

# Chapter 7

## Quality and value analysis

**7.1** This chapter summarises the results from the site audits that were undertaken as part of the study. 197 sites were visited throughout the county and were subject to a detailed audit based on the Green Flag Award themes.

**7.2** The audit criteria were separated into factors relating to ‘quality’ and ‘value’, resulting in each site being assigned a quality and value score. As set out by the (former) Planning Practice Guidance 17 (PPG17) Companion Guide: “quality and value are fundamentally different and can be completely unrelated” **[See reference 28]**. For example, an open space may be of higher quality but if it is not accessible it is of little value, while if an open space is poor quality but has a wide range of facilities it is potentially of higher value.

**7.3** The typology, hierarchy and locality of the audited sites are summarised in **Table 7.1** to **Table 7.3**.

**Table 7.1: Number of audited sites by location**

Location	Count
Hereford	95
Bromyard	6
Kington	4
Ledbury	13
Leominster	19
Ross-on-Wye	22
Rural	38

Location	Count
Total	197

**Table 7.2: Number of open spaces audited by typology**

Typology	Count
Amenity greenspace	68
Natural and semi-natural greenspace	14
Green corridors and chains	11
Incidental greenspace	48
Provision for Children and Teenagers	40
Outdoor Sports Facility	11
Cemeteries	3
Civic Spaces	2
Total	197

**Table 7.3: Number of sites audited by hierarchy**

Hierarchy	Count
District greenspace	1
Wider neighbourhood greenspace	1
Neighbourhood greenspace	6
Local greenspace	33
Doorstep greenspace	48
None	108

Hierarchy	Count
Total	197

**7.4** The Green Flag Award [See reference 29] is a recognised benchmark standard for open space management in the UK and internationally and is recommended as the go-to quality criteria within the GI Framework. Detailed criteria have been developed that are suitable to the Herefordshire context.

**7.5** The box below provides an overview of the Green Flag themes considered as part of the site audits.

## Assessment themes (based on green flag award criteria)

1. A Welcoming Place: Welcoming, good and safe access, signage, equal access for all.
2. Healthy, Safe and Secure: Safe equipment and facilities, personal security, dog fouling, appropriate provision of facilities, quality of facilities.
3. Clean and Well Maintained: Litter and waste management, grounds maintenance and horticulture, building and infrastructure maintenance.
4. Sustainability: Environmental sustainability, waste minimisation, arboriculture and woodland management.
5. Conservation and Heritage: Conservation of nature features, wild flora and fauna, conservation of landscape features, conservation of buildings and structures.

6. Community Involvement: Community involvement in management and development including outreach work, appropriate provision for the community.
7. Marketing and Culture: Marketing and promotion, provision of appropriate information, provision of appropriate educational interpretation/information.

## Current quality and value

7.6 The results of the greenspace audits are set out in the following paragraphs.

### A welcoming place

#### Entrances

7.7 Entrances can make a contribution to how open spaces are perceived by potential visitors and local residents. In order to be inviting, entrances should be open, clean, in a good state of repair and provide some visibility in and out of the open space.

7.8 The results shown in **Figure 7.1** indicate that the quality of entrances is generally good: over half of audited sites scored a 4 (good) or 5 (very good) and a third scored 3 (average). Good scores indicate entrance ways that are easy to find, of an appropriate size and clean and inviting. The quality of entrances is generally less good for the provision for children and young people typology, where 45% of sites scored a 3 (average). Natural and semi-natural greenspace sites have the highest proportion of 4 (poor) and 5 (very poor) which make up 35% of the scores. These entrances may be unclear or poorly maintained.

## Boundaries

**7.9** Clearly defined, well maintained open space boundaries can make a positive contribution to the perception of open spaces. As **Figure 7.1** shows, the quality of boundary features scores generally higher than the other welcoming criteria, with over two-thirds of sites scoring a 4 (good) or 5 (very good). Boundaries generally score better in the rural areas compared to Hereford and the market towns.

## Access

**7.10** The audits included an assessment of the quality of access both within and to the open space. The quality of access to open spaces may be influenced by several factors. Some sites benefit from good access via several modes of transport, such as nearby public transport links, provision of car parking, cycle paths, and cycle parking. Where located within built-up areas, open spaces should offer easy access for informal recreation close to resident's homes. Within Herefordshire, large rivers, roads and railway lines can also limit access.

**7.11** Access within open spaces generally scores higher than access getting to the open spaces (see **Figure 7.1**). Within larger open spaces, which offer a range of facilities, consideration of the Equality Act (2010) should also be considered. Any type of open space will be able to provide a range of benefits to the local community if they have good Access for All, and can be used by the elderly, infirm and people with physical disabilities.

**7.12** Access within the site generally scores higher than access to the site, with scores 4 (good) and 5 (very good) making up 51% and 44% of the audited sites respectively. Natural and semi-natural open spaces have notably lower scores for access within open spaces, with over a third of sites scoring 1 (very poor).

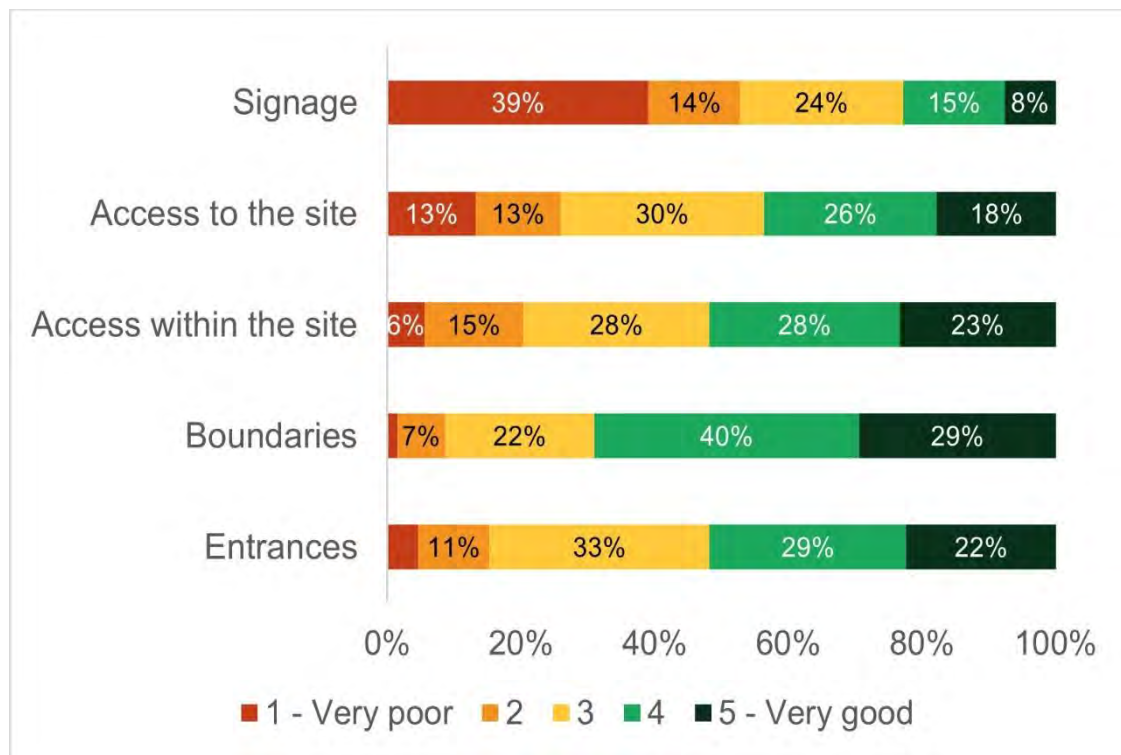
## Signage

**7.13** Up to date, clear, good quality signage that is accessible and readable for a range of users gives an indication of whether an open space is well cared for and can enhance the experience for new and regular users. For larger sites and natural and semi-natural sites, signage can be used to indicate promoted walking and cycling routes and provide information as to what facilities are on site.

**7.14** Overall, signage scores were notably lower than scores for other scores within this theme. Only just over a fifth of sites scored 4 (good) or 5 (very good) (as in **Figure 7.1**). Natural and semi-natural greenspace generally have poorer signage compared to other typology, with half of sites scoring 1 (very poor). Within the accessible greenspace typologies, larger sites tend to have better signage scores compared to smaller sites. In some cases signage may not be necessary for very small sites with few facilities or features. Sites in Leominster also scored lower than average, with 74% of the 19 sites scoring 1.

**7.15** Poorer scores may indicate that signage is in a poor condition or that there is no signage within the open space.

Figure 7.1: Scores for welcoming criteria



## Healthy, safe and secure

### Open approach

**7.16** An open approach with clear site lines and visibility into the site enhances the sense of safety when entering the open space. Approaches which are screened by vegetation or high walls, or include entrances via narrow alleyways obstruct views into the site.

**7.17** As **Figure 5.8** shows, 84% of the audited sites had open approaches indicating sites in Herefordshire are generally performing well in this area. The market towns of Bromyard and Ross-on-Wye perform particularly well, with all audited sites in these towns scoring as having open approaches. In contrast, only 58% of sites in Leominster scored for this. Overall, natural and semi-

natural greenspaces scored less well, with only half sites scoring as having open approaches. This compares to all cemeteries and civic spaces and 90% of amenity greenspace.

## Surveillance and observation

**7.18** Surveillance of open spaces was more common from natural surveillance from surrounding properties and infrastructure. **Figure 7.2** shows that 70% of sites scored for having natural surveillance, compared to 51% which had a flow of people through the site.

**7.19** Natural surveillance is notably lower for natural and semi-natural greenspace (29%) and green corridors and chains (30%). There is an overall inverse trend between size and natural surveillance for accessible greenspaces, with 83% of accessible greenspaces under 0.5ha scoring for natural surveillance compared to 38% of those over 20ha.

**7.20** In addition to providing surveillance and a sense of security, a flow of people also indicates that a site is well used. This factor may be influenced by the location of the open space to other facilities, including schools and recreational destinations. The time of day can also influence this, therefore the scores identified from a single site visit within this audit give only an indication of the wider picture. The general trend appears to be that natural and semi-natural greenspaces score less well for a flow of people (29%).

## Lighting and CCTV

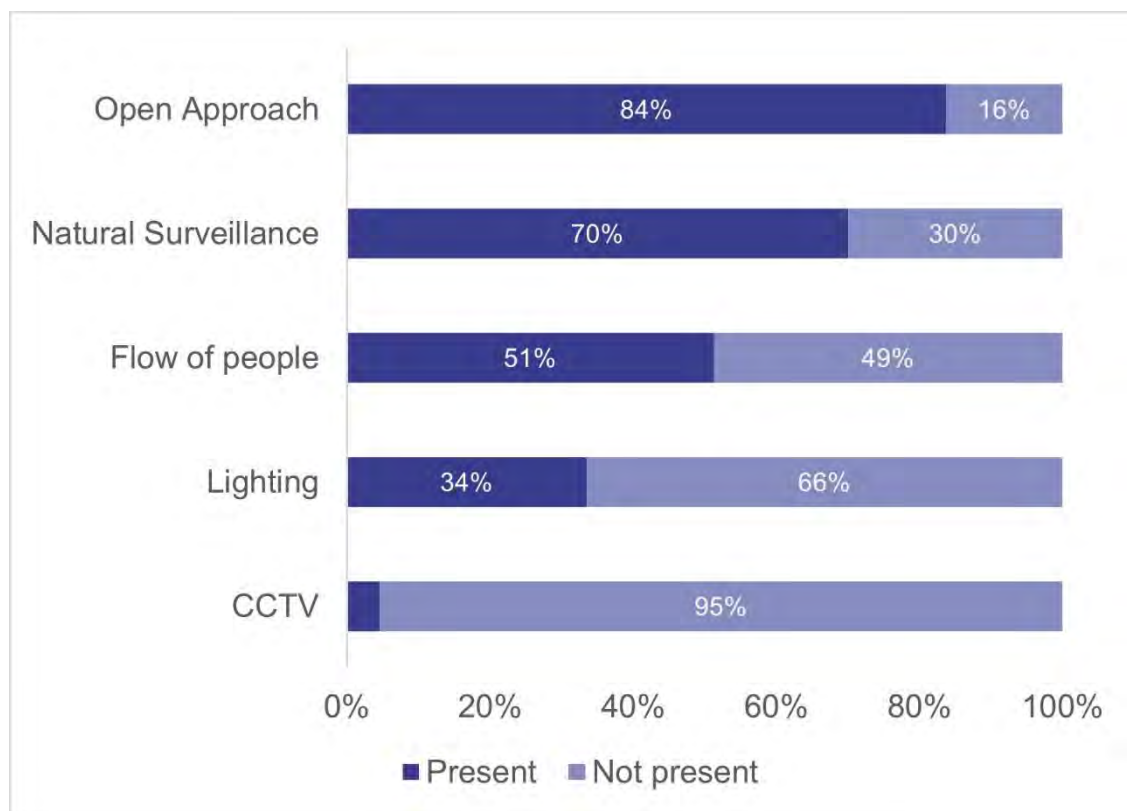
**7.21** Lighting and CCTV within an open space make a positive contribution to a sense of security.

**7.22** Generally, scores for lighting and CCTV are lower than other indicators for sense of security. Lighting is more common in Herefordshire (present in 34% of open spaces) compared to CCTV (in only 5% of open spaces) (see **Figure 7.2**).



Lighting is more common in Hereford (51%) and in some of the market towns (Bromyard 67% and Ledbury 62%) compared to open spaces in the rural areas (5%). CCTV is mostly absent from sites, but more common within the Outdoor sports typology (27%).

Figure 7.2: Scores for sense of safety criteria



## Basic amenities

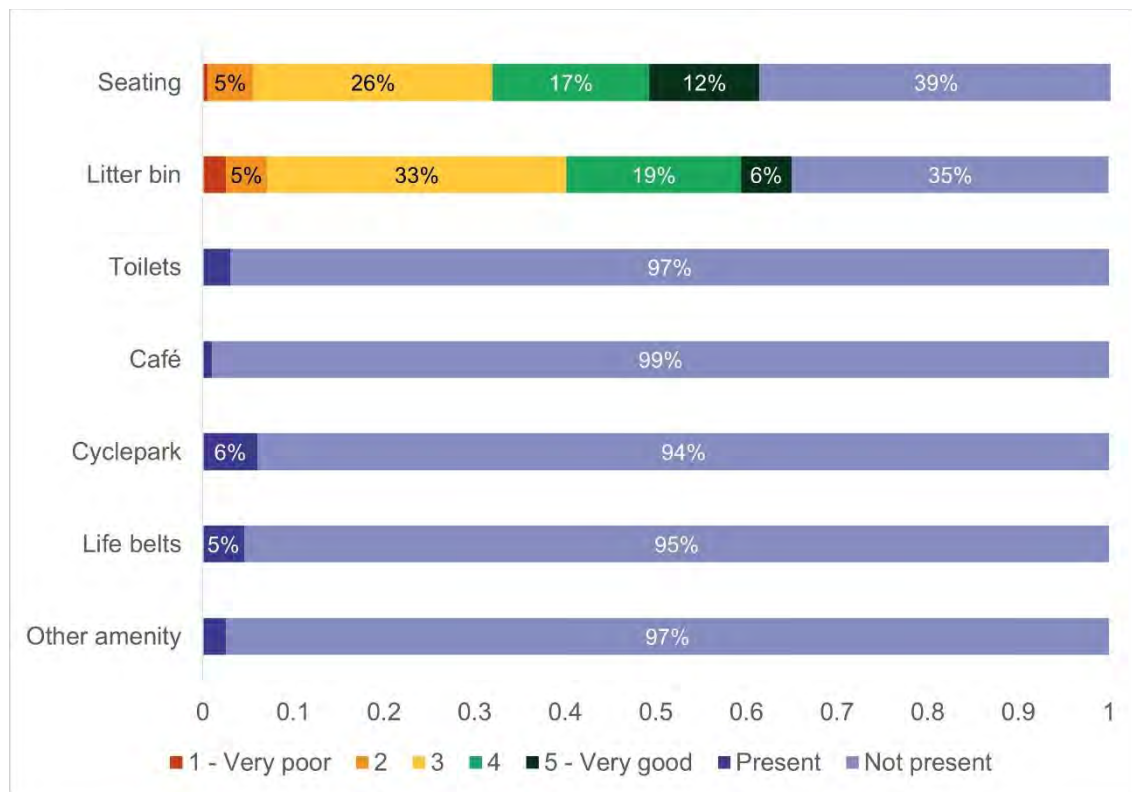
**7.23** The audit assessed the presence of criteria of basic amenities, including litter bins, seating, toilets, a café, cycle parking and life belts. These features make an open space more useable for a wider range of visitors and can entice visitors to stay longer in the open space. Residents of all ages, abilities and backgrounds should feel comfortable entering and using open spaces.

**7.24** As shown in **Figure 7.3**, seating and litter bins were by far the most common basic amenities within the open space, being present in 61% and 65% of open spaces respectively. Natural and semi-natural greenspace is the typology with the least provision for these facilities: seating is present in 36% of these open spaces and litter bins are in 21%.

**7.25** The common score for seating and litter bins is 3 (average). Scores are generally higher for amenity greenspace and outdoor sports provision where scores of 4 or higher were recorded in 47% and 78% of open spaces with seating respectively. Natural and semi-natural greenspace had generally lower scores for seating, with only 20% of the open spaces with seating score 4 and not sites scoring 5.

**7.26** The other basic amenities are mostly absent from open spaces in Herefordshire. The exception is the provision for outdoor sport. Toilets are present in 27% of these open spaces and 'other amenity' facilities were recorded in 18%.

**Figure 7.3: Scores for basic amenities**



## Active and informal recreation

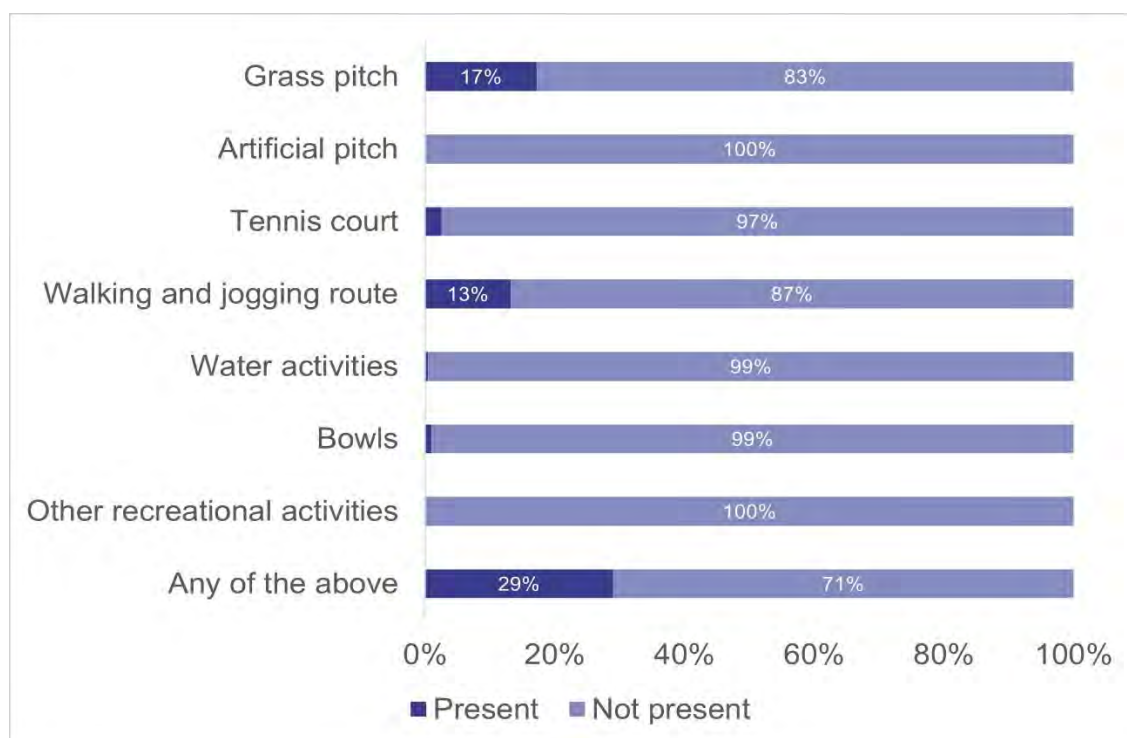
**7.27** Open spaces should have a range of facilities to meet the needs of users and encourage and facilitate recreation and healthy lifestyles. Open spaces which promote active and informal recreation increase the value delivered by open spaces and can promote physical recreation.

**7.28** As **Figure 7.4** shows, the presence of formal active recreational facilities is absent from most the sites in Herefordshire, with less than a third of sites having any kind of active recreational or sports facilities. The most common facilities were grass pitches (17%) and walking and jogging routes (13%). These types of facilities are most commonly found in the outdoor sports facilities open spaces, where 91% of audited sites had at least one active recreational facility. There is also a correlation with the size of the site: only 6% of accessible

greenspaces under 0.5ha had any facilities for active recreation, compared to 95% of sites over 20ha.

**7.29** A separate outdoor sport and play pitch strategy is being produced which will audit the quality of sports facilities.

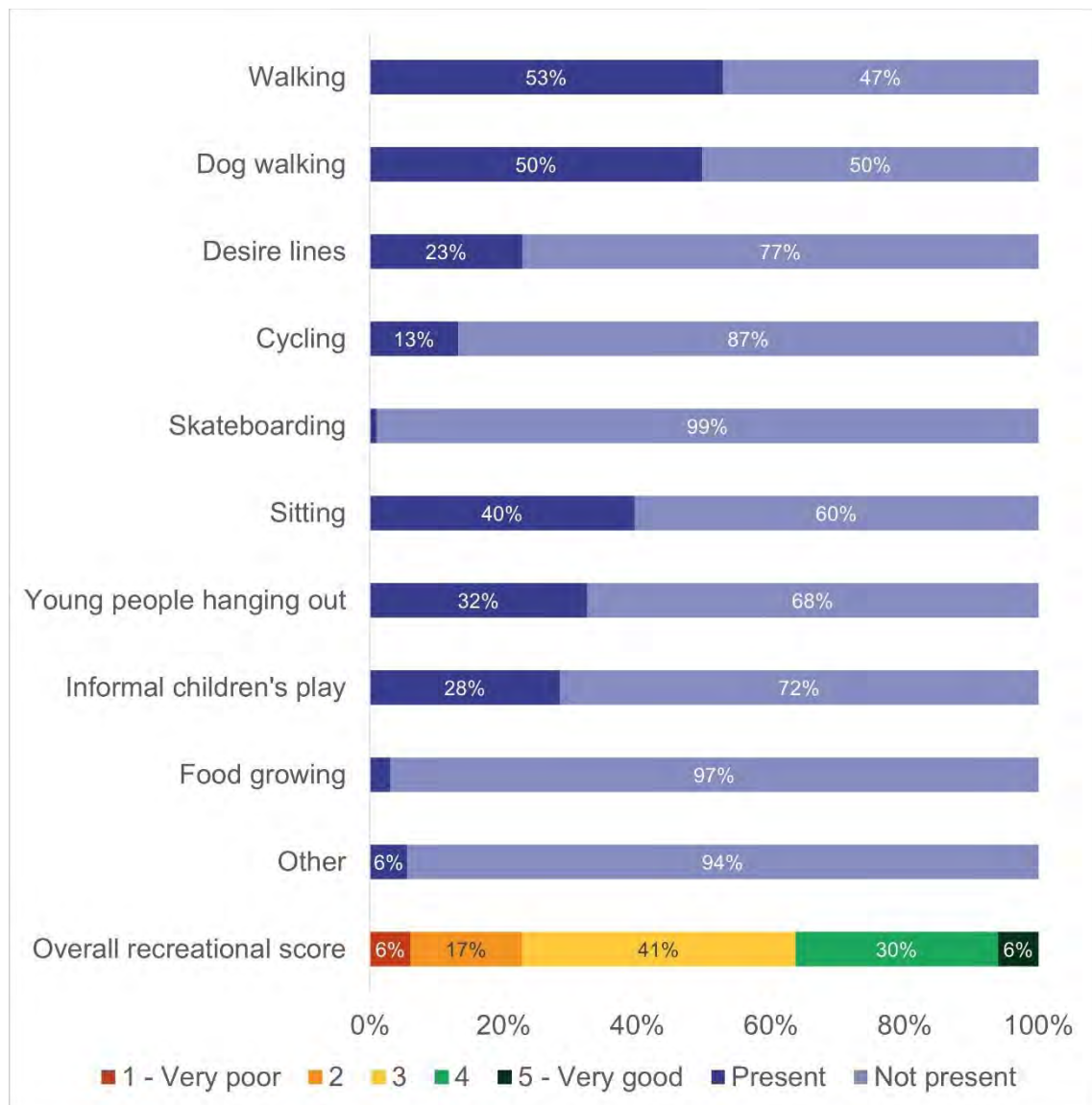
**Figure 7.4: Value scores for active recreation criteria**



**7.30** Most open spaces showed evidence of informal recreation (67%). As **Figure 7.5** shows, walking and dog walking are the most common types of informal recreation taking place within open spaces (53% and 52% respectively). This is compared to only 1% of sites that showed evidence of skateboarding and 3% showed evidence of food growing.

**7.31** The most common score given was 3 (average).

Figure 7.5: Scores for informal recreation



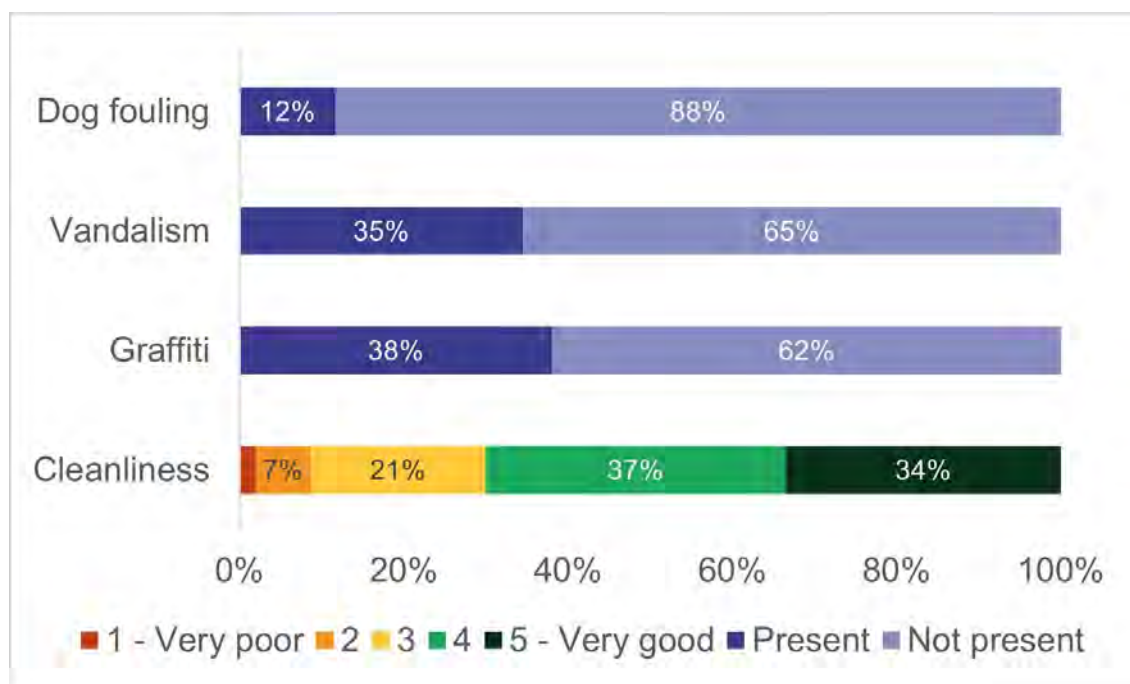
## Clean and well-maintained

7.32 As shown in **Figure 7.6** the overall level of cleanliness was generally good, with 71% of the sites scoring 4 (good) or 5 (very good). Scores for overall cleanliness were generally poorer for provision for children and young people open spaces, were 8% scored 1 (very poor) and 5% scored 2 (poor). However, this typology scored better than average for the presence of graffiti and

vandalism, with only 15% of sites experiencing either of these detractors, compared to 38% and 35% overall.

**7.33** Dog fouling detracts from the cleanliness of open spaces, as well as being a safety issue. As **Figure 7.6** shows, most sites (88%) in Herefordshire were free from dog fouling. In general, amenity greenspace was less affected by dog fouling than the other typologies, with 93% of these sites having no dog fouling evidenced in the audits.

**Figure 7.6: Scores for cleanliness criteria**



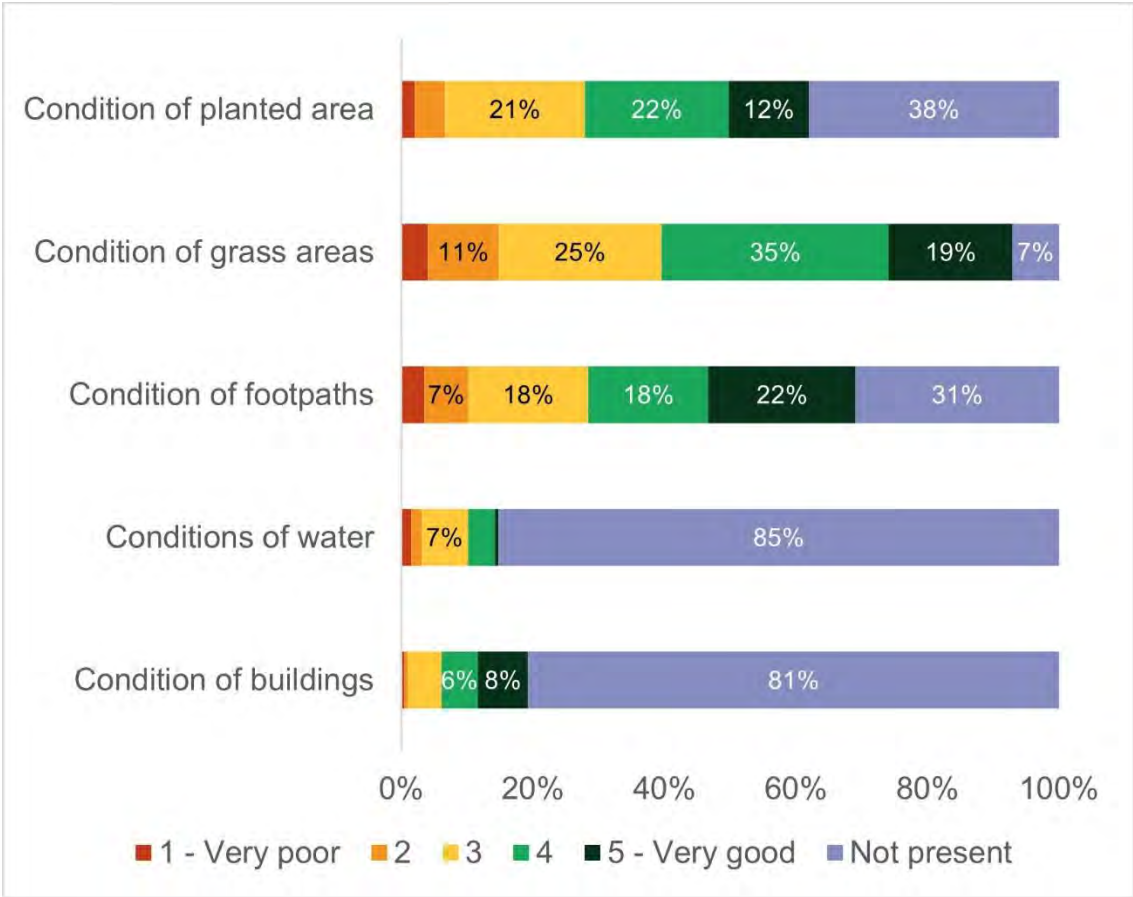
**7.34** **Figure 7.7** summarises the presence and condition of features across the audited sites. Grass areas were most common, found in 93% of sites. Those without grassed areas including civic spaces and 27% of natural and semi-natural spaces, which are likely to contain woodland.

**7.35** 62% of open space included planted areas, such as ornamental planting, shrubs and tree avenues. The condition of planted areas was mostly scored at 3 (average) and 4 (good). Planted areas were least common within the natural and semi-natural greenspace typology.

**7.36** The majority of sites (69%) had footpaths, which mostly scored 3 (average) or better. The natural and provision for children and teenagers, amenity greenspace <0.5ha in size and semi-natural greenspace typologies were less likely to have footpaths. Footpaths were present in 55%, 62% and 64% of these open space typologies respectively.

**7.37** Only 15% and 19% of sites included water edge and buildings respectively. Water edges were most commonly found in the green corridors and chains typology, which often follow river corridors. Nearly half of the water edge features audited scored 3 (average). Buildings were present in all of the outdoor sports provision audited. Nearly 40% of buildings scored 5 (very good).

**Figure 7.7: Scores for the condition of features**



## Sustainability

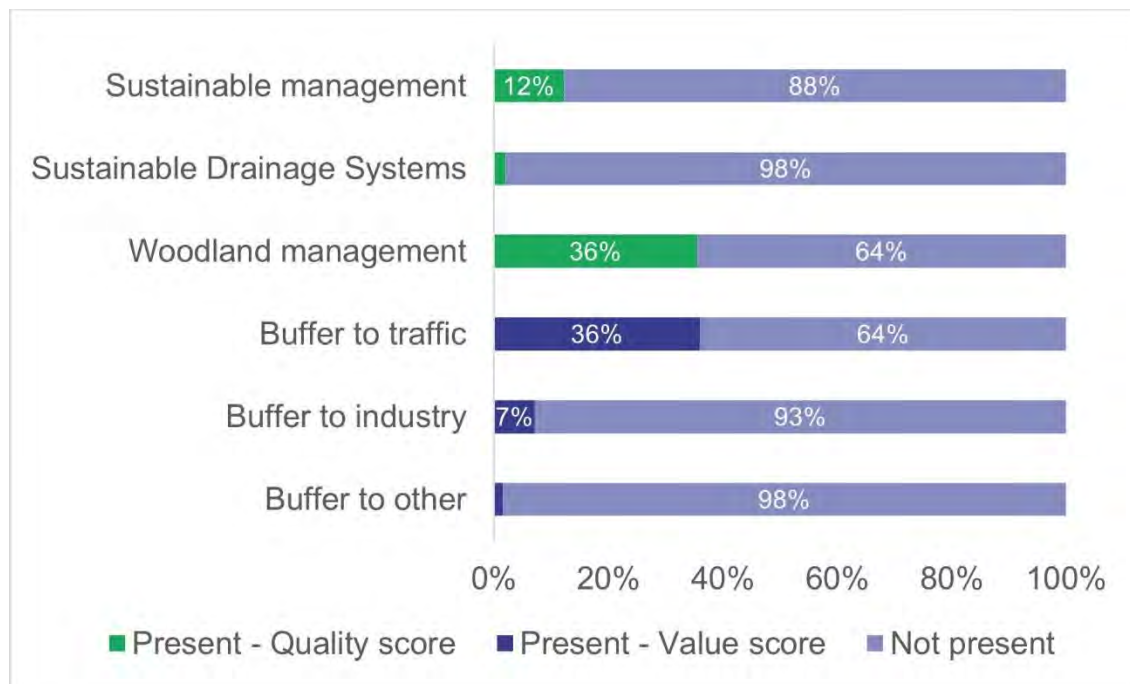
**7.38** Open spaces can perform a range of functions with regards to environmental sustainability. Sustainable management practices within open spaces may include good waste management, composting, drought tolerant planting, water harvesting, mulching or the use of solar panels on park buildings.

**7.39** **Figure 7.8** summaries the scores for the sustainability criteria. The results indicate that sustainability is not being maximised in most of the sites. A 'no' response in the audits, however, does not necessarily mean that open spaces are not providing these benefits, but that there is little indication of specific management for this.

**7.40** Woodland management is the most common type of management which enhances sustainability, with over a third of audited sites being managed for this. Over a third of open spaces performed a 'buffer' role to help absorb noise and pollutants from busy roads.



**Figure 7.8: Scores for sustainability criteria**



## Conservation and heritage

**7.41** The audit recorded the landcover types within each of the greenspaces. 53% of the greenspaces audited contained 3 – 5 landcover types, with 27% containing over five landcover types. 19% of greenspaces were noted to contain just one or two landcover types.

**7.42** The most frequent landcover type recorded within amenity greenspace was amenity grass (90% of sites) followed by tree groups (72% of sites) and then hedges (68% of sites).

**7.43** The green corridors and chains typology most frequently contained woodland (80% of sites) followed by a river and amenity grassland (both 60% of sites).

**7.44** Natural and semi-natural greenspace were noted as containing woodland (82% of sites) with semi-improved grassland recorded as the second most frequently recorded vegetation type (55% of sites).

**7.45** Amenity grassland (84% of sites) and tree groups (70% of sites) were recorded as the most frequent vegetation types within incidental greenspace.

**7.46 Table 7.4** provides a breakdown of vegetation types audited within each greenspace type.

**Table 7.4: Vegetation type by accessible greenspace**

Landcover type	Amenity greenspace	Green corridors and chains	Natural and semi-natural greenspace	Incidental greenspace
Ornamental planting	13%	0%	9%	22%
Orchard	9%	0%	0%	2%
Veteran tree	21%	0%	18%	18%
Tree groups	72%	50%	45%	70%
Woodland	56%	80%	82%	36%
Marginal	18%	50%	18%	10%
Ditch	4%	10%	18%	6%
Pond	6%	0%	27%	2%
River	19%	60%	27%	4%
Amenity grassland	90%	60%	27%	84%
Annual bedding	6%	0%	0%	4%
Hedge	68%	60%	45%	62%

Landcover type	Amenity greenspace	Green corridors and chains	Natural and semi-natural greenspace	Incidental greenspace
Shrub	37%	30%	36%	26%
Herbs	7%	10%	9%	2%
Wildflower grassland	25%	30%	18%	14%
Semi-improved grassland	37%	50%	55%	12%
Other vegetation	0%	0%	0%	2%
Derelict	19%	10%	9%	8%
Number of sites audited	68	10	11	50

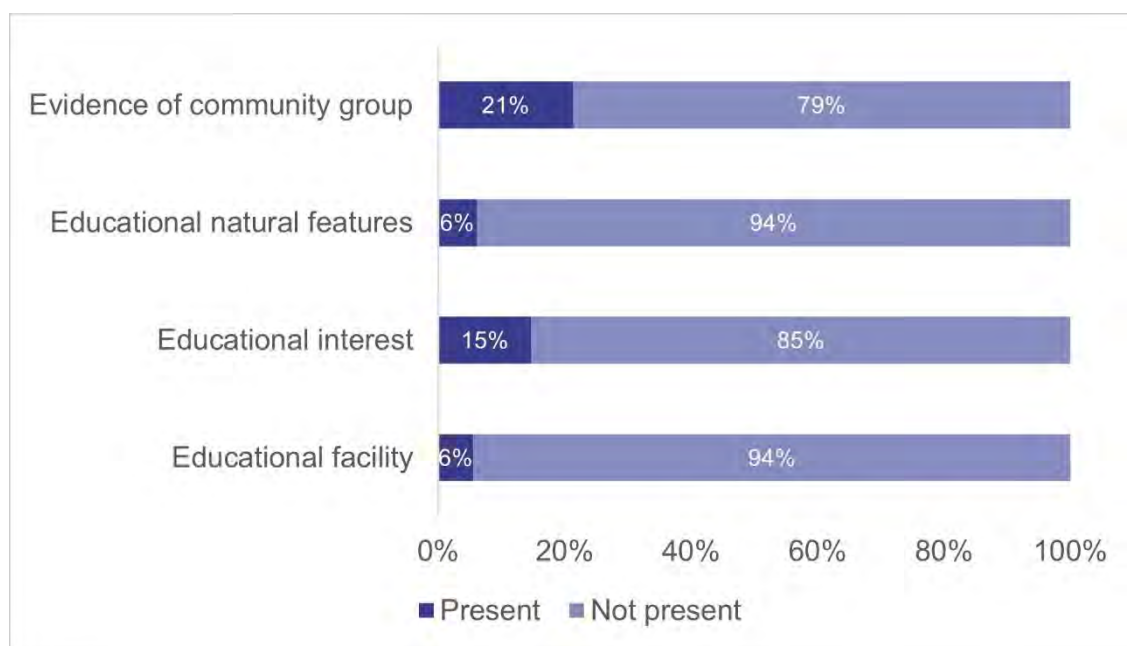
## Community involvement

**7.47** Evidence of an active community group was noted on just over a fifth of audited open spaces within Herefordshire, as shown in **Figure 7.9**. Outdoor sports provision and cemeteries and churchyards were most likely to have evidence of community involvement. However, this does not necessarily indicate that groups are involved in active management of a site. Likewise, absence of evidence of a community group does not guarantee that there is no community involvement on the site.

**7.48** Educational interest in open spaces was generally absent, only 15% of sites scored for this. The cemeteries and churchyards, natural and semi-natural greenspace and outdoor sports provision typologies scored higher for educational interest. Within accessible greenspaces, larger sites were more likely to have educational interest.

**7.49** The presence of an educational facility within the open space, or evidence of natural features being used for education was low, each being present in just 6% of open spaces. Open spaces within the rural areas generally scored better for educational value, with 29% scoring for educational interest, 18% for the presence of an educational facility and 21% for showing evidence of natural features being used for education.

**Figure 7.9: Scores for community involvement criteria**



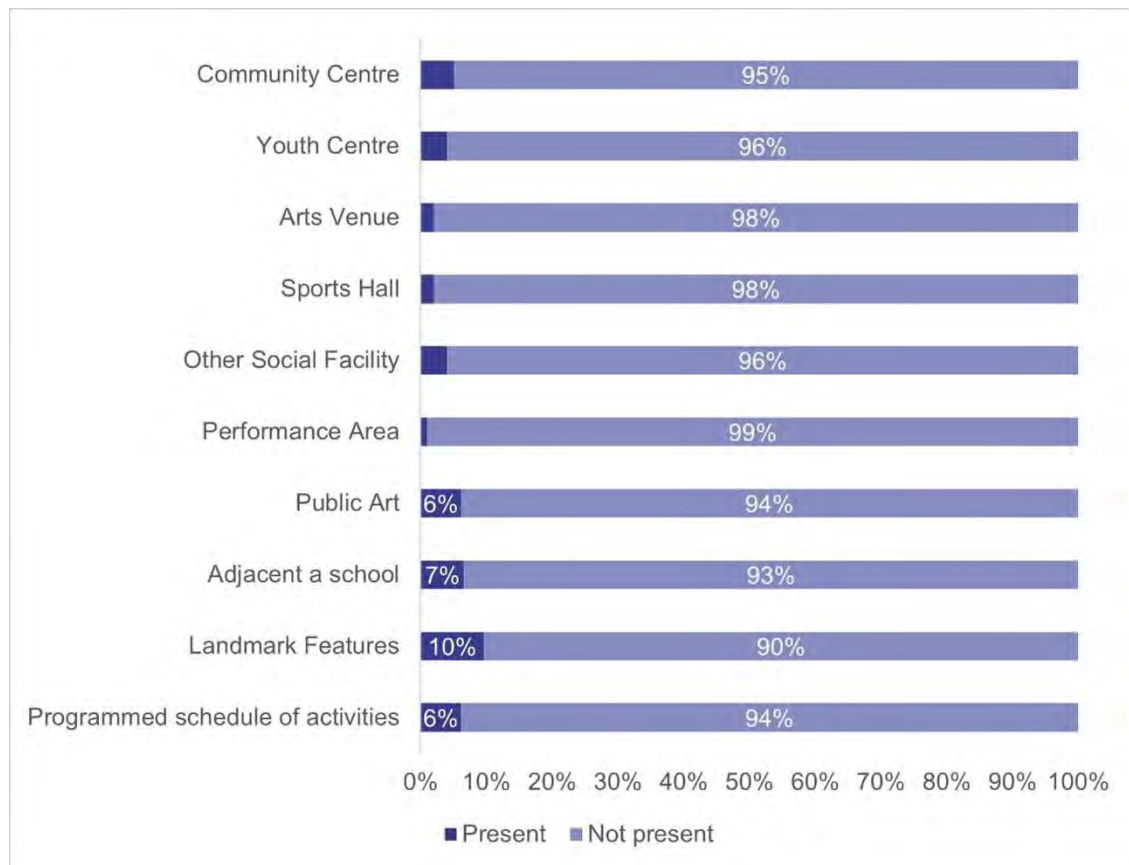
## Marketing

**7.50** Most open space in Herefordshire does not contain features which would help promote the open space to wider users (as seen in **Figure 7.10**). For each of the features assessed, they were present in less than 10% of open spaces. The most common feature was public art (in 10% of sites), followed by being adjacent to a school (7% of sites).

**7.51** Overall, marketing features are more common in the amenity greenspace typology, where 13% of audited open spaces had public art and 12% had

landmark features. Outdoor sports facilities also performed well: 36% are adjacent to a school, 36% have a programmed schedule of activities and 27% have a social facility on site.

**Figure 7.10: Scores for marketing criteria**



## Tree canopy coverage

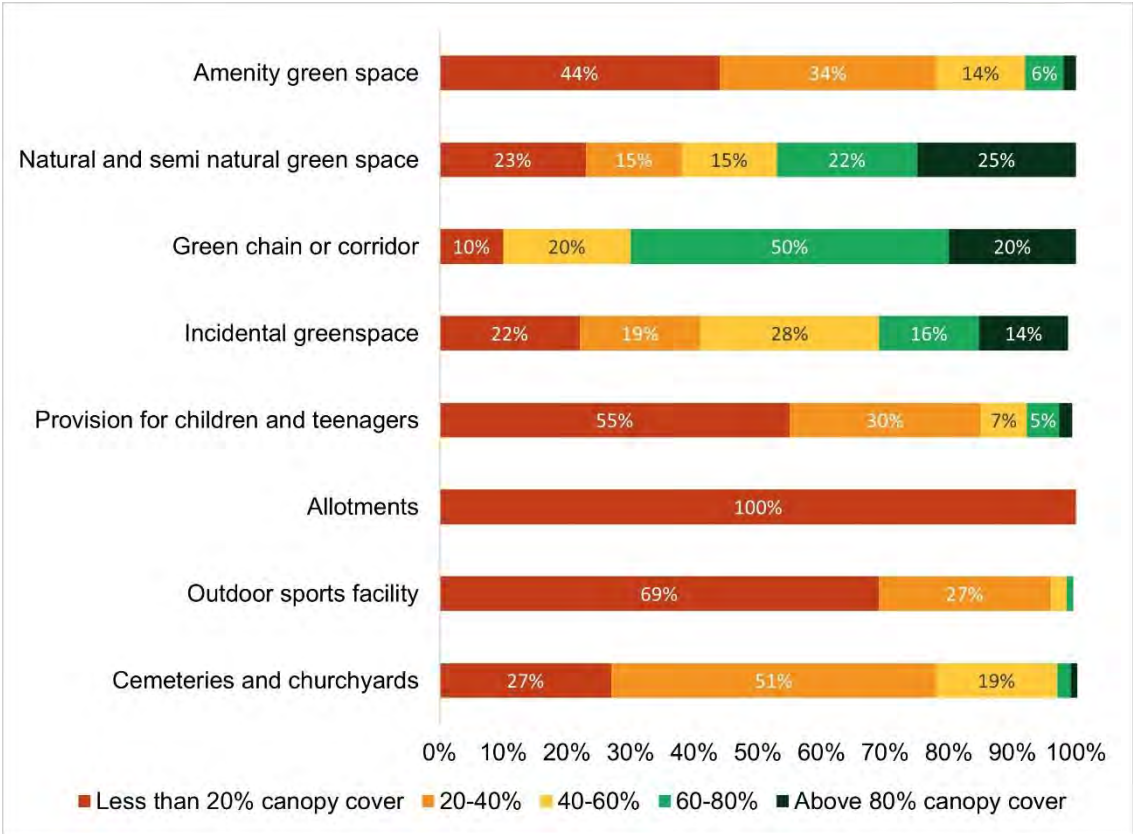
**7.52** Across Herefordshire, greenspaces have on average a third of their area covered by tree canopy. The amount of tree canopy coverage in open spaces varies depending on the typology (see **Figure 7.11**).

**7.53** The natural and semi-natural greenspace and green corridors and chains typologies have the most open spaces with very high tree canopy coverage. A

fifth of open spaces within these typologies have over 80% tree canopy cover. Incidental greenspace also has a good level of canopy cover. Less than a quarter of these types of open spaces have a very low canopy cover.

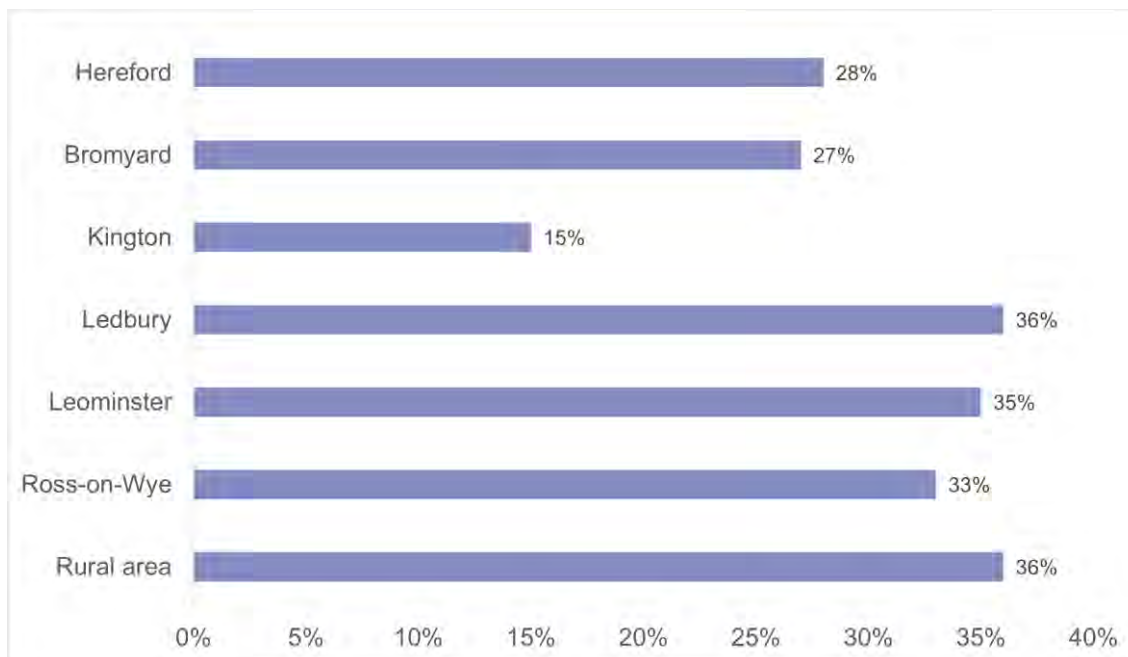
**7.54** Allotments have the lowest tree canopy cover, with all open spaces within these typologies having less than 20% tree canopy cover. There are only eight allotments identified in Herefordshire, so these typologies do not play a major role in overall open space provision in the county. Outdoor sports facilities also have lower canopy cover than other open space typologies.

**Figure 7.11: Tree canopy cover by typology**



**7.55** Figure 7.12 displays the average percentage tree canopy coverage within each of the settlements and rural areas.

Figure 7.12: Tree canopy coverage in open spaces by area



## Setting quality and value standards

**7.56** In order to develop a quality standard which is appropriate for the type and function of open spaces in Herefordshire. Quality and value standards were set by hierarchy level (where appropriate).

**7.57** Standards were set based on two factors:

- An assessment of what can reasonably expected from greenspaces and play spaces at different levels of the hierarchy (for example small sites would not be expected to have toilets or cafes but some variety of habitat, litter bins and either benches or footpaths may be expected); and
- A review of the scores achieved within the audited sites across Herefordshire to ensure the standards are aspirational but achievable within Herefordshire.

**7.58** The proposed quality and value standards are set out in **Table 7.5** (for accessible greenspace) and **Table 7.6** (for provision for children and teenagers).

**7.59** Quality and value standards have not been set for allotments, outdoor sports provision, cemeteries and churchyards or civic spaces.

**7.60** The audit only captured one site within the district hierarchy, Bromyard Downs, and one site within the wider neighbourhood hierarchy, King George V Playing Fields and Bishops Meadow. As a result of the limited audit information for accessible greenspaces within these hierarchies, benchmarks have not been set. For this study, these spaces have been assessed against the benchmark for the neighbourhood hierarchy, to reflect the fact that, in addition to their wider offer, they also provide local provision to the immediate vicinity.

**Table 7.5: Quality and value benchmarks for accessible greenspaces**

Hierarchy	Quality	Value
District*	(40)	(27)
Wider neighbourhood**	(62)	(68)
Neighbourhood	70	56
Local	46	31
Doorstep	39	25
Incidental	36	17

\* Scores achieved by Bromyard Downs

\*\* Scores achieved by King George V Playing Fields and Bishops Meadow



**Table 7.6: Quality and value benchmarks for provision for children and teenagers**

Hierarchy	Quality	Value
Neighbourhood	5	16
Local	5	16
Doorstep	4	9

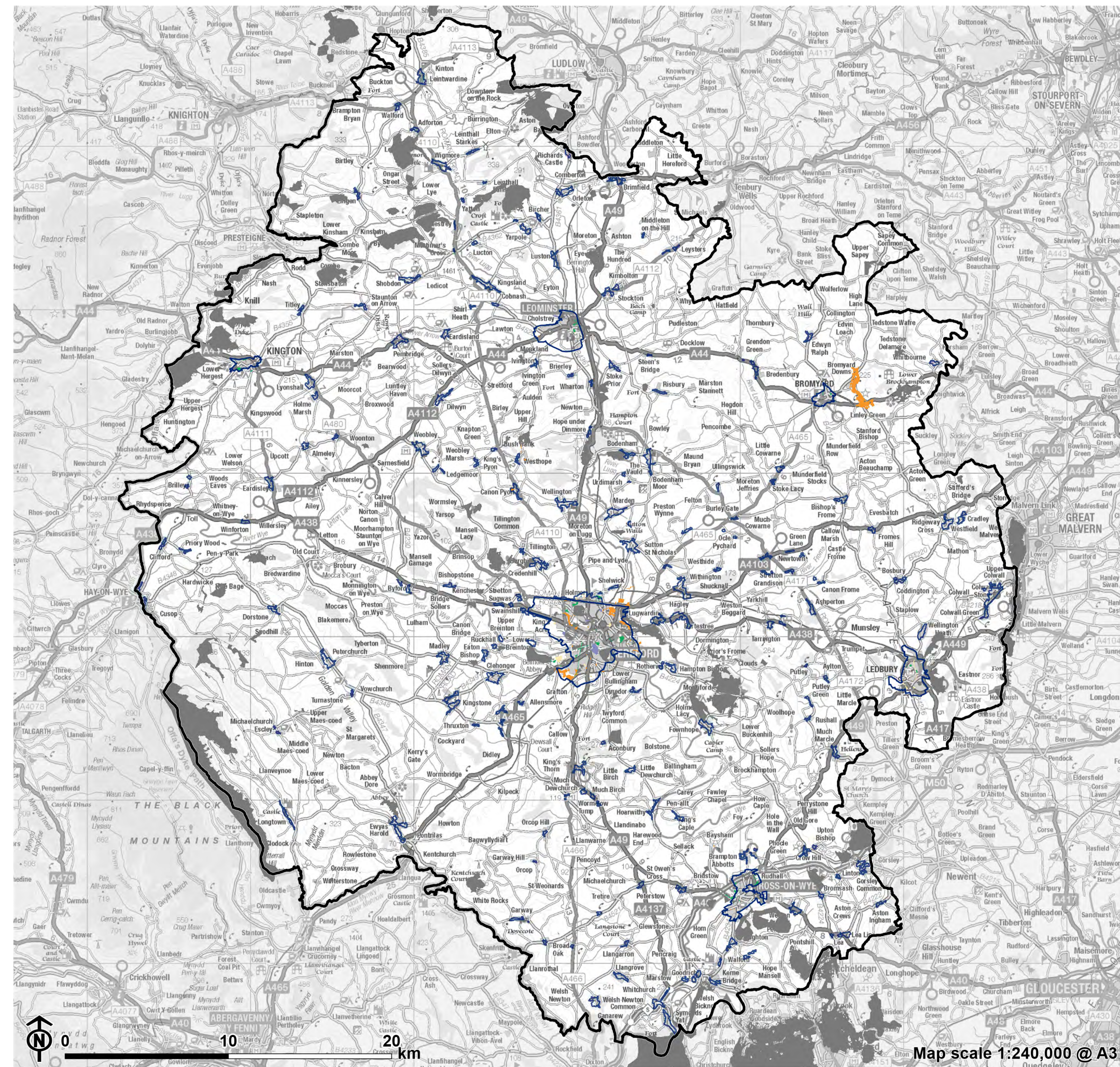
7.61 Each greenspace has been assessed against these criteria. The results are shown by settlement and rural area within the chapter nine. A full list of open spaces by quality and value is shown in **Appendix E**.

7.62 **Figure 7.13** to **Figure 7.19** show the spatial distribution of accessible greenspace by quality and value score. Many of the sites not audited include outdoor sports provision, often within schools, within settlements and large areas of open access of common land in the rural areas.

**Figure 7.13: Quality and value of audited open spaces in Herefordshire**

- Herefordshire boundary
- Settlement
- Open and play space quality and value**
- Higher quality, higher value
- Higher quality, lower value
- Lower quality, higher value
- Lower quality, lower value
- Not audited

'Quality' refers to aspects relating to management and the condition of features and facilities 'value' refers to the presence of various features and facilities, and value to the local community.



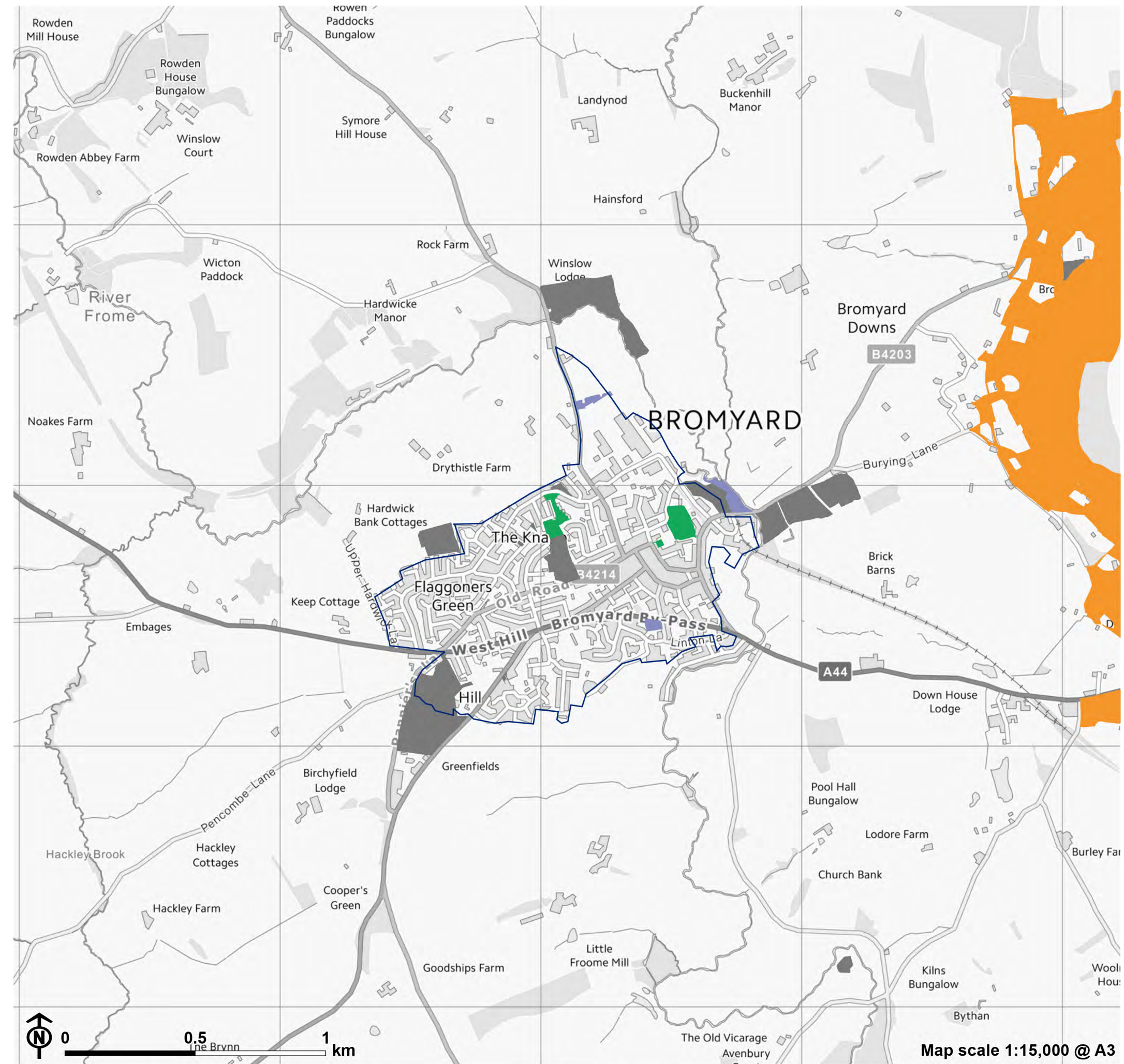
Source: Herefordshire Council, Natural England, Ordnance Survey

Map scale 1:240,000 @ A3

**Figure 7.14: Quality and value of audited open spaces in Bromyard**

- Herefordshire boundary
- Bromyard boundary
- Open and play space quality and value**
- Higher quality, higher value
- Higher quality, lower value
- Lower quality, higher value
- Lower quality, lower value
- Not audited

'Quality' refers to aspects relating to management and the condition of features and facilities 'value' refers to the presence of various features and facilities, and value to the local community.



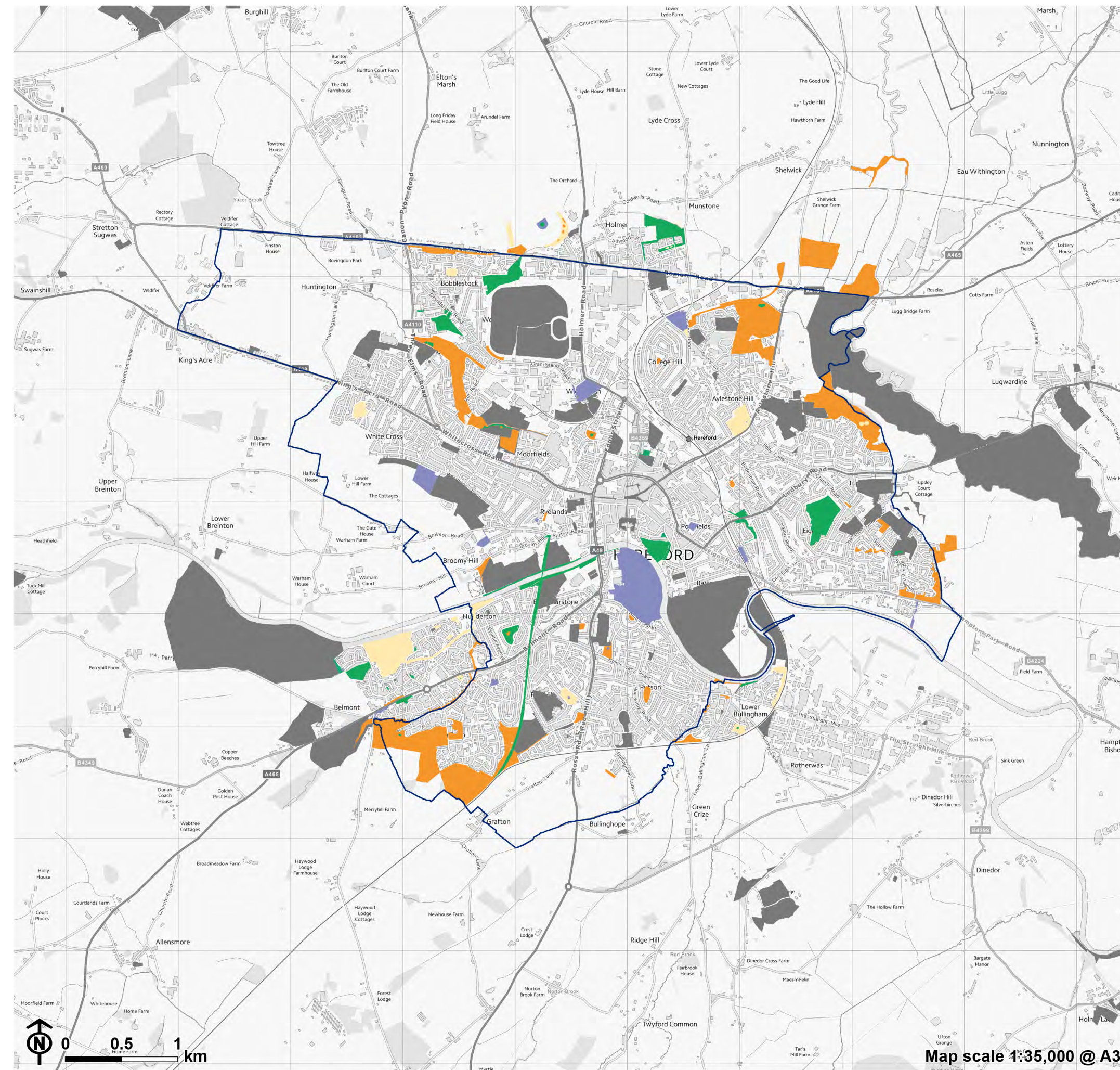
Source: Herefordshire Council, Natural England, Ordnance Survey

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**Figure 7.15: Quality and value of audited open spaces in Hereford**

- Herefordshire boundary
- Hereford boundary
- Open and play space quality and value**
- Higher quality, higher value
- Higher quality, lower value
- Lower quality, higher value
- Lower quality, lower value
- Not audited

'Quality' refers to aspects relating to management and the condition of features and facilities 'value' refers to the presence of various features and facilities, and value to the local community.



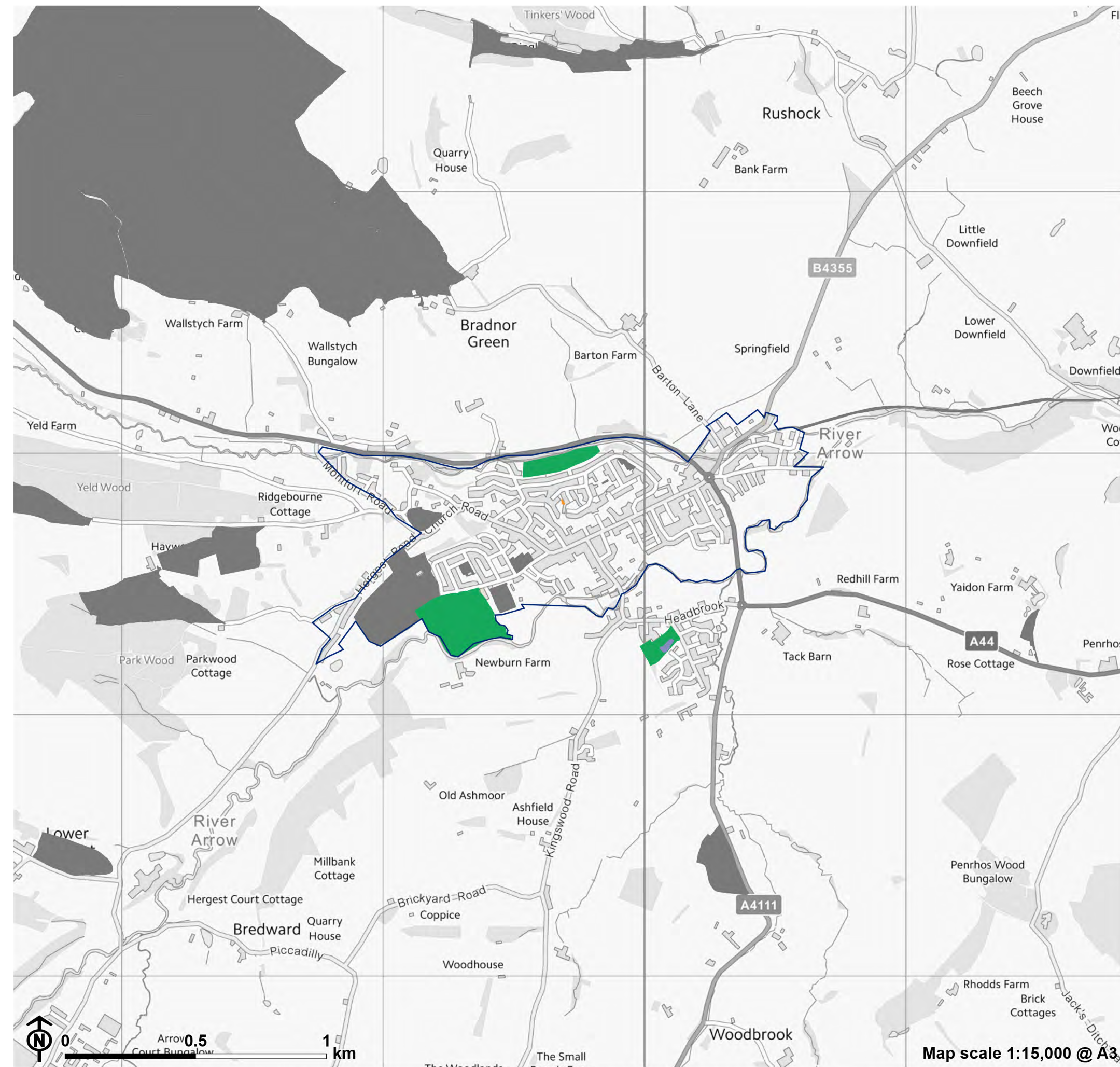
Source: Herefordshire Council, Natural England, Ordnance Survey

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**Figure 7.16: Quality and value of audited open spaces in Kington**

- Herefordshire boundary
- Kington boundary
- Open and play space quality and value**
  - Higher quality, higher value
  - Higher quality, lower value
  - Lower quality, higher value
  - Lower quality, lower value
  - Not audited

'Quality' refers to aspects relating to management and the condition of features and facilities 'value' refers to the presence of various features and facilities, and value to the local community.



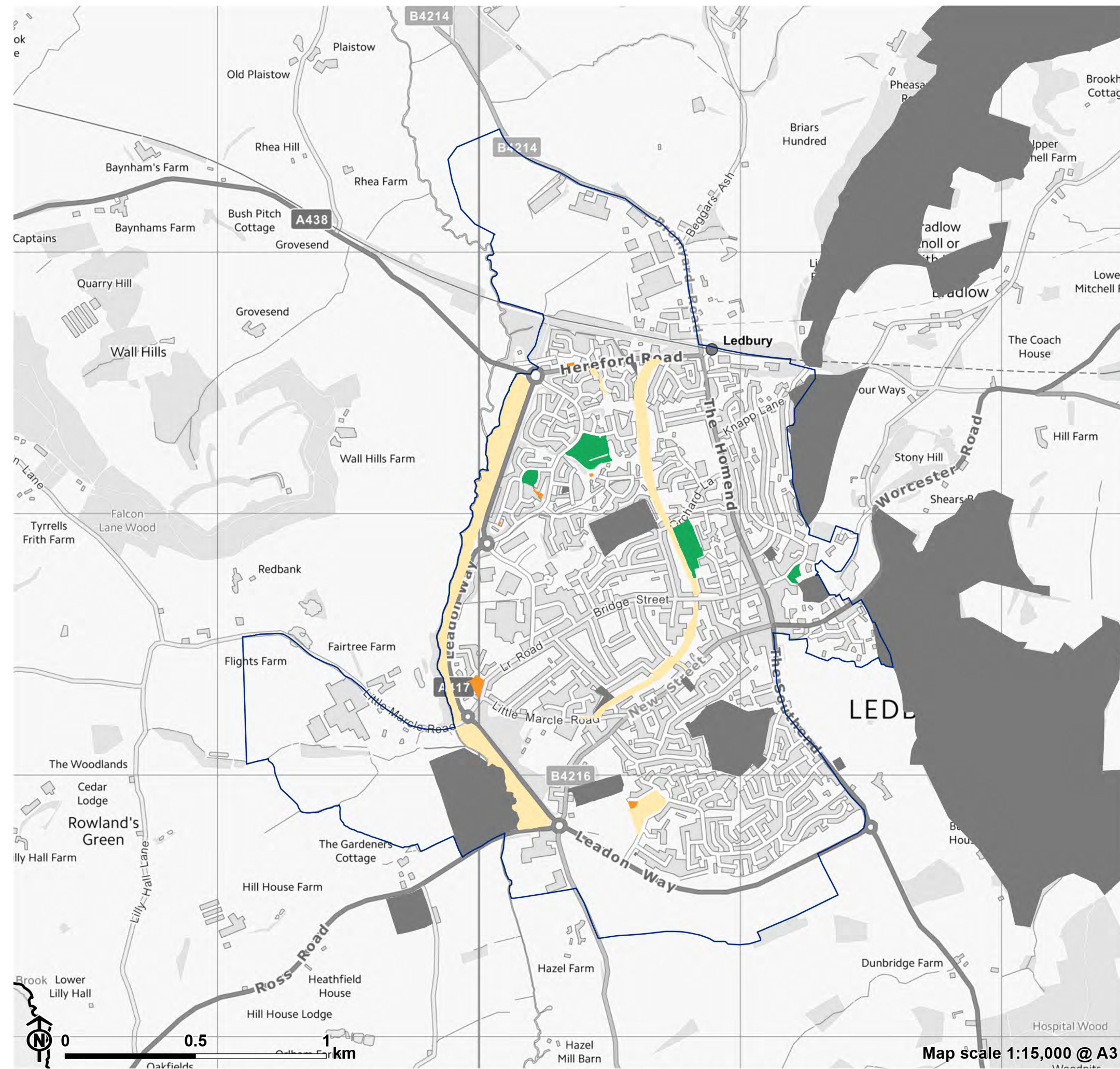
Source: Herefordshire Council, Natural England, Ordnance Survey

Map scale 1:15,000 @ A3

**Figure 7.17: Quality and value of audited open spaces in Ledbury**

- Herefordshire boundary
- Ledbury boundary
- Open and play space quality and value**
  - Higher quality, higher value
  - Higher quality, lower value
  - Lower quality, higher value
  - Lower quality, lower value
  - Not audited

'Quality' refers to aspects relating to management and the condition of features and facilities 'value' refers to the presence of various features and facilities, and value to the local community.



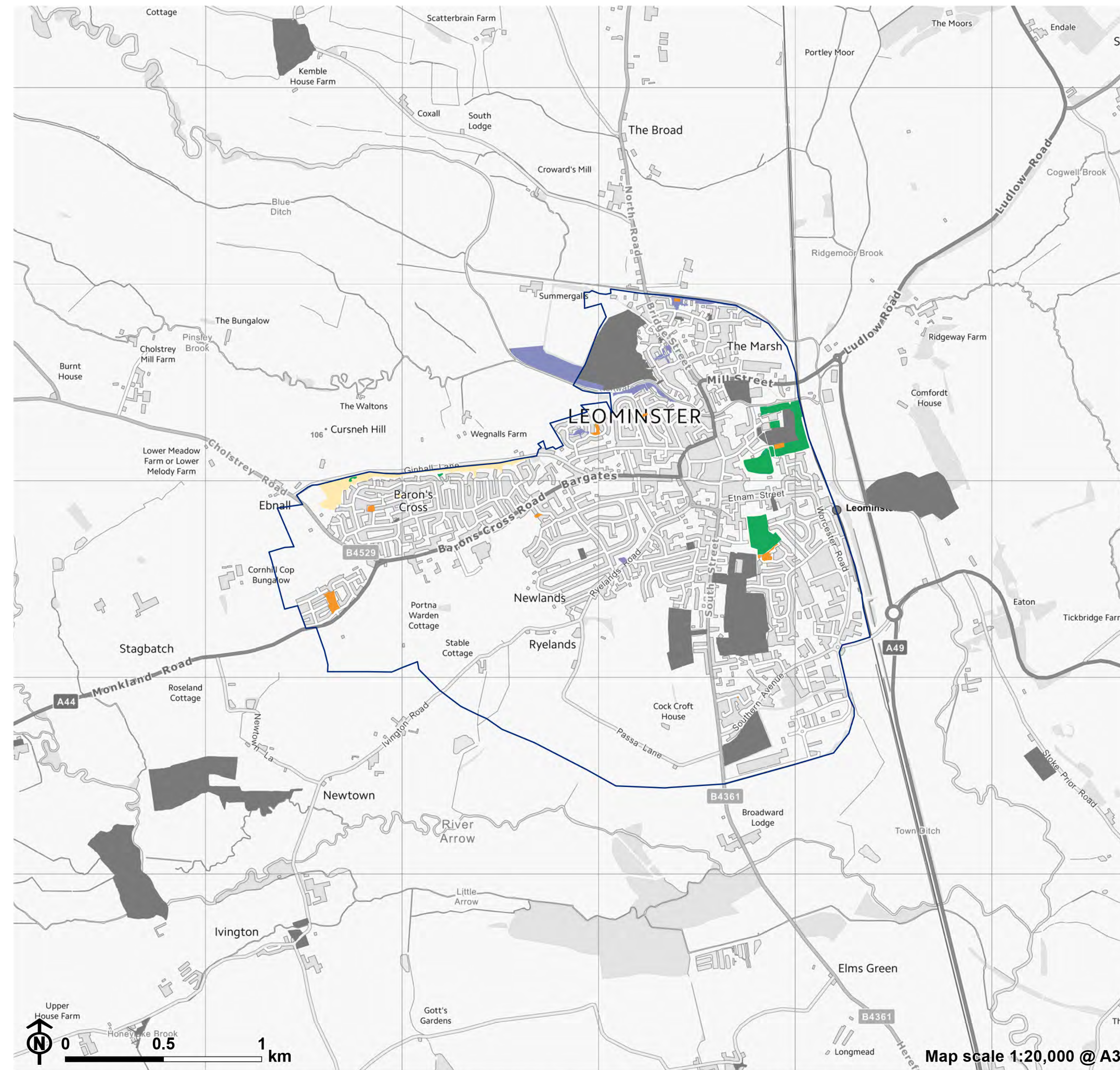
Map scale 1:15,000 @ A3

Source: Herefordshire Council, Natural England, Ordnance Survey

**Figure 7.18: Quality and value of audited open spaces in Leominster**

- Herefordshire boundary
- Leominster boundary
- Open and play space quality and value**
- Higher quality, higher value
- Higher quality, lower value
- Lower quality, higher value
- Lower quality, lower value
- Not audited

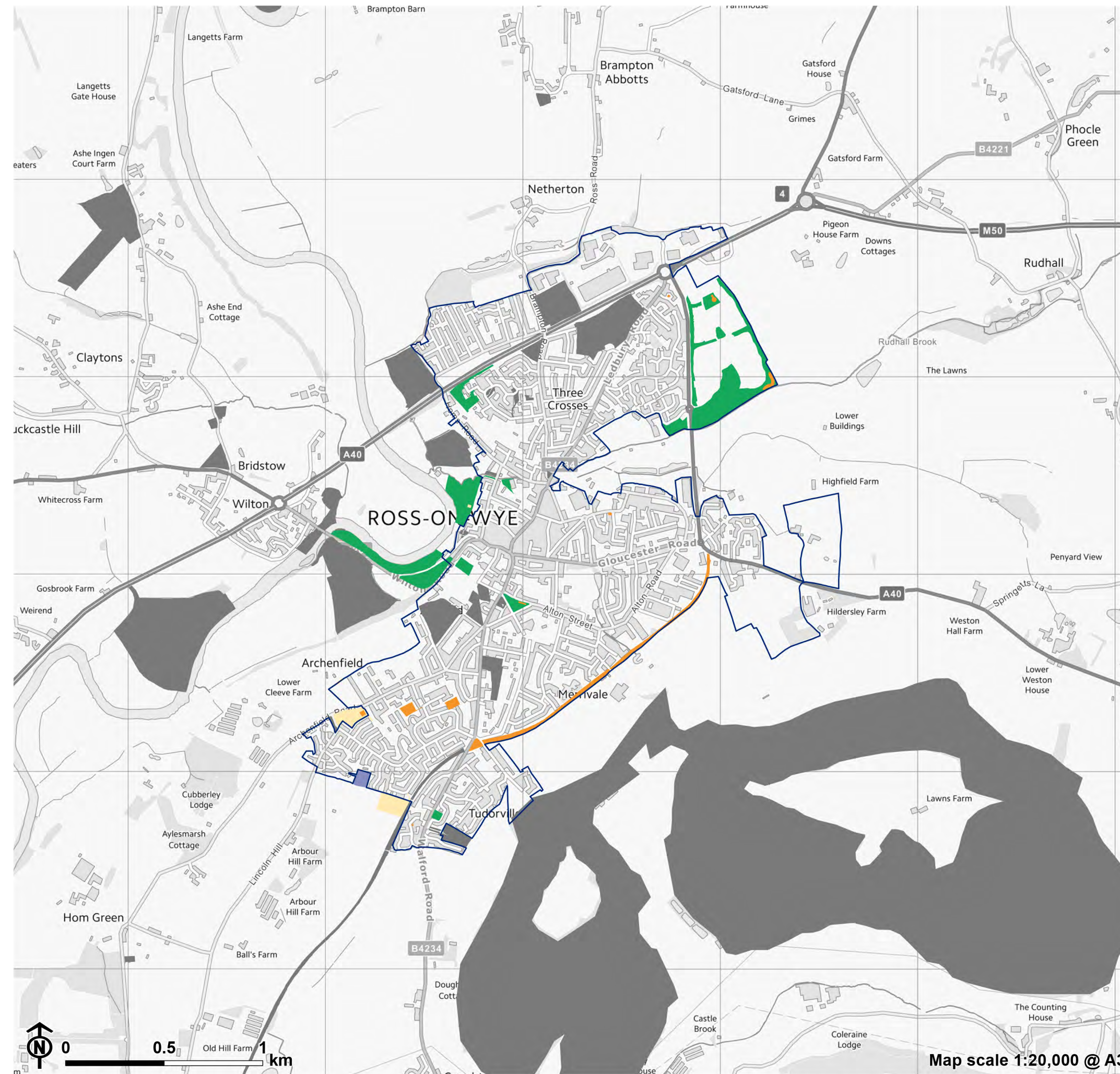
'Quality' refers to aspects relating to management and the condition of features and facilities 'value' refers to the presence of various features and facilities, and value to the local community.



Source: Herefordshire Council, Natural England, Ordnance Survey

Map scale 1:20,000 @ A3

**Figure 7.19: Quality and value of audited open spaces in Ross-on-Wye**



- Herefordshire boundary
- Ross-on-Wye boundary
- Open and play space quality and value**
- Higher quality, higher value
- Higher quality, lower value
- Lower quality, higher value
- Lower quality, lower value
- Not audited

'Quality' refers to aspects relating to management and the condition of features and facilities 'value' refers to the presence of various features and facilities, and value to the local community.



Map scale 1:20,000 @ A3

Source: Herefordshire Council, Natural England, Ordnance Survey