

Thorpe Neighbourhood Plan

Green and Blue Infrastructure Note

Introduction

Access to high quality open spaces and leisure facilities can make an important contribution to health and wellbeing for both individuals and wider communities. Open spaces are used for recreation, relaxation and social interaction and are an important resource for the community. Open spaces are also an important part of the wider Green Infrastructure network which supports biodiversity and wildlife habitats.

The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan includes an ambition to better connect people with the environment to improve health and well-being. It states:

"Green and blue spaces in our built environment are essential to health and happiness. Yet urban greenspace is unequally distributed. The provision of more and better quality green infrastructure including urban trees, will make towns and cities attractive places to live and work, and bring about key long-term improvements in people's health. Better green infrastructure will promote local social interaction and help to develop strong community networks through participation and shared achievements."

Policy Context

Green infrastructure is defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as:

"A network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities"

The NPPF reiterates the ambitions in the 25 Year Environment Plan in a number of policies intended to promote healthy and safe communities:

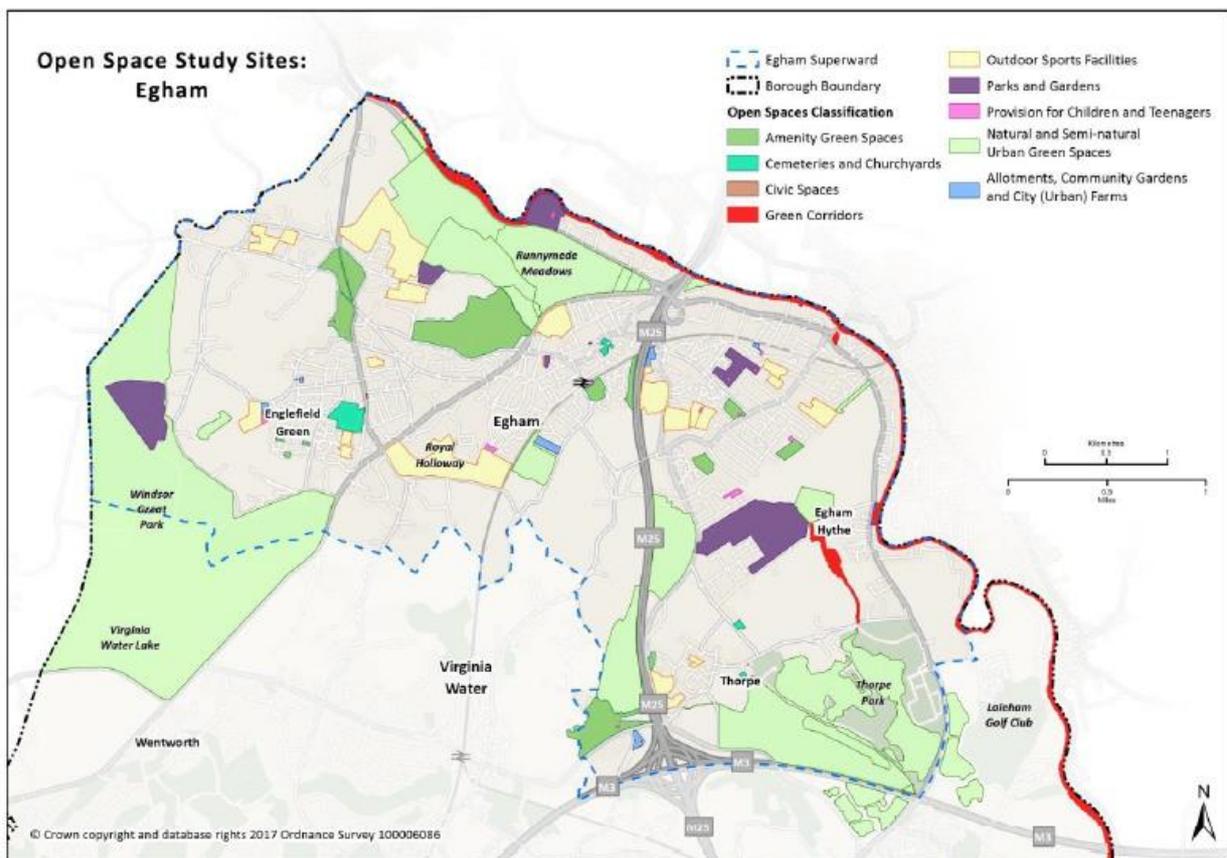
- §91(c) *"enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs – for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling."*
- §92. Confirms that planning policies should plan positively to "provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs...to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments"
- §96. Also confirms that "access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities" and that "planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessment of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits and surpluses) and opportunities for new provision."

At the local level, there are a range of policies in the emerging Runnymede 2030 Local Plan that are relevant in the context of Thorpe:

- EE9: Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Nature Conservation
- EE10: Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
- EE11: Green Infrastructure
- EE12: Blue Infrastructure

Runnymede Open Space Study¹

The following classifications of open space form part of the Borough’s Green Infrastructure network that relate to Thorpe.



Extract from Runnymede Open Space Study:
Figure 48. Map showing all open spaces in the Egham Superward.

¹ Runnymede 2035 Open Space Study (Feb 2017) [Link](#)

The Open Space Study (OSS) assesses the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities throughout the Borough, the level of current provision, identifies deficits in provision, and established opportunities for new provision.

The OSS draws a number of general conclusions including:

- All areas of the Borough should provide, where practicable, outdoor sports facility provision, play provision and allotments to meet future need over the plan period up to 2035
- There is under provision for children and teenagers in all 'superwards'

The assessment of Thorpe is included in a wider assessment of the Egham Superward (as indicated above). While Thorpe has extensive blue infrastructure assets, it has become largely severed from extensive areas of urban greenspaces by the M25.

In relation to Egham Superward there is:

- Under provision of accessible outdoor sports facilities – equating to only 20% of the Fields In Trust standard.
- There is a shortfall in provision for children/teenagers
- There is a shortage of burial capacity at Thorpe Cemetery
- There are no allotments in Thorpe

The Frank Muir Memorial Field at the western end of the village and to lesser extent the Thorpe Green and Thorpe Village Hall play areas provide sport and recreation facilities including a skate park, but there is a deficit in general provision to the east of the designated area.

The aspirations that follow identify the opportunities for enhancing the current provision of Green/Blue Infrastructure within the Forum area.

Green/Blue Infrastructure Opportunities

Footpaths

There are four designated footpaths that cross the plan area and are currently all passable although there is concern that footpath 48 is difficult to navigate.

- a. The major footpath is Monks Walk which runs from St Mary's Church through to Chertsey and prior to the reformation was used by Monks walking from Chertsey Abbey to the Chapel that is now St Mary's Church. This footpath crosses Thorpe Park/Thorpe Lakes and is fenced on both sides.

ASPIRATION; *Could Monks Walk be used as part of a cycle route coming back to the village along the cycle path on Chertsey Lane (A320) and Green Lane (By way)?*

Cemeteries

- b. The churchyard of St Mary's Church is closed but valued by churchgoers as it provides a beautiful setting to the church.
- c. Thorpe cemetery in Ten Acre Lane is a well-kept and important resting place for many of Thorpe's former residents.

ASPIRATION; *There are currently plans to enlarge the cemetery and this is an area that could be developed for both amenity and wildlife. Linked in with the aspiration below, Ten Acre Lane could provide sports facilities, car park and a new safer pedestrian route from the Community Hall (Scout hut) to the centre of the village, St Mary's Church, Thorpe Nursery Preschool and Village Hall. It would benefit from some heritage lighting as Ten Acre Lane borders the Conservation Area which already has heritage lamps.*

Car Parking

The Forum identified early on that there was a need for increased car parking facilities in the core of the village. This area includes a thriving village hall with drama group, community hall, day-care nursery and an historic church. Parking had been provided for large events in TESIS boarding school but following security concerns by OFSTED this was curtailed. St Mary's Church has limited parking in the Vicarage but is unable to accommodate large wedding and funeral groups which has had a significant detrimental effect on their economic viability and ability to maintain this grade 1 listed building. No other non-Green Belt locations have been identified.

ASPIRATION;

To enhance the amenity of the core of the village both for the benefit of community users and the economic viability of the local organisations in a way that is sympathetic to the rural nature of Ten Acre Lane and the Green Belt. This is further developed in relation to the cemetery and sports facilities detailed below.

Sports and Recreation Facilities

- d. Within the grounds of Thorpe C of E Primary school there are playing fields used by the pupils.
- e. Similarly, within the grounds of TESIS, off Ten Acre Lane there is a large playing field used by students of the school.
- f. The only public sports facilities are in the Frank Muir Memorial Field off Rosemary Lane. This open space has one football pitch, basketball net and play equipment for small children (0-4 years old) and one adventure play area for older children including a skateboard park.
- g. Thorpe Village Hall also has a small play area
- h. There is also a hard footpath from Green Road to the car park in Rosemary lane and then on to the activity area for older children. This almost meets the existing footpath and is well used by dog walkers.

ASPIRATION; *Could this footpath be developed as an informal cycle path to the Thorpe Primary School and linking to the cycle path which passes under the M25 and onto Thorpe Green?*

ASPIRATION; *Develop a new sports facility/car park for public use on the land to the east of Ten Acre Lane close and accessible to the historic core.*

Open Space and Amenity Green Spaces

- h. In the centre of a small housing development known as The Gower there is a small open space serving a valuable amenity for the immediate residents.

ASPIRATION. *This area and surrounding roads would benefit from more tree planting (see AECOM report)*

- i. Adjoining the Frank Muir Memorial Field and Footpath 53 is an area of land in private ownership, but which is designated as Amenity Green Space for visual amenity and serves as an important barrier to the noise and air pollution from the M25 and Thorpe bypass. This space has a significant number of trees which act a visual screen for many parts of the village, preventing sight of the overhead gantries and lights on the elevated motorway for many residents beyond the immediate vicinity.

ASPIRATION. *Although this is in private ownership the forum would like to see tree planting enhanced here to improve the amenity currently recognised and reduce the air pollution as this is an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). This could enhance the biodiversity of the designated area.*

Green Corridors

- j. There are some significant hedgerows which have historical importance having formed the boundaries of farms that are no longer in existence.

The hedge along Cottage Farm Way and that along Village Road from Ten Acre Lane to the first dwelling are good examples.

Trees within the Conservation area effectively have preservation orders and one Oak tree is on the Woodland Trust list of Ancient Oaks, but it is not visible to the public.

ASPIRATION; *to plant more native species within existing hedgerows to improve them and to encourage new hedgerows to be planted throughout the designated area.*

Blue Infrastructure

- k. Thorpe Park

Probably the largest area of natural or semi natural green space. This privately-owned land (Merlin) is used for recreation as a theme park with a strong emphasis on water rides although these use treated water. A vast expanse of water remains after gravel extraction and this has been carefully landscaped to enhance wildlife and act as flood storage.

There is a designated area (SSSI) which is protected from public use. Thorpe Park also is part of the SW London Water Bodies Special Protection Area and an area of Special Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI)

- l. Thorpe Lakes

This too is privately owned land but open to the public for recreational use for water skiing and other water sports.

Within this land holding is an SSSI and a RAMSAR site important for overwintering birds.

Both the lakes in Thorpe Park and Thorpe Lakes are significant in the control of flood water from the Thames and will probably be linked to the Thames if the proposed Thames Relief Scheme goes ahead. (RTS)

- m. Fishing Lake. Ten Acre Lane

Another result of gravel extraction and now used by a private fishing club.

- n. Lake in TESIS grounds

This lake offers considerable visual amenity to the staff and pupils of TESIS, a private boarding school for International students.

o. Lake in grounds of CEMEX/EDEN Health ownership.

This landholding has just been given planning permission, subject to conditions to convert 3 listed buildings and a listed roof garden into C3 accommodation. This small lake will become a visual amenity to the residents of the converted buildings.

p. Lake in grounds of Stuart Cottage. Rosemary Lane

This lake, again the result of gravel extraction is in the garden of a private dwelling but is overlooked by houses on 3 sides and provides considerable visual amenity to neighbours.

q. Lake adjoining 4 Aymer Drive/ Mead lake Ditch

This lake is in private ownership but forms part of the Mead Lake Ditch which comes from Egham and flows into the Thorpe Park Lakes. This crosses Norlands Lane through a culvert under the road and will also be absorbed into the RTS if built.

ASPIRATION; *If the RTS is developed then the Forum would like to see significant public access to the waterway and a cycleway and, subject to land owner agreement, a link to Footpath 49. This area currently a capped landfill site also offers opportunities for leisure activities.*

r. The Moat

A small drainage ditch that flows through the centre of the village

ASPIRATION; *There is a possible route for a cycle path along the banks of the Moat and Green Road subject to the provision of a suitable green buffer between the cycle path and watercourse.*

s. The River Bourne

This small river which flows from Virginia Water Lake (man-made) and flows through Thorpe along the path of the M25 and is a significant water course in terms of local flooding as it takes run off from the M25 and Lyne Lane Sewerage Works.

It was formally the site of a Water Mill hence the references to Mill House Lane

ASPIRATION; *There is a possible route for a cycle path along the banks on an existing footpath*

Note; Thorpe Neighbourhood Plan designated area sits within the Thames Basin Heath buffer zone of 5-7km

Opportunities

Thorpe Neighbourhood Forum sees opportunities to enhance the Green Infrastructure and improve access to footpaths and cycle paths in several parts of the designated area. Using planning conditions/section 106 contributions/CIL (when implemented) there is the potential to interlink existing infrastructure and improve other routes.

1. Ten Acre Lane. This narrow rural lane is well used by pedestrians from the Thorpe Lea area and mourners from St Mary's church walking to the cemetery. It would benefit from a footpath and heritage lighting. Adjoining this lane is a potential housing site and the opportunity to provide a car park for the use of the village and a playing field to meet unmet sports facilities. This will provide increased focus to the village centre and historic core. It will enhance the village identity, viability and sense of community. Access to a small development could also provide a new road through to Coldharbour Lane which would relieve congestion in the core of the Conservation area.
2. Land adjacent to Coltscroft, footpath 53 and Thorpe by pass. This land currently has public access although in private ownership. It offers the opportunity to dramatically enhance the visual amenity to residents of the neighbouring Rosemary Lane and beyond into the housing estate known as The Gower. The existing trees already provide a visual screen to the overhead gantries of the elevated M25 and are important for habitat and especially in an area of Air Quality Management. Further tree planting would enhance the Green infrastructure of this important boundary to the village. (This is the area we would like to keep in the Green Belt)

Policy recommendations

1. New development should provide or enhance footpaths and cycleways and sport and recreational facilities to enhance local green infrastructure to support the health and wellbeing of the Thorpe community
2. Planning conditions/Section 106/CIL (if implemented) contributions to be used to improve GI in the designated area.
3. All new development should plant trees and native hedges and other native flora to deliver a 'net gain' in biodiversity
4. All opportunities should be explored to improve walking and cycling routes to Thorpe C of E Primary School in The Bence off Rosemary Lane.

Appendix

Map Extracts from the Runnymede 2035 Open Space Study 2016 (Final Feb 2017)

Open Space Study 2016 Final Report

3.1.2 Natural and Semi Natural Green Spaces

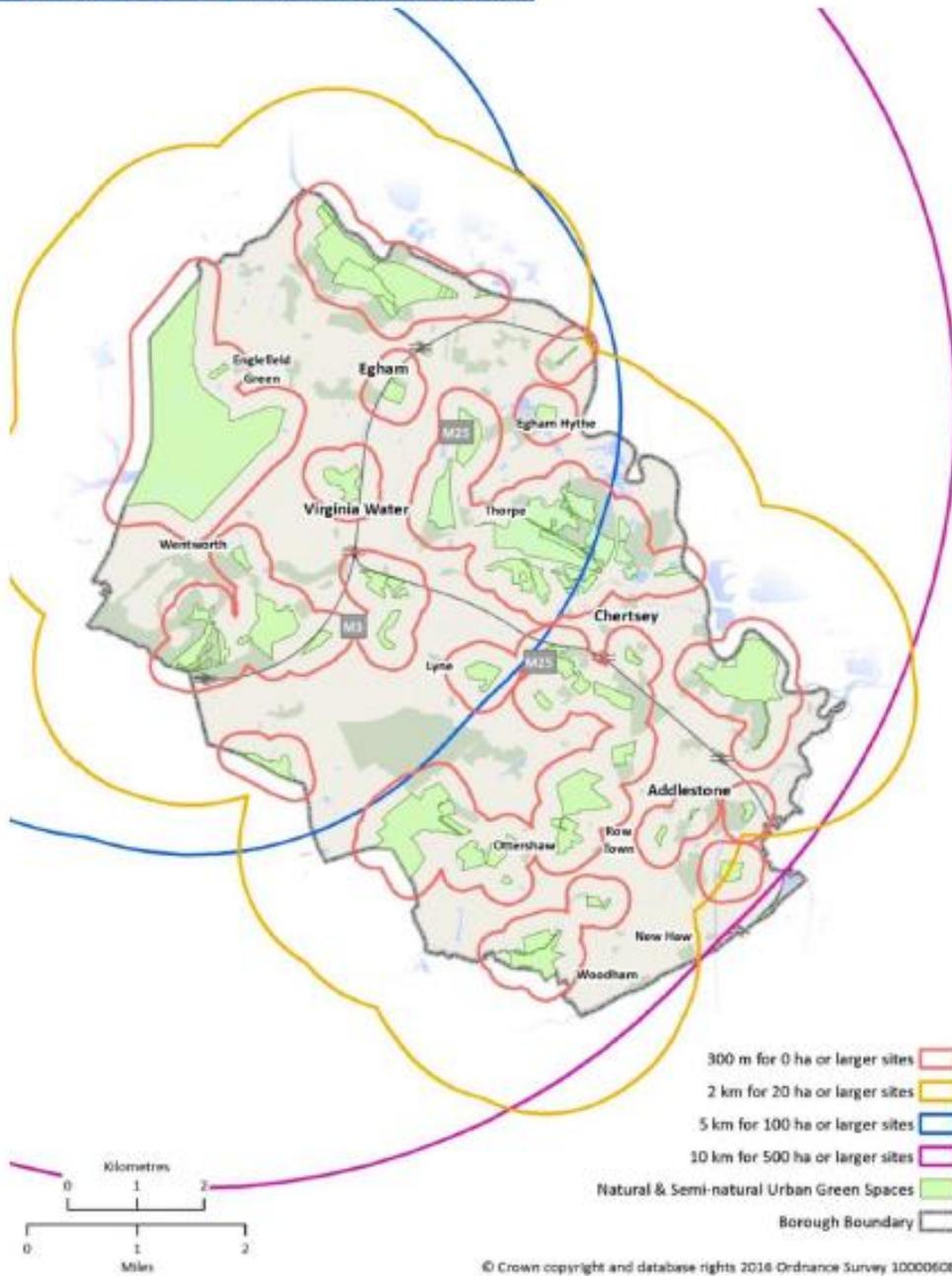


Figure 51: Map showing provision of accessible natural and semi-natural green spaces and straight-line buffer distances to indicate accessibility of classification across the Borough

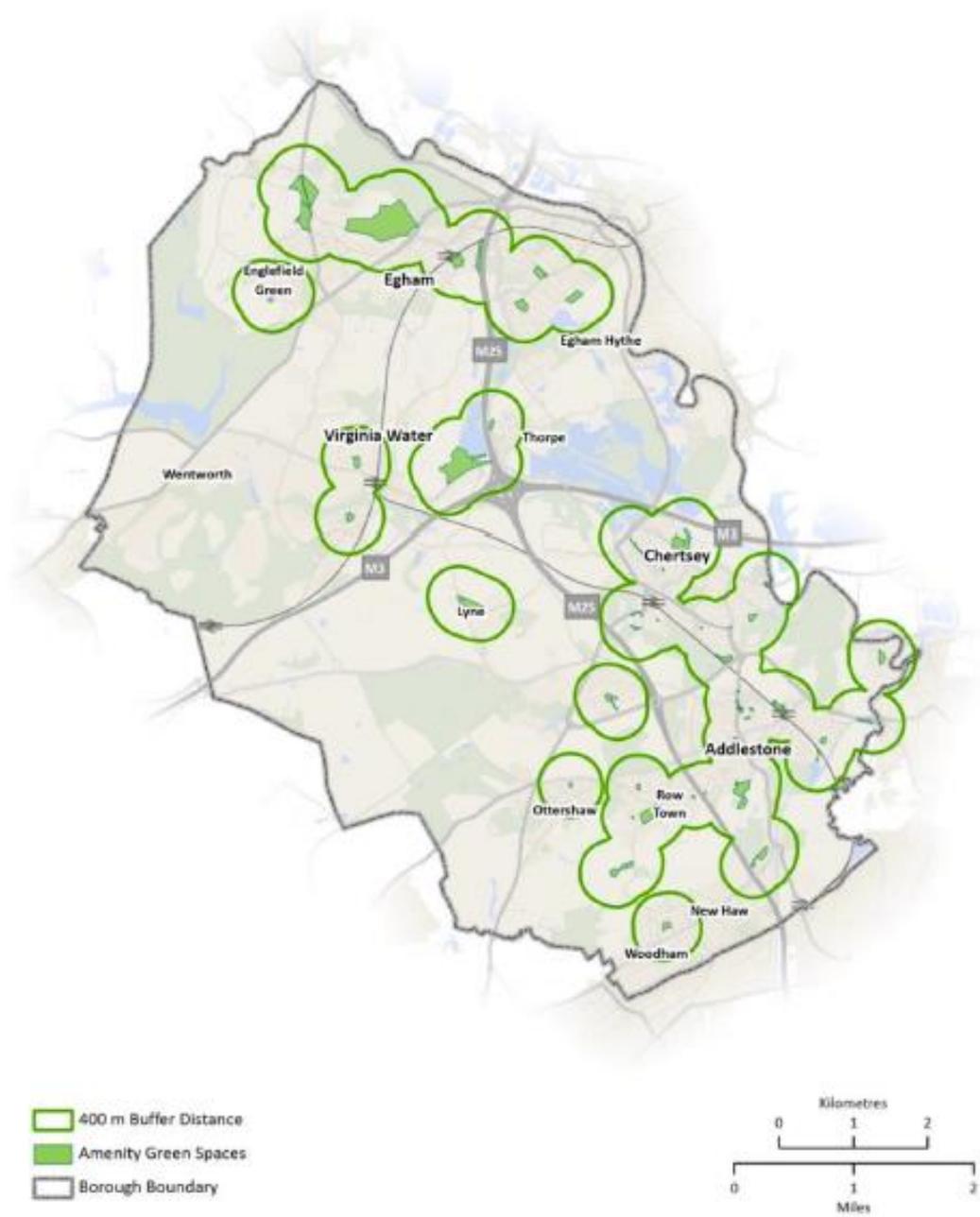
3.1.3 Outdoor Sports Facilities



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Figure 52: Map showing provision of accessible outdoor sports facilities and straight-line buffer distances to indicate accessibility of classification across the Borough

3.1.4 Amenity Green Spaces



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Figure 53: Map showing provision of accessible amenity green spaces and straight-line buffer distances to indicate accessibility of classification across the Borough.

3.1.5 Provision for children and Teenagers

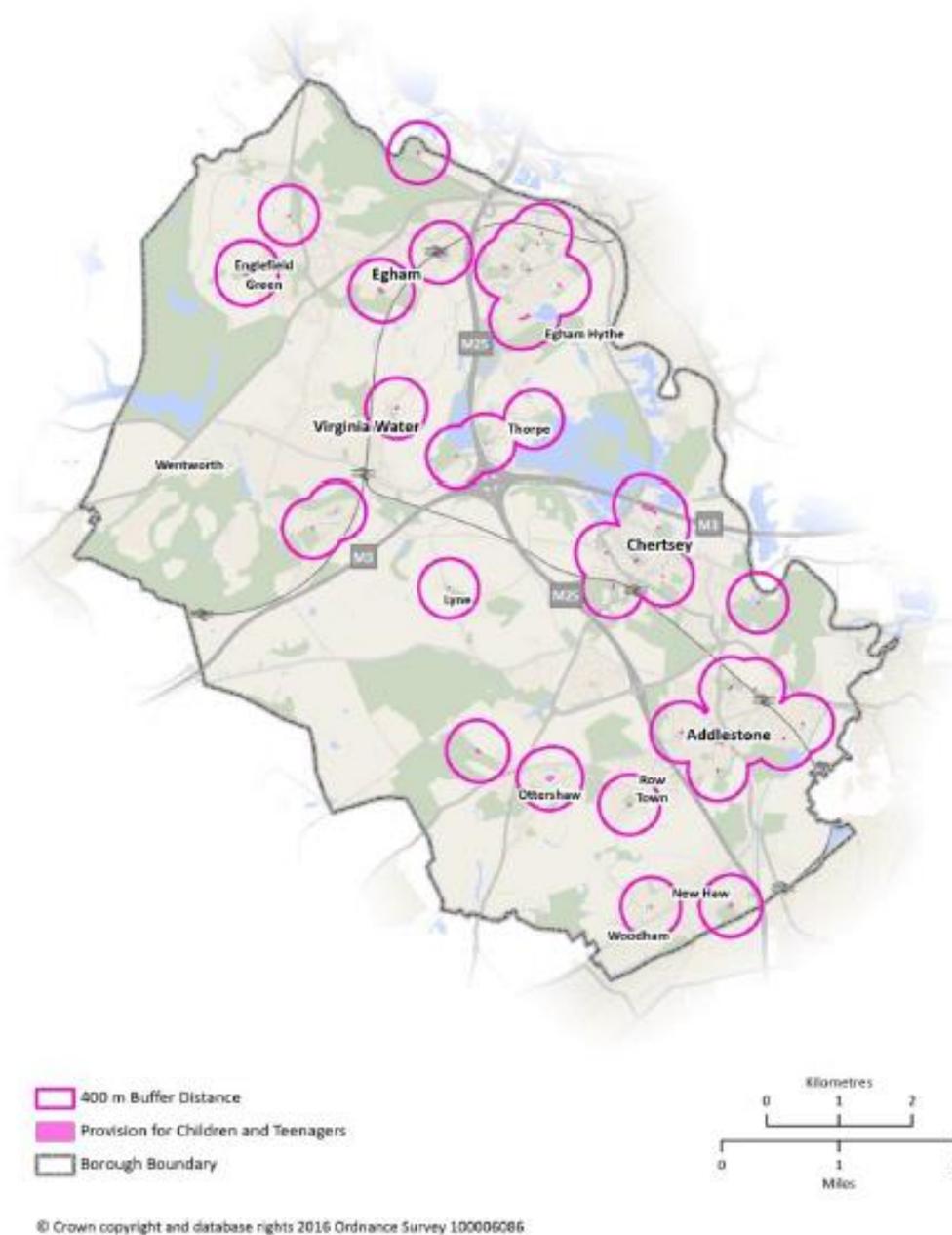


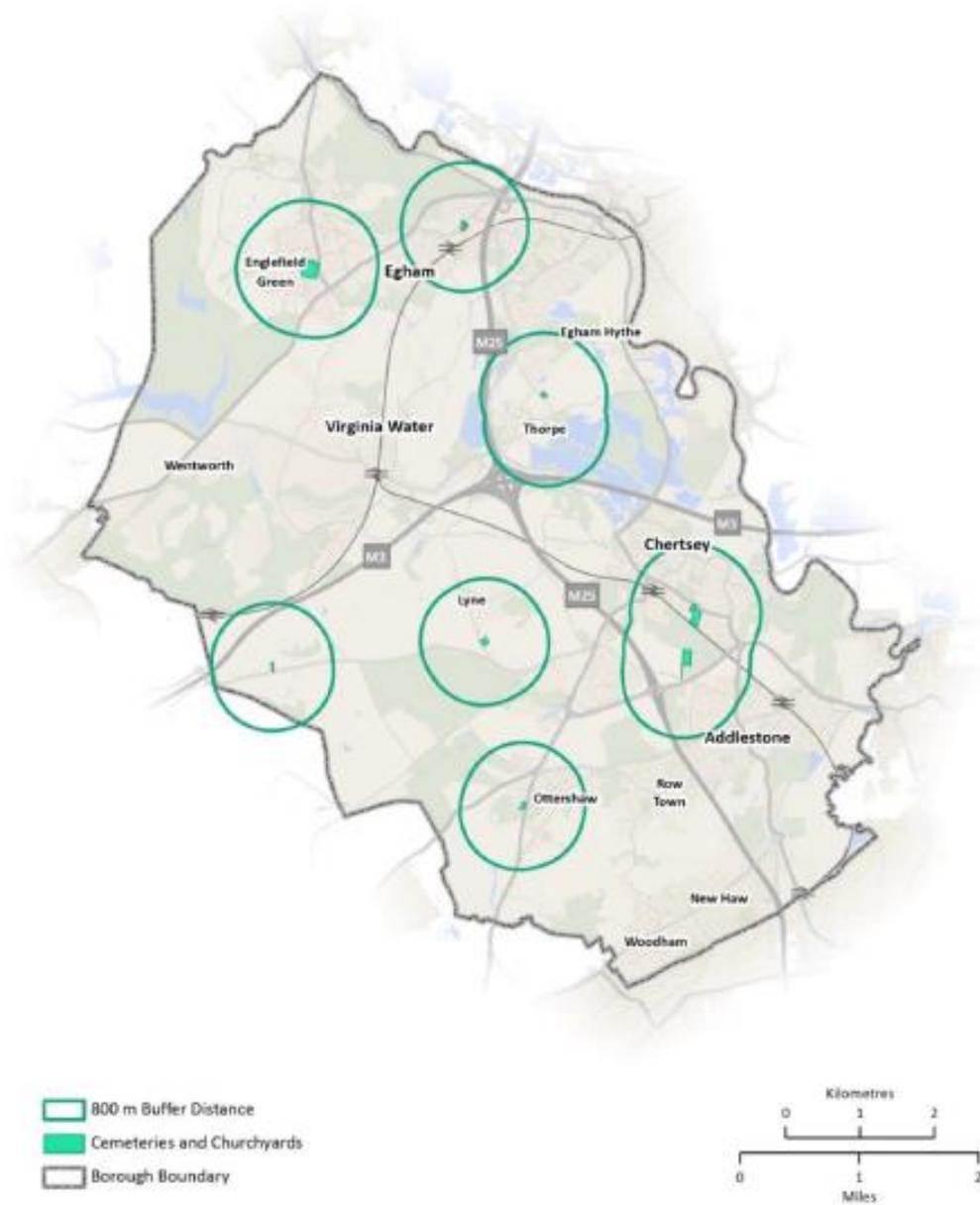
Figure 54: Map showing provision of accessible provision for children and teenagers and straight-line buffer distances to indicate accessibility of classification across the Borough

3.1.6 Allotments, community gardens and city farms



Figure 55: Map showing provision of accessible allotments and straight-line buffer distances to indicate accessibility of classification across the Borough

3.1.7 Cemeteries and churchyards



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Figure 56: Map showing provision of accessible cemeteries and churchyards and straight-line buffer distances to indicate accessibility of classification across the Borough.