

Civic spaces

Introduction and definition

- 12.1 Civic spaces include civic and market squares and other hard surfaced community areas designed for pedestrians with the primary purpose of providing a setting for civic buildings, public demonstrations and community events.

Figure 12.1 – Hoddesdon Town Centre (Site ID 178)



Context

- 12.2 Civic spaces can be important open space in some areas particularly in urban areas and town centres.
- 12.3 As PPG17 states: *“the purpose of civic spaces, mainly in town and city centres, is to provide a setting for civic buildings, and opportunities for open air markets, demonstrations and civic events. They are normally provided on an opportunistic and urban design led basis. Accordingly it is for planning authorities to promote urban design frameworks for their town and city centre areas”.*
- 12.4 Civic spaces need to be considered as an important asset as an area of open space for the residents in towns and settlements across Broxbourne borough. It is the only open space type that is not considered as green space.
- 12.5 Consultation undertaken as part of the study highlighted the following key issues:
- 33% of respondents from the household survey stated that they visit a civic space site at least once a month

- however only a small proportion of respondents to the household survey (5%) identified this type of open space as the type they use most frequently. This does not necessarily suggest that residents do not use these open spaces, just that they visit other types on a more frequent basis.

Quantity of existing provision

12.6 A total of four civic space sites have been identified in the borough. These are:

- Hoddesdon Town Centre (Site ID 178)
- Newgatestreet Road (Site ID 318)
- Old Pond (Site ID 326)
- Waltham Cross Town Centre (Site ID 547)

12.7 There are no definitive national or local standards for civic spaces.

12.8 Feedback from the household survey indicates that the majority of respondents (63%) consider there to be adequate civic space provision in the borough, although 20% stated that there is insufficient provision. A significant percentage of respondents indicated that they had ‘no opinion’ on civic space provision.

Setting provision standards – quantity

12.9 It is not possible to make a reasoned judgement in setting provision standards for civic spaces across the local authority area due to the limited amount of civic space provision. Furthermore, PPG17 suggests that it is not realistic to set a quantity standard for civic spaces.

Quantity standard (see Appendices J and K)

12.10 It is recommended that no local quantity standard be set. However, PPG17 adds that it is desirable for planning authorities to promote urban design frameworks for their towns and city centres, and where appropriate the Council should seek to achieve this.

Quality of existing provision

12.11 The quality of each site has been assessed through a detailed site visit. It is important to note that the quality score represents a snapshot in time and records only the quality of the site at the time of the site visit. The quality of civic spaces across the borough is set out in Table 12.1 below. It has to be noted that Waltham Cross Town Centre was not quality assessed due to major refurbishments taking place at the time of site visits.

Table 12.1 Quality of civic spaces across Broxbourne borough

Analysis area	Name of sites	Quality scores (%)
AA1 (Waltham Cross & Theobalds)	Waltham Cross Town Centre	N/A
AA2 (Cheshunt Central & Cheshunt)	Old Pond	76

Analysis area	Name of sites	Quality scores (%)
North)		
AA3 (Goffs Oak, Bury Green, Rosedale & Flamstead End)	Newsgatestreet Road	64
AA4 (Hoddesdon North & Rye Park)	N/A	N/A
AA5 (Hoddesdon Town)	Hoddesdon Town Centre	71
AA6 (Wormley, Turnford & Broxbourne)	N/A	N/A

12.12 The key issues emerging from Table 12.1 and consultations relating to the quality of provision of civic spaces include:

- consultation from the household survey indicates a large proportion of respondents (65%) view civic spaces to be of average quality. 25% of respondents rate this typology as being of good quality and the remaining 10% poor
- all three sites have relatively high quality scores ranging from 64% through to 76%. This is reflective of the results from the household survey.

Setting provision standards – quality

12.13 In setting local standards for civic spaces, it is only appropriate to set a quality standard, taking into account any national or local standards. Full details of the consultation and justifications for the recommended local standard are provided within Appendix K. The recommended local standard, derived directly from consultation across Broxbourne borough has been summarised overleaf.

Quality standard (see Appendix K)

Recommended standard	
Local consultation, national guidance and best practice suggest that the following features are essential and desirable to local residents:	
<p>Essential features:</p> <p>Clean and well maintained</p> <p>Safe and secure</p> <p>Seating</p> <p>Access to toilets</p> <p>Plants and trees</p>	<p>Desirable features:</p> <p>Events</p> <p>Access to refreshments</p>
Justification	
<p>Consultation with residents, key stakeholders and council officers resulted in the recommendation of the above standards. It is important that any new provision meets this local quality standard that incorporates all Council visions and public aspirations. Ultimately sites need to be safe and well maintained to encourage usage. In addition, where appropriate, the hosting of events at civic space sites, as well as the provision of seating and access to refreshments will promote usage.</p>	

Accessibility of existing provision

- 12.14 Responses to the household survey showed that more people would expect to walk (48%) to a civic space sites as opposed to drive (34%), with the 75th percentile threshold being 20 minutes. This suggests that civic spaces are believed to be generally accessible on foot.
- 12.15 Site assessment ratings shows that all three civic spaces are good or average in terms of transport links and general site access.

Setting provision standards – accessibility

- 12.16 There is no realistic requirement to set catchments for such an open space typology as they are limited in their scope to provide additional provision. Civic spaces tend to be located in town or local centres or indeed opportunity led through the development if civic or large buildings. This is particularly the case in the more rural areas of the borough, where there would be little expectation to find civic spaces located in such areas.

Accessibility standard (see Appendix L)

Recommended standard
PPG17 states that there is no realistic requirement to set catchments for such a typology as it cannot be easily influenced through planning policy and implementation. However, it is recommended that the Council consider the accessibility of civic spaces as a standard that can be used for broad planning need.

Summary and recommendations

- 12.17 There are only three civic spaces across the Broxbourne borough, located in three of the six analysis areas. The nature of this typology means that they are very specific to their locality.
- 12.18 Whilst no local quantity or accessibility standard has been set, careful consideration should be given when new developments are designed to the opportunity for providing additional civic spaces.
- 12.19 A quality standard has been set as a benchmark for new areas of civic space and the maintenance of existing areas across the borough.

CIV 1	The Council should work in partnership with other providers to improve and maintain the quality of civic spaces across the borough in line with the quality standard and to ensure civic spaces provide a value community resource.
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