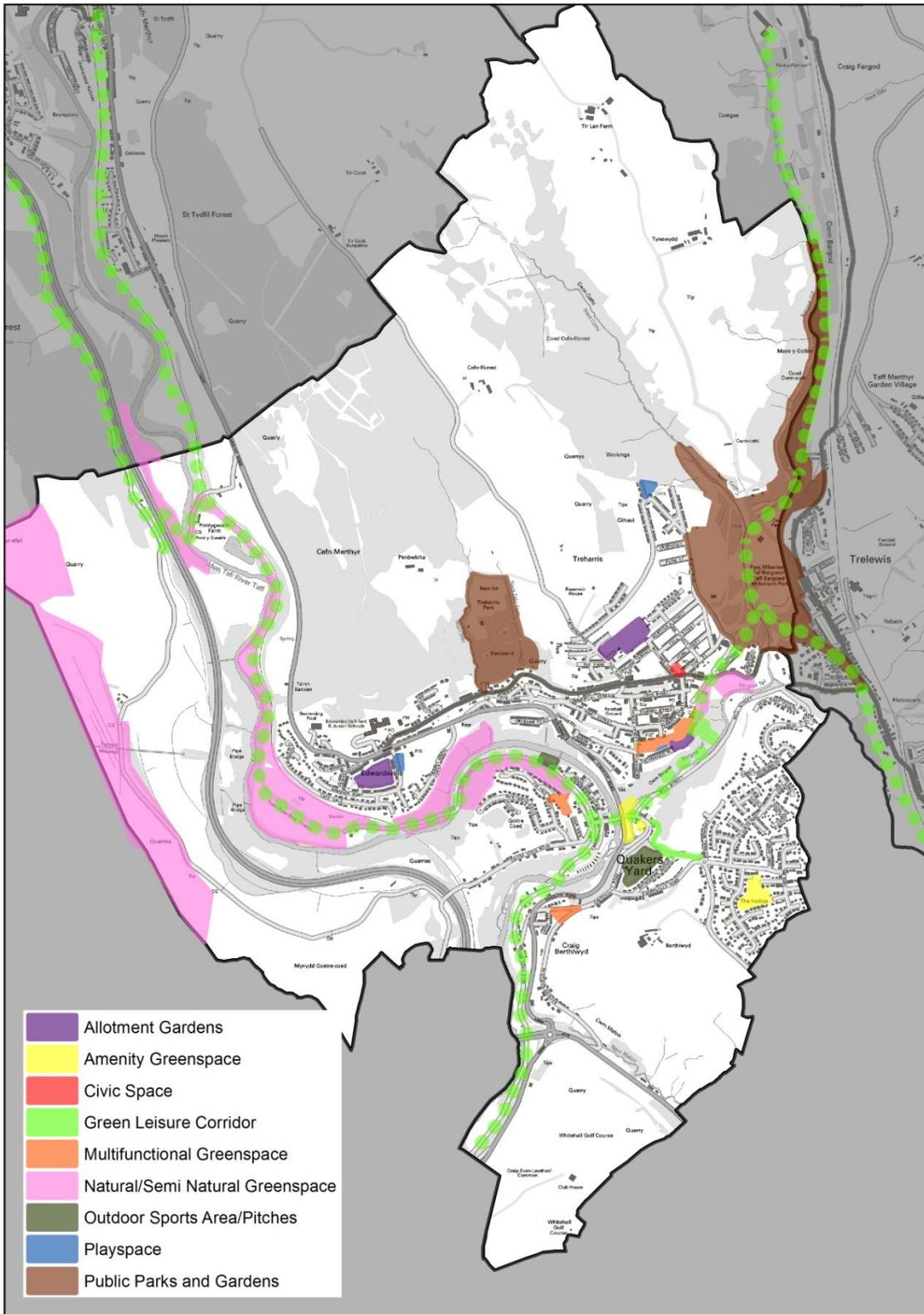
Plymouth Ward



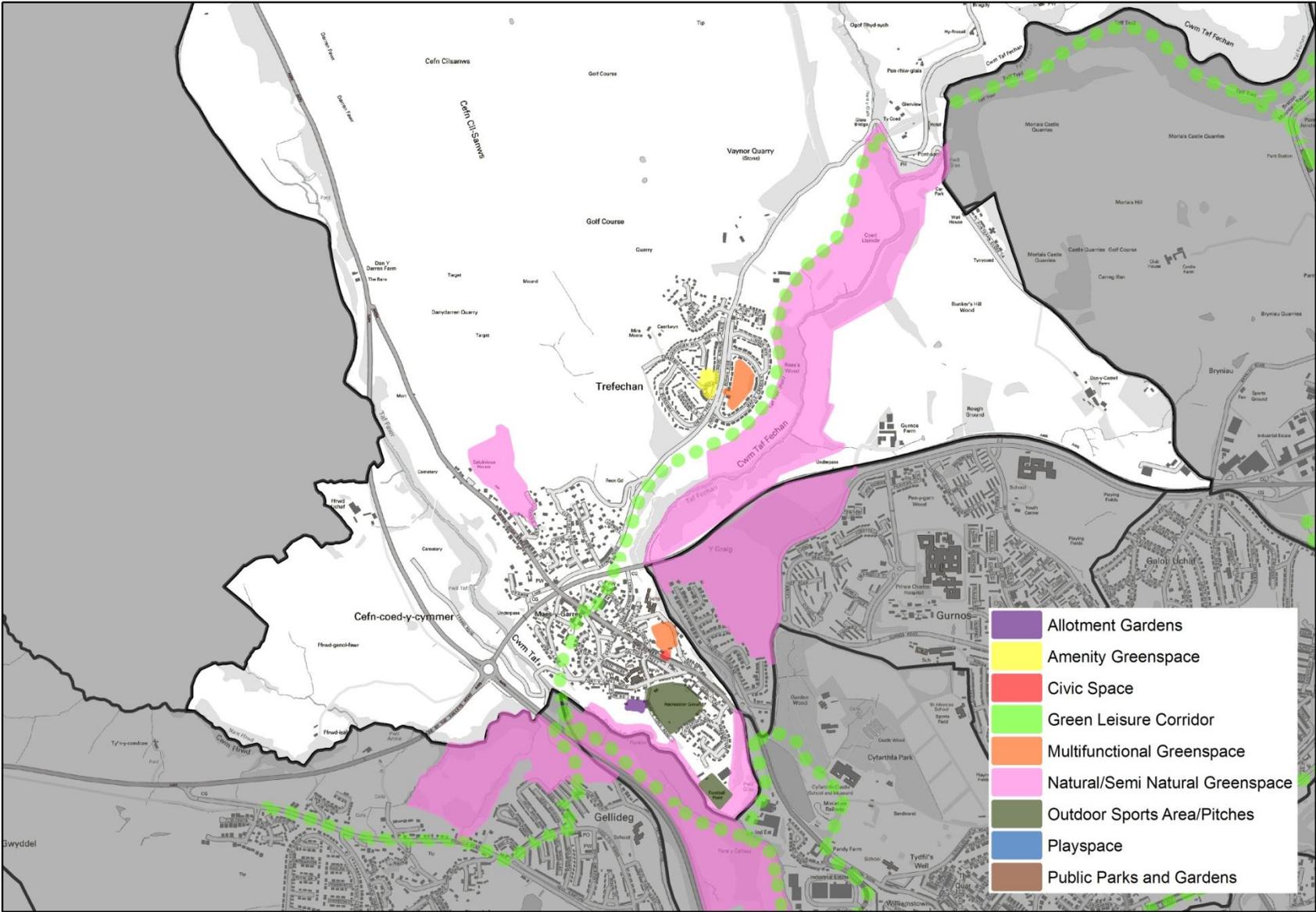
Town Ward



Treharris Ward



Vaynor Ward



Appendix 6

Summary of Comments Received on the Draft Open Space Strategy Consultation with Council Response in Each Case

Representor:	Keep Wales Tidy
Issue:	Clarification is sought for the boundary of Dowlais Community Park; there appeared to be confusion over where the boundary should be.
Council Response:	The definition of the site boundary was made by incorporating only the accessible areas of the open space. Excluded were the community centre and the steep embankment falling away to the north, west and south.
Recommended changes:	None.

Representor:	Natural Resources Wales
Issue:	Clarification required over why only Local Authority owned space is represented within the Strategy and certain types of spaces such as cemeteries have been excluded.
Council Response:	The Strategy includes both Local Authority and non-Local Authority owned spaces which were selected using unmitigated access criteria (see P36 of the Strategy). The Strategy should reflect local conditions and attitudes to open spaces. Cemeteries locally do not function as open spaces in the local context in the manner that they might for some larger urban areas or inner city areas. Open spaces were selected with proximity to existing population centres and the degree of access afforded.
Recommended changes:	None.

Representor: Natural Resources Wales

Issue: Clarification is sought for the reasons for using the 2006 standard for Accessible Greenspace and not the NRW current standard.

Council Response: At the time of preparing local standards for accessibility the NRW Standard was not available. The use of updated standards will be incorporated as part of the four year review of the Open Space Strategy.

Recommended changes: None.

Representor: Natural Resources Wales

Issue: The Strategy is commended for its detailed, standard based approach which could be used as a model for other local authorities seeking to adopt a strategic approach to the provision of green space.

Council Response: Supportive comments from Natural Resources are welcomed

Recommended changes: None.

Representor: Natural Resources Wales

Issue: Consider future revisions to include land owned by other public bodies or charitable organisations where the public could be expected to be granted access.

Council Response: Larger open spaces in the custody of other public bodies were considered at an early stage but were discounted at the time because they were insufficiently close to centres of population and as such were concluded to be inaccessible.

Recommended changes: None.

Representor: Natural Resources Wales

Issue: Need to indicate potential links between open spaces and linear/green corridors and potential green / safe / off road footpaths / cycle links.

Council Response: This was considered during the course of the Strategy but was discounted at that stage as it was outside the scope of the Strategy. It was however considered to be a secondary product that could be developed after the adoption of the Strategy.

Recommended changes: None.

Representor: Natural Resources Wales

Issue: Reference could be made to the Well Being of Future Generations Act.

Council Response: Reference to The Well Being of Future Generations Act can be found within the Policy Review document which is referred to within the Open Space Strategy and is available on request.

Recommended changes: None.

Representor: Natural Resources Wales

Issue: Care is needed with regard to building on open space and changes to the open space should be considered as a first option.

Council Response: The Council acknowledges concern over the development of open space, however this is regarded as a last resort and the need to improve existing space is considered to be the first priority. Where there is a surfeit of a particular type of open space there may be a case for disposing of one site in favour of compensating with another site which might meet the demand more appropriately for example in terms of geographic access.

Recommended changes: None.

Representor: Natural Resources Wales

Issue: Suggest an Executive Summary of the Strategy could be useful, capturing the salient messages from each section.

Council Response: The Council acknowledges the benefits of an Executive Summary and recommends that one be made available alongside the Open Space Strategy.

Recommended changes: Whilst no changes are recommended to the Strategy, an executive summary has been prepared which will be made available alongside the Strategy.

Representor: Natural Resources Wales

Issue: It would be worth looking at a strategic view for targeting less advantageous wards with a greater need for action over others for certain types of provision.

Council Response: The Action Plans have been designed to address shortfalls of certain types of open space in all wards by identifying priority sites. The statistical information within the Background Papers provides the evidence of need. It is quite clear which wards are in the greatest need although the issue is not just about accessibility and quantity but also quality. Prioritisation of sites aims to address this through working with communities on each priority site in accord with Green Flag guidelines. Sites within less advantaged wards can be given greater priority through targeted resources and the appropriateness of this approach should be considered further in collaboration with the Public Service Board as part of the priorities for the forthcoming Local Wellbeing Plan.

Recommended changes: None.

- Representor:** Natural Resources Wales
- Issue:** Concern that the references to mitigation and adaption to climate change referred to as functions of open space are not adequately covered within the main body of the document text.
- Council Response:** While the issues of a changing climate are recognised in the body of the text, this was not an overriding priority in the Strategy. It is however recognised that there are opportunities to expand on this in order to explain the benefits of open space within this context.
- Recommended changes:** Add the following sentences at the end of paragraph 1.7 of the Open Space Strategy to read: **In relation to the latter, trees and vegetation can reduce the impacts of climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. They can also ameliorate the warming effects of climate change through evapotranspiration and direct shading, and help cope with the increased frequency of sudden heavy rainfall by reducing runoff and increasing rainfall capture.**
-

- Representor:** Natural Resources Wales
- Issue:** Consider placing the four major parks and gardens into the same standard as strategic parks and gardens, and clarify how/where this would be achieved and whether it is an achievable standard.
- Council Response:** It is not considered appropriate to apply the strategic parks and garden standard to the four major parks and gardens because they serve different open space needs. The former serve the needs of the County Borough's residents as well as wider adjacent areas and visitors from further afield, while the latter primarily serve the needs of the County Borough's residents in a similar way to local parks and gardens. It is therefore more appropriate to apply the smaller parks and gardens standard to the four major parks and gardens, which was indeed the case in calculating the current quantity provision of public parks and gardens at ward level. The Open Space Strategy should be amended to clarify the minimum quantity standard applied to major parks and gardens.
- Recommended changes:** Amend paragraph 2.57 of the Open Space Strategy to read: The minimum quantity standards have been set as follows:
- Strategic Public Parks or Gardens: **2.04Ha per 1000 population**
 - Smaller **and Major** Public Parks or Gardens: **0.54Ha per 1000 population**
-

Representor: Natural Resources Wales

Issue: The final sentence of paragraph 3.4 should read 'respectively not respectfully'.

Council Response: The error is acknowledged and a minor amendment to the text is required.

Recommended changes: Amend final sentence of paragraph 3.4 of the Open Space Strategy to read: In terms of access, 100% and 95% of the ward's population are served by these types of open space ~~respectfully~~ **respectively**.

Representor: Natural Resources Wales

Issue: Old mineral workings should not be excluded.

Council Response: Old mineral workings have not been excluded from the Open Space Strategy, there are a number of examples of sites that were formerly worked for minerals or subsequently reclaimed. Sites were only excluded where they did not meet the access criteria.

Recommended changes: None.

Representor: Cadw

Issue: A number of Scheduled Ancient Monuments fall within open spaces and we would welcome their inclusion within the Open Spaces Strategy, and the provision of public access to them.

Council Response: All open spaces within the Strategy were included because they are afforded access; therefore all SAMs found within open spaces can be accessed. The issue of interpretation being expanded is one that can only be addressed through Open Space Quality which is being considered through the formation of Draft Management Frameworks for priority sites which includes interpretation as a component.

Recommended changes: None.

Representor: Cadw

Issue: It is recommended that MTCBC ensures that they are fully aware of designated assets within each open space.

Council Response: All data concerning open space is stored on a layer on the GIS. Mapped data concerning designated assets and SAMs is also available as a GIS layer to consult and interrogate each site. This data represents an up-to-date historic environment record, which includes regular updates from GGAT. The Draft Management Frameworks utilise this data when suggesting design changes to the manner in which a site is managed. It is therefore highly unlikely that we would not be aware of such assets.

Recommended changes: None.

Representor: Cadw

Issue: It is recommended that MTCBC consults Cadw regarding the management of individual SAMs to ensure public access is balanced with their conservation.

Council Response: Noted.

Recommended changes: None.

Representor: Cadw

Issue: With regard to historic parks and gardens, Cyfarthfa Castle and part of the registered site at Aberfan fall within the scope of the Open Space Strategy. Cadw would welcome further communication when considering any changes to elements of historic parks and gardens, such as trees and planting, historic structures and features, and layout.

Council Response: There are no current plans to make changes to historic parks and gardens under the Open Space Strategy although any future changes would be carried out in consultation with Cadw.

Recommended changes: None.

Representor: Friends of Saron

Issue: Request to include 'churchyards and cemeteries' as open spaces within the Open Space Strategy.

Council Response: The majority of cemeteries are still active and therefore would not fit with the perception of them being used for recreation. The older sites i.e. the smaller chapel graveyards such as Saron are unlikely ever to become under threat from development and it is more a case of encouraging and supporting an active programme of management for cultural and biodiversity reasons to ensure their future survival.

Recommended changes: None.

Representor: Merthyr Valleys Homes

Issue: Request to exclude eastern and western portions of the following site from the Strategy: ID168 Rear of Prince Charles Hospital.

Council Response: The proposed excluded portions form part of a strategic group of spaces linked together to form a linear open space. Amendment to exclude these portions would reduce the significance of the space and deplete the Gurnos ward further thereby affecting both quantity of open space and more importantly the quality with which the space could strategically connect across the northern part of the ward.

Recommended changes: None.

Representor: Merthyr Valleys Homes

Issue: Request to amend boundaries to ID66 Gellideg Play Space.

Council Response: The amendment to this space is reasonable as planning permission has been recently granted for development on part of the space.

Recommended changes: Amend the Cyfarthfa Action Plan and Ward Map to reflect the amended boundary.

Representor: Merthyr Valleys Homes

Issue: Request to amend boundaries to ID117 Pant Hollow.

Council Response: The amendment to this space can be made but only in accordance with the existing defined open space currently designated within the Local Development Plan.

Recommended changes: Amend the Dowlais Action Plan and Ward Map to reflect the amended boundary.

Representor: Merthyr Valleys Homes

Issue: Request to remove ID270 Forsythia Close.

Council Response: The loss of this space will result in a loss of Natural Semi Natural Greenspace from the Gurnos ward which will worsen the already poor supply which currently falls below the standard set therefore removal cannot be justified.

Recommended changes: None.

Representor: South and West Wales Wildlife Trust

Issue: Request for the creation of at least one Local Nature Reserve in each ward on the basis that one priority site from each ward is considered as an LNR.

Council Response: The Council will explore the possibility of creating Local Nature Reserves on the sites suggested; this will be subject to the outcome of the prioritised needs identified within each Action Plan. Each space will present appropriate opportunities where conditions allow for LNR creation on a case by case basis and will be considered for inclusion as an LNR.

Recommended changes: None.