



Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council

Open Space Strategy 2011 - 2021

Review due 2016



NUNEATON & BEDWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Open space within the Borough is essential to our health and well-being. Well-used and maintained spaces make a considerable contribution to the quality of life of residents and visitors and to sustainable communities. They provide a place to meet, exercise and play and places to learn about nature or just enjoy a pleasant environment.

It is essential that these spaces are continually developed and protected as development within the borough is realised and new spaces created wherever possible to serve new communities as required. A high quality green environment is critical in enhancing the image of an area, helping to attract investors, visitors and residents alike.

With these ideals in mind Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council has risen to the challenge by preparing a strategy for its open spaces to raise their profile and ensure they meet the needs of local people.

Our Vision

“To maintain and enhance a network of high quality, accessible public open spaces that meets the needs and demands of our community”

NBBC Open Space Strategy

This strategy sets out the organisation's vision and the goals it wants to achieve, plus the resources, methods and time needed to meet them.

This strategy for open spaces therefore.....

...Provides a shared vision for the future and ensures the linkages are evident.

...Helps in identifying improvements required and setting priorities.

...Helps make the case for funding opportunities and planning obligations.

...Will respond to the changing planning and policy background.

...Increases public expectations in relation to open space issues.

Nuneaton and Bedworth Community Plan

The Boroughs Community Plan, entitled 'Shaping our Future' is the overarching strategy produced by the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), and brings together organisations from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors to work together as a single group for the benefit of an area.

Their key priorities include:

- Improving the well-being of communities by helping people to work together, support and understand each other.
- To make Nuneaton and Bedworth a safer place for everyone where day-to-day quality of life is not marred by the fear of crime.
- To improve access to health care and improve life expectancy within the borough, by promoting more healthier and active lifestyles.
- To have a high quality environment with increased biodiversity and a sustainable approach to waste and energy.

- To improve the Boroughs transport infrastructure in order to provide easier access to key services and facilities.

Quality accessible public open space will make a significant impact on the delivery of these key objectives.

We have therefore taken a strategic assessment of all the accessible public open space within the borough in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility. We have combined this information with our extensive knowledge of local circumstances to produce a typology and hierarchy of public open space within the borough.

Hierarchy/Typology Of Public Open Space

Destination Parks (Dest)

Community Parks (Comm.)

Neighbourhood/Local (Loc)

Incidental (Inci)

Cemeteries

Allotments

For the purpose of the typology we have included formal, semi-formal and natural urban green space (Wildspaces) under the same typology.

Destination Parks

These particular sites would normally cover an area of between 10 and 65 hectares and contain a whole range of quality facilities and experiences for all members of the public. These can be classed as our main parks and would allow the visitor to spend several hours enjoying the open space environment

Community Parks

These sites are normally between 1 and 10 hectares and include some of our most established and utilised areas of public open space. There are 30 of these sites within the borough covering an area of 177 hectares

Local Parks

These sites are typically 0.4 – 10.0 hectares and contain in excess of 35 formal and wildspaces throughout the borough covering an area of over 50 hectares, including such significant sites as, Haunchwood Recreation Ground and Walkway and Collycroft Recreation Ground. They act in many cases as the only useable pieces of Public Open Space in their locality and as the conduit linking together the green infrastructure.

Incidental Open Space

These areas include all other pieces of public open space found throughout the borough and are normally up to 0.4 hectares in size.

They include such areas as grass verges but also some significant sites in housing areas such as Butlers Crescent and Blackatree Road, which form an important role in breaking up large blocks of housing.

The use / misuse for recreation of these areas will be considered later in this strategy - both in terms of pressure on them in areas otherwise deprived of open space and in terms of physical measures that can be taken to prevent their use.

Cemeteries

These are an important part of the councils green space, not only acting as functional sites i.e. as burial grounds, but as places of sanctuary for the bereaved attending graves and seeking a place for quiet contemplation and also as a historical archive with the many memorials.

We have five active sites within the borough and are in the process of extending our site at Marston Lane, Bedworth whilst negotiating the purchase of additional land in Nuneaton to sustain burial space for the next 50-100 years. We also are responsible for five closed churchyards.

Allotments

There are 23 council owned sites across the borough, which have not been included directly within this strategy but will be dealt with under a separate strategy.

Quantity

All known public accessible open space was mapped onto the GIS system, this indicates not only the type i.e. falling into one of the above categories but also the geographical spread across the borough.

Using the broad assessments identified within the strategy it would appear that with formal provision within the borough' there is an overall **deficit** in provision (2.06 ha per 1000 population compared with the six acre standard of 2.4 ha per 1000 population), but it would appear that we have **sufficient** natural accessible greenspace at 2.24 ha per 1000 population – (when our landholding is combined with that accessible land in private ownership).

At present the level of growth in relation to housing and employment development is still to be determined. However It is essential to take into consideration the impact development has. It will not only put pressure on land holdings within the Borough but also pressure on existing facilities.

The proposed increase in the number of households will require a significant increase in the accessible public open space within the borough, to ensure we meet the broad assessments within the appropriate standards together with improvements in our main pieces of Public Open Space in accommodating the potential increase in numbers.

Quality

All destination, community / neighbourhood, and local sites were assessed using a methodology derived from the national quality standard for parks and green spaces – the Green Flag Award. This award is the nationally recognised assessment tool for the measurement of quality within public open space.

Focusing on eight headline areas, which are further broken down into sub-criteria.

The quality assessments carried out for this strategy can be used as a baseline to compare performance against the requirements of Green Flag as they replicate the field visit stage of the Green Flag process.

Each site was assessed and given a score against the Green Flag criteria. From this an overall percentage score was then calculated. The average quality score for the borough is 39% which when placed on the scale below indicates that overall green space quality is poor when compared to the expectations of the Green Flag award.

GREEN FLAG QUALITY SCALE				
VERY POOR	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	VERY GOOD
0% to 14%	15% to 44%	45% to 64%	65% to 74%	75% to 100%

At present, no open space in the borough would achieve Green Flag Status.

Although the majority of sites are not going to be submitted for Green Flag consideration, the council will continue to strive to meet the standards expected of the award scheme, and as a bare minimum, all open spaces should seek to be classified as fair on the Green Flag quality scale outlined above.

There are a number of policies linked directly to improving the quality scores of our green space within the document, including seeking Green Flags for each of our destination parks during the life of the strategy.

Accessibility

An analysis of accessibility – based on the geographical distribution of sites throughout the borough is represented visually by mapping sites. This has been developed utilising local standards for open space catchments, which we have formulated using national guidance and local knowledge of the borough.

Local Standards for Open space Catchments:

<u>Greenspace Type</u>	<u>Catchment Area Radius</u>	<u>Walking Times</u>
Destination Park	1000 metres	15-20 minutes
Community Park	600 metres	10-12 minutes
Local Park	400 metres	5-8 minutes

By creating these visual images in this way, indicative areas of deficiencies and potential surpluses can be easily identified.

We have stated within the strategy that all residents within the borough should have access to a “Community Park”. This has highlighted several areas of deficiency, which will need to be addressed by either upgrading existing sites, partnership working or by the provision of new sites as the borough grows in line with the agreed options as part of the Borough Plan.

General Principles / Policies Relating To Green Space

- We have developed a number of key policies to enable the continued improvement, protection and development of public greenspace within the borough that will meet the needs of its diverse population, for the next ten years.
- The strategy takes into account the proposed increases in population and integrates directly with the Green Infrastructure Study as part of the councils Borough Plan. We have identified key routes and proposed new links to enable the future development of publicly accessible land, creating a “Green Network” of continuous routes and wildlife corridors.
- We will seek to assess all land to establish whether it may be surplus to green space needs. Such sites will be further reviewed to establish whether they are surplus to requirements and whether they therefore merit protection under emerging planning policy on green space or could be considered for alternative use.
- A coherent, unified approach will not only be used in the design of our spaces but in the use of materials and the installation of features into sites.
- The development of strategies for both playing pitches and allotments.
- To work with our grounds maintenance contractors, in striving to ensure that there is continuous improvement in the quality of the grounds maintenance of all our open spaces.
- Identified the need for a commitment to training to ensure well-trained, motivated employees.

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- To work with children and young people living in the Borough, to ensure they have access to play provision and teenage facilities that meets their needs in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility and that the equipment and facilities are inclusive, appropriate and stimulating for a range of age groups and abilities.
- To establish the play ranger service as an integral part of the parks and countryside service, supporting the play programme and advocating the use of green space as an important tool in children and young people's development.

Cross Cutting Policies

- The development of a marketing strategy, that will encompass communication, stronger branding of sites and other "products" of the service.
- We will address the key barriers to the use and quality of our green space as highlighted by our customers, most notably anti-social behaviour, dog fouling, vandalism and the public's sense of personal safety.
- The review of on-site supervision of our green space in light of the barriers to use, assessing the viability of site based staff / volunteer rangers and how effective they may be in the encouraging community cohesion and improved use of sites.
- A review of all health and safety procedures and systems, as they affect our communities and staff alike.
- To identify the essential affect greenspace has to people's physical and mental health and well-being. Including development of partnership working with local communities, organizations and individuals in ensuring that green space becomes a real choice in acting as a catalyst in the "battle" against many of the health issues that are affecting our communities.

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- To continue to develop strong relationships with external organisations, agencies and our residents. Working closely with these bodies and individuals to provide, develop and enhance services. We will continue to work with our partners to improve the Borough's green spaces: from listening to what local users want to adopting new ideas on their use, layout, management and securing of grant funding.
- The, establishment, development and support of "Friends of Groups", for all our Destination and Community Parks be encouraged over the life of the strategy, to represent the views of local people and help guide the future development of facilities.
- The continued support and development of the "Conservation Volunteer" programme to assist in the protection and enhancement of semi-natural green space.

Biodiversity and Sustainability Policies

- Work to inform and support Planning Policy in relation to the emerging Green Infrastructure Study and to develop the links between existing green space and potential green links and routes that are proposed as part of the Borough Plan.
- Work to inform and support Development Control in its duties under the NERC Act, including technical advice and training in the development of more robust procedures relating to future planning applications and the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, wildlife and habitat.
- Work to ensure that sites within our own ownership are exemplars of good practice, protecting and enhancing wildlife sites and corridors and to increase the area of, quality of and amount of linkages between habitat areas.
- Work with other agencies – to positively influence wildlife habitat and biodiversity.

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- We will continue to support the work of the West Midlands Biodiversity Partnership and the ongoing Habitat Biodiversity Audit.
- To minimise detrimental impacts of the Parks and Countryside Services operations and management on the natural environment and to maximise positive impacts.
- A review of which sites / parts of sites can appropriately continue to be fished without unacceptable detriment to wildlife - the Council will seek to let its waters to a formally constituted angling club.

Funding

- The delivery of the policies and priorities identified within the strategy are and will be totally dependant on the future funding and investment (both internally and externally) that can be afforded to the service.
- The main planks of the policies relate to the improving of the overall quality of our Green Spaces within the borough and will require a review of our financing to determine how these policies will be shaped and how they can be delivered and maintained over the life of the strategy.
- Improvements to Public Green Space will be linked to the key aims identified both within the Corporate and Community Plans.
- To continue to access external funding opportunities wherever possible in delivering the priorities within the strategy, developing potential partnerships for delivery and staff allocated the task of taking forward the most time effective opportunities.

Strategy Review

An annual review will be carried out as part of “Service Planning” to address any key changes in corporate policy, new corporate plan annual milestones, new legislation and any changes necessitated by other major influences on policy and working practice.

A more comprehensive review will be carried out 5 years into the adoption of the strategy, to relate to and reflect the impact of the future implementation of the Borough Plan.

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1.0 Introduction

Open space within the borough is essential to our health and well-being. Well-used and maintained spaces make a considerable contribution to the quality of life of residents and visitors and to sustainable communities. They provide a place to meet, exercise and play and places to learn about nature or just enjoy a pleasant environment.

They are venues for affordable recreation and provide opportunities for young people to undertake creative play and “hang out” away from more sensitive living space. Ideally, green spaces wherever possible should contain spaces aimed at serving a number of functions rather than designated in a single dimensional way.

A high quality green environment can also boost the image of an area, helping to attract new investors, visitors and residents alike. With the increasing pressure for development within the borough it is particularly important that its green spaces and access to them is protected and enhanced and new public spaces created.

With these ideals in mind Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council has risen to the challenge by preparing a strategy for its open spaces to raise their profile and ensure they meet the needs of local people.

Our Vision

This vision for Nuneaton and Bedworth’s open spaces was developed with the support of members of the Open Space Strategy Steering Group.

“To maintain and enhance a network of accessible, high quality public open space that meets the needs and demands of our community”

This strategy will help address this by:

- Developing a clear and shared vision between the community, Council and other stakeholders

NBBC Open Space Strategy

- Demonstrating the value of open space in achieving corporate, strategic and community objectives and to develop the link with the emerging Borough Plan.
- Establishing a cross-cutting framework for provision, design, management, accessibility (ensuring sites are as inclusive as possible) and maintenance.
- Ensuring that existing and future open spaces enhance the quality of life of local communities and the environment and promote greater civic pride and social inclusion.
- Maximising resources to support open space improvements through external funding opportunities and allocation of revenue budget.
- To engage with communities so as to promote local ownership of open space.
- Providing a clear framework for voluntary and community groups to contribute to on going management and maintenance of open spaces.
- To promote a culture where the health and safety of staff, residents and visitors is inherent within the design, management and maintenance of our public open spaces.
- Providing evidence to underpin the negotiations for “planning gain” relating to open space provision within new development and to support the development of existing sites to meet quality targets.
- Being the basis for the development of investment-backed annual service plans.

The strategy has used baseline information collected as part of the 2007 audit of open space driven by Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17, 2002), which looked at the condition of our open space assets. This information has influenced sections of this and other strategies notably, the play strategy.

Coupled with guidance from the former Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) now Communities and Local Government (CLG) and the governments advisor on architecture, urban design and public space The Commission for the Built Environment (CABE), the council has a strong framework for the continued development of this strategy and, with its partners, including the community, its successful implementation.

This Open Space Strategy will be one of a suite of documents supporting the Borough Plan. The strategy will inform planning policy and enable Council to make a robust defence of those open spaces it wants to protect and also to identify open spaces that require enhancement through planning gain and desirable areas for new provision.

1.1 Strategy Adoption

This Strategy will be adopted for the period 2011-2021, but will be reviewed in 2016 and updated as required during the life of the strategy to relate to and reflect the impact of the future implementation of the Borough Plan.

1.2 Policies

For the purpose of this report policies succeeded by a (C), are those that have an effect corporately and those marked in green and succeeded with a (D), are those that have a departmental effect.

2.0 Equality

The Open Space Strategy will be subject to a comprehensive Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) to identify what impact or likely affect will follow from its implementation for different groups in the community.

The EIA will be able to anticipate the equality consequences of a particular policy and ensure that as far as possible, any negative consequence for a particular group or sector of the community are eliminated, minimised or counterbalanced by other measures.

3.0 Benefits of Open Space

Open space is an essential ingredient of successful neighbourhoods and it provides a wide range of social, economic and environmental benefits to local communities. There is huge national demand for better quality open spaces. Surveys repeatedly show how much the public values them, while research reveals how closely the quality of public spaces links to levels of health, crime and the quality of life in every neighbourhood.

In Nuneaton and Bedworth **open space** includes parks and public gardens, formal recreation facilities, children's play areas, teenage shelters and games areas, natural and semi-natural urban green spaces, amenity grassland, allotments, open space corridors, cemeteries and accessible countryside on the urban fringe.

Well-designed **open space** provides space for recreational activities, improving physical health and fitness, mental health and well being. Open spaces like allotments are also productive, yielding the fresh fruit and vegetables that are essential to a healthy diet.

Open space affords opportunities for social interaction between people of different communities, fostering social inclusion and community development. It can often become a focus for community activity, involvement and capacity building, thereby helping to develop citizenship and local pride and reducing anti-social behaviour and crime.

Open space provides opportunities for people to get involved in creative and cultural activities by supplying a venue for events and shows or public art installations. In themselves, open spaces contribute to heritage and culture by providing reservoirs of collective memory. For example, cemeteries can operate as the biography of our communities containing important historical and cultural features that help identify our heritage.

Good quality **open space** contributes significantly to our urban regeneration and renewal projects by improving the image of the place and attracting investment.

NBBC Open Space Strategy

It improves investor and resident perception of the place by raising confidence in the area. Quality open space is known to have a significant positive impact on house prices, supporting the creation of stable housing markets.

Open space corridors provide visual interest along main roads and can improve drivers' perceptions of the Borough, encouraging tourism in the future. Open space helps create an attractive environment in which to live, work, visit and invest, thereby assisting economic growth in the Borough.

A high quality public environment makes a positive contribution to the townscape. Attractive parks, squares, gardens and other public spaces create a pleasant and varied townscape improving the setting of the built environment. In town centres, a pleasant and well maintained environment supports a healthy economy as it attracts new businesses and workers and increases the number of people visiting retail areas.

Open space provides a wealth of opportunities for outdoor play, which is known to have developmental and therapeutic benefits for children and young people. It is important for building social, emotional and life skills and can provide a means for children to learn about risk and develop confidence and independence. **Open space** helps children and young people to stay healthy and tackle problems of obesity by providing opportunities for exercising and fresh air. It can also provide essential diversionary activities for young people, helping to reduce juvenile nuisance. Spaces that are designed with young people's involvement also offer a safe place for young people to meet, play and 'hang out'.

Well designed **open space** contributes towards ecological diversity, supports environmental sustainability and helps to counter pollution. Within urban open space, varied habitats help to relieve the monotony of the urban landscape with different colours and sounds and help to bring the delights of the countryside into our towns. As well as providing important visual amenity benefits in built up areas urban open space gives people the chance to experience and learn about nature and wildlife close to where they live.

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Open space can function as an 'outdoor classroom' offering formal and informal learning opportunities for schools and communities, thereby contributing to lifelong learning and helping to improve educational attainment.

This strategy provides a working document for users and managers to direct the protection, maintenance and development of **open spaces** and ensure that they continue to provide as many benefits as possible to residents and visitors to Nuneaton and Bedworth.

4.0 Why Prepare an Open Space Strategy?

A strategy sets out an organisation's vision and the goals it wants to achieve, plus the resources, methods and time needed to meet them.

This strategy for open spaces...

...Provides a shared vision for the future and ensures the linkages are evident.

The strategy will help everyone understand the value of parks and open spaces in achieving corporate, strategic and community objectives. Open space is an important element of other Council strategies. The Open Space Strategy is therefore important in establishing a policy framework for provision, design, management, accessibility and maintenance and for establishing political and inter-departmental officer support and responsibility.

...Provides a framework for community groups.

Nuneaton and Bedworth is developing a mechanism for developing Parks "Friends of Groups", which will help ensure that those parts of the open space network meet the needs of local people, and provide a clear framework for voluntary and community groups to contribute to on going management and maintenance of open spaces. Nuneaton and Bedworth has used the strategy process as a catalyst to enhance community engagement and is committed to ongoing consultation and feedback to ensure the needs of existing and future communities are being met.

...Helps in identifying improvements required and setting priorities.

The strategy will ensure that existing and future open spaces enhance the quality of life of local communities and the environment and promote greater civic pride and social inclusion. It will identify what needs protecting, enhancing or creating and will help recognise open space that is not achieving objectives, which may then be considered as part of rationalisation.

...Helps make the case for funding opportunities and planning obligations.

Nuneaton and Bedworth has already had success in accessing funds for regeneration. The Council will continue to make applications where appropriate and will aim to maximise resources to support open space improvements through external funding

opportunities as well as allocation of revenue budgets. This Strategy sets out the policies and aspirations for the Borough's open space, which will aid future applications for funding and give developers a clear view on what might be required via planning obligations and other funding mechanisms.

...Will respond to the changing planning and policy background.

Since the final report of the Urban Task Force in 1999 '*Towards an Urban Renaissance*', the Government has increasingly promoted a holistic approach towards urban regeneration, which has recognised the vital role of urban open space in achieving that renaissance. The 2001 report of the Urban Parks Forum and Round Three of the Beacon Council scheme both noted that those authorities with an open space strategy were the most successful at maximising internal and external resources aimed at open space improvement. Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 on Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation urges the need for strategic assessments of community need for open space, sport and recreation facilities to inform the Development Plan process.

...Increases public expectations in relation to open space issue.

The People's Panel experience showed that open space issues are often at the forefront of communities' aspirations for change. This experience is echoed and reflected in changing policy background in local authorities and central government.

It was against this background that Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council launched the following initiatives to deliver these aspirations:

- An 8 year, 2 million pound, capital programme of playground refurbishment across the Borough.
- A successful bid to the Big Lottery Fund for our Play Ranger Service, which has been mainstreamed funded by the Council.
- The support of members for a Stage 1 Heritage Lottery Fund Bid (HLF) for Riversley Park.

5.0 The Scope of the Open Space Strategy

The strategy has considered all publicly owned land greater than 0.2 hectares in size that is used formally or informally for recreation and/or is managed for nature conservation or visual amenity, coupled with land in private ownership i.e. canal corridors and public rights of way.

Land in other ownership i.e. agricultural land and private gardens has been evaluated as part of the strategy for its biodiversity but not included as accessible greenspace, this will be addressed as part of the Green Infrastructure Study (GIS).

The methodology undertaken comprises two distinct sections,

- Firstly an audit and assessment of the quantity, quality and accessibility of Nuneaton and Bedworth's open space.
- Secondly, the strategy itself as the authority's response to the findings of the audit and how it will achieve the vision.

6.0 The Local, Regional and National Context

6.1 Nuneaton and Bedworth

The Borough of Nuneaton and Bedworth covers an area of 30 square miles, to the east of the West Midlands conurbation, and is predominantly bordered by rural areas of Warwickshire and Leicestershire and by the city of Coventry to the south.

The population of the Borough totals 122,000, (mid-term population estimate 2009) which is a 2.4% rise from the census of 2001 and accounts for 22.8% of the population of Warwickshire. This figure has grown by almost 10% since 1971 and it is further predicted that by 2033, that the population is projected to increase by a further 13.7%, with the eldest age group (those aged 85 and over) projected to increase by over 194% over the same period.

The economic base of the Borough now relies to a large extent on manufacturing, wholesale, retail and distribution industries, which make up a significantly larger proportion of the local economy than of the national economy. Within the manufacturing sector the distribution and service industries have replaced the traditional mining, textile and brick industries on which the area relied for several centuries. The public sector is now the largest source of employment in the borough.

Compared to regional and national averages, Nuneaton and Bedworth has a relatively high proportion of low paid employment, for example distribution and retail occupations. Around 30% of residents in Nuneaton and Bedworth are in professional occupations, compared to more than 42% nationally. This has been reflected in Nuneaton and Bedworth residents traditionally having lower household income levels than both County and national averages. Nuneaton and Bedworth also has by far the lowest jobs density in the County, i.e. jobs per person, another good indicator of the health of the local labour market.

House prices in the Borough reflect many of these characteristics, with housing affordability for those on the lowest incomes actually more favourable than elsewhere in the County. Although Nuneaton and Bedworth has the highest volume of social sector housing stock in the County, there are still more than 3,900 households on the Local Authority housing register.

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Population has increased by 5.9% since 1981. Nuneaton and Bedworth has a slightly younger population than the Warwickshire average with 36.7% of the population under 30. Since 1991 the elderly and very elderly age groups have increased considerably – the 75-84 age group by 24%, and those over 85 by 42%. Groups other than White British account for 9.1% of the population. Other than Christianity, Sikh and Muslim faiths are the predominant religions.

The health of people in Nuneaton and Bedworth is generally worse than the England average. Life expectancy is shorter than the England average and deaths from smoking are worse than the average.

Estimated levels of physically active adults, obese adults and adults who eat healthily are worse than the England average.

Nuneaton and Bedworth has performed relatively poorly on the Census health indicators. 19.1% of the population has a limiting long-term illness (11th of 34 West Midlands local authorities) and 9.7% class their health as 'not good' (10th regionally).

Nuneaton and Bedworth has the highest levels of deprivation in the county of Warwickshire. The borough ranks 108th out of 326 local authority districts (1st being the most deprived). Under the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), each local authority area is divided into small Super Output Areas (SOAs), of which there are 32,482 in the whole of England and 70 in Nuneaton and Bedworth. Each Super Output area contains approximately 2,000 persons. The nine most deprived Super Output Areas in Warwickshire are located in Nuneaton and Bedworth.

There are nine SOAs in Warwickshire ranked within the top 10% most deprived SOAs nationally on the overall Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010. These are all located within Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough. This compares with only six SOAs in the IMD 2007 and two SOAs in the IMD 2004.

The most deprived SOA in the County is Bar Pool North and Crescents SOA in Nuneaton. This area is ranked 492nd out of the 32,482 SOAs in England on the overall Index of Multiple Deprivation, placing it within the top 2% most deprived SOAs nationally.

In terms of multiple deprivation, there are a number of areas which feature within the top 10% most deprived areas nationally in a number of different domains. Bar Pool North

and Crescents, Camp Hill Village Centre and Kingswood Grove Farm and Rural in Nuneaton feature in the top 10% most deprived areas in five out of the seven domains. These areas experience multiple-domain deprivation associated with income, employment, health, education, and crime. In addition to this, Abbey Town Centre and Priory and Hill Top in Wem Brook ward show up within the top 10% most deprived SOAs nationally in four out of the seven different domains, whilst Middlemarch & Swimming Pool SOA and Bede East SOA feature within three.

Half of the borough area, largely to the East and West, is green belt with areas to the North classed as Countryside. There are substantial areas of managed open space within the more urban areas and which connect to and provide access to the wider countryside. Parks and open spaces are important landmarks in the borough with The Miners' Welfare Park and Riversley Park instantly recognisable to residents and many visitors.

7.0 Local, Regional and National Strategies

7.1 Introduction

Local, regional and national strategies and plans provide a framework to influence the development of an Open Space Strategy. Sport, open-spaces and recreation all contribute to people's quality of life and consequently cross a number of national and local government competencies including: planning, leisure and recreation, health, education and crime.

7.2 Local Policy

7.2.1 Nuneaton and Bedworth Community Plan

The Borough's Community Plan, entitled 'Shaping our Future' is the overarching strategy produced by the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), and brings together organisations from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors to work together as a single group for the benefit of an area.

Their key priorities include:

- Improving the well-being of communities by helping people to work together, support and understand each other.
- To make Nuneaton and Bedworth a safer place for everyone where day-to-day quality of life is not marred by the fear of crime.
- To improve access to health care and improve life expectancy within the borough, by promoting more healthier and active lifestyles.
- To have a high quality environment with increased biodiversity and a sustainable approach to waste and energy.
- To improve the Borough's transport infrastructure in order to provide easier access to key services and facilities

Quality accessible public open space will make a significant impact on the delivery of these key objectives.

7.2.2 Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council Corporate Plan

The Council's Corporate Plan has recently been refreshed and covers the period 2007-2021, to complement the sustainable community plan

The vision and corporate aim stated in the Corporate Plan is that:

“By 2021, we shall achieve the greatest improvement in the quality of life and social justice in Warwickshire, providing value for money services in a safe and pleasant environment”

Linking our Corporate Plan priorities to our parks strategy:

Key Aim 1: Improve the quality of life and social justice for residents so it is much closer to that enjoyed by the rest of Warwickshire.

Response: We shall ensure that all residents have access to quality open space and provide facilities that are inclusive for all to improve health and health inequalities.

Key Aim 2: Work in partnership to reduce the level of crime and disorder so that the community is and feels safer.

Response: We shall provide a wide range of facilities, activities and experiences to deal with anti-social behaviour and to ensure our open spaces are as accessible as possible.

Key Aim 3: Provide a pleasant environment for those living, working and visiting the borough

Response: We shall continue to maintain and develop the open space within the Borough to ensure the quality of the spaces and facilities is protected and enhanced. We shall report on these projects delivered by the Council, its partners and community groups and promote the attractions, events and places to visit in the borough.

Key Aim 4: Provide quality services which represent value for money

Response: We will raise awareness of the services we deliver and how they may be accessed. We shall report on the success of these services, on the services/facilities/environmental improvements we are working to introduce and on the consultations/projects that will help reshape our future service delivery.

7.2.3 Development Plan

The saved policies within the adopted Nuneaton and Bedworth Local Plan set out land use policies and proposals for the Borough up to 2011. Its main purpose is to guide new development and the provision of facilities. It provides a sound basis for making decisions on planning applications. It will influence private and public investment and help to deliver objectives and proposals in other plans.

The Local Development Framework (LDF) will replace the existing Nuneaton and Bedworth Local Plan, which was adopted on 28 June 2006. The LDF consists of a suite of Local Development Documents (LDDs) including the Statement of Community Involvement and the Borough Plan.

The Borough Plan will set out a long-term spatial vision, strategic objectives and spatial strategy for future development within the Borough.

An integral part of this process has been the preparation of a Green Infrastructure Study which is an important piece of evidence for the Council's LDF, as it will:

*'Help to provide a more informed and systematic way to consider the competing priorities of green infrastructure within the spatial planning process'*¹

The Green Infrastructure Study (as well as forming an important piece of evidence in its own right and providing a basis for Green Infrastructure Policy in the Borough Plan) will inform the Borough's Infrastructure Delivery Plan - setting out key prioritised infrastructure projects of all types (health, transport, environment etc). The Infrastructure Delivery Plan will form a key part of the Borough Plan.

7.2.4 Crime and Disorder Strategy

Nuneaton and Bedworth Safer Communities Partnership (NABSCOP) has as its main objectives, to reduce crime and disorder, and the fear of crime. The new Partnership Plan 2011- 2012 outlines how the partnership is going to work together to reduce Violent Crime, Anti Social Behaviour and Domestic Burglary over the next year. As the needs and priorities of residents are constantly changing, the document will be reviewed annually to make sure it is focusing on the most important issues.

¹ The Green Infrastructure Planning Guide

7.2.5 The Nuneaton and Bedworth Health Improvement Plan

The Healthier Borough Theme of the Nuneaton & Bedworth's Sustainable Community Plan 2007-2021 aims to improve access to healthcare, and improve life expectancy within the Borough, by promoting more healthier and active lifestyles.

Warwickshire Health Inequalities Strategy was adopted by the Public Service Board at its meeting in January 2009 and sets out a programme approach which includes the wider determinants of health and being measured by life expectancy. It will be implemented countywide but with an emphasis on the main causes on early death for each district and using the programme approach suggested. Clearly Nuneaton & Bedworth has the majority of health inequality in the county.

The first Joint Strategic Needs Assessment was published in 2008 and should inform all strategic planning by all agencies in the future. It is planned to be refreshed annually. Access to it is via NHS Warwickshire web site.

The Nuneaton & Bedworth Health Improvement and Wellbeing Partnership will respond to Warwickshire Health Inequalities Strategy, promote and improve the health and general wellbeing of the local population targeting activity in the areas of greatest deprivation and to those most at risk with the aim of reducing health inequalities.

This strategy will assist in the delivery of these initiatives.

7.2.6 Warwickshire Health Inequalities Strategy

The Warwickshire Health Inequality Strategy sets out a framework for health inequality reduction across the county. It has an ambitious target of raising the life expectancy of the most socially disadvantaged by 24 months by 2010 and sets out strategic objectives that will contribute to this reduction in health inequalities. Consequently, these strategic objectives will inform the Warwickshire Health Inequalities Strategy. It is the intention to improve life expectancy for the most disadvantaged including those with special needs by working towards a Warwickshire where - nowhere will life expectancy at birth be lower than the national target currently 78.6 years for men and 82.5 years for women by 2010. This is achievable on the basis of targeted interventions on those who will gain maximum benefit. We will also aim to achieve a healthy life expectancy. So men and women in Warwickshire can expect years of life without ill health.

7.2.7 Environmental Sustainability Strategy

The aims and objectives contained within the Environmental Sustainability Strategy (ESS) will help Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council deliver its vision for 2021:

Vision: By 2021 we shall achieve the greatest improvement in quality of life and social justice in Warwickshire, providing value for money services in a safe and pleasant environment.

This vision is consistent with the Local Government Act (Section 2) which gives power to local authorities to do anything which they consider is likely to achieve any or all of the following objectives: -

- The promotion or improvement of the economic well-being of their area.
- The promotion or improvement of the social well-being of their area.
- The promotion or improvement of the environmental well-being of their area.

The ESS will address mainly environmental well-being in the area and in so doing will help to deliver the following Corporate Aim:²

'To provide a pleasant environment for those living, working and visiting the Borough.'

- A green and clean environment
- Leading in environmental issues addressing climate change and protection of the environment.

7.2.8 Warwickshire Local Transport Plan (LTP)

The County Council is responsible for the preparation and delivery of the Local Transport Plan (LTP) for Warwickshire. The current plan runs from 2006 to 2011 with early informal consultation currently just beginning on the possible content of the next plan which will commence in 2012.

The key objectives of the current LTP are to improve accessibility to the transport system, to support employment and the economy, to reduce the environmental impact

² Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council Corporate Plan 2007-2021, Aim 3

of transport, to improve the environment and safety of people when using the transport system and to encourage more integrated transport provision.

Therefore the key overlaps with the open space strategy are the common objectives and interest in providing off road pedestrian and cycle routes to help access key services (shops, doctors surgeries, stations, leisure centres etc), to enable sustainable enable travel to work and to enable sustainable access to key parks, open spaces and recreational leisure routes themselves.

Therefore it is critical - to avoid duplication, to maximise sustainability in terms of maintenance and to maximise the draw down of future LTP, planning gain and other external funding sources that the open space strategy and the emerging LDF develop a common coherent view on key routes, opportunities and priorities to be pursued.

7.3 Regional and National Policy

7.3.1 Regional Spatial Strategy

“On 6 July 2010, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government announced the revocation of Regional Spatial Strategies (apart from the London Plan) with immediate effect. The implications of this decision are yet to be fully clarified and understood, although initial guidance has been issued to respond to any immediate matters that may arise. This programme returns decision-making powers on housing and planning to local councils. It has, however, raised concerns that it could exacerbate *'nimbyism'* at the local level at a time when bold steps are needed to tackle the UK's significant housing shortage”.

7.3.2 PPG17 – Sport, Open Space and Recreation

Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation, states that open spaces, sport and recreation underpin people's quality of life and are fundamental in delivering broader Government objectives, these include:

Relationship of Strategy to Strategic Planning Objectives

- Supporting an urban renaissance – local networks of high quality and well managed and maintained open spaces, sports and recreational facilities help create urban environments that are attractive, green and safe. Green spaces within urban areas

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perform vital functions as areas for nature conservation and biodiversity and by acting as 'green lungs' can assist in meeting objectives to improve air quality;

- Supporting rural renewal - the countryside can provide opportunities for recreation and visitors can play an important role in the regeneration of the economies of rural areas. Open spaces within rural settlements and accessibility to local sports and recreational facilities contribute to the quality of life and well being of people who live in rural areas;
- Promotion of social inclusion and community cohesion/intergration - well planned and maintained open spaces and good quality sports and recreation facilities can play a major part in improving people's sense of well being in the place they live. As a focal point for community activities, they bring together members of deprived communities and provide opportunities for people for social interaction;
- Health and well being - open spaces, sports and recreational facilities have a vital role to play in promoting healthy living and preventing illness, and in the social development of children of all ages through play, sporting activities and interaction with others; and
- Promoting more sustainable development – by ensuring that open space, sports and recreational facilities (particularly within urban areas) are easily accessible by walking and cycling and that more heavily used or intensive sports and recreational facilities are planned for locations well served by public transport (PPG 17, 2002).

In establishing the value of existing recreational facilities to the community and the need for new facilities, PPG17 recommends that Local Authorities should undertake robust assessments of the existing and future needs of their communities for open space, sports and recreational facilities. Guidelines describing how such assessments should be completed are set out in '*Assessing Needs and Opportunities: A Companion Guide to PPG17*' (ODPM, 2002)

(PPG17) defines open space as follows;

‘ Open space should be taken to mean all open space of public value, including not just land but also areas of water such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can also act as a visual amenity’

The guidelines recommend that audits of local open space needs should:

- Cover the differing and distinctive needs of the population for open space and built sports and recreational facilities including those working in and visiting areas;
- Include audits of existing open space, sports and recreational facilities including usage, accessibility, costs and opportunities for new open space and facilities. Audits should establish the quantity and quality of spaces; and Identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses.

PPG 17 advises Local Authorities to use the information gained from their assessment of needs and opportunities to set locally derived standards for the provision of open space, sports and recreational facilities in their areas. Such standards form the basis for redressing quantitative and qualitative deficiencies through the planning process. The Companion Guide to PPG17 provides guidance as to how Local Authorities should identify and apply provision standards based upon assessments of local need.

Research undertaken by the consultants on behalf of the London Planning Advisory Committee (LPAC, 2000) identified that whilst standards may provide a useful basis for comparison, it is generally considered that, on their own, standards are inadequate in addressing a wide range of mainly qualitative factors that include issues such as sustainability and biodiversity, accessibility and socio-economic trends in planning and also the changing use and function of open space.

PPG17 advises local authorities to draw up their own open space standards including standards for open space for inclusion within development plans. Such standards should be based upon a robust and defensible assessment of local needs.

The Transport, Local Government and the Regions select committee in its report ‘Public Spaces: The Role of PPG17 in the Urban Renaissance’ (February 2002) and PPG 17 both emphasise the need to recognise the multiple roles which open spaces perform and their relevance to the Government’s wider objectives for the urban renaissance and the quality of life.

7.3.3 PPS9 – Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

PPS 9 sets out the Government's vision for conserving and enhancing biological diversity. The vision includes the broad aim that planning, construction, development and regeneration should have minimal impacts on biodiversity and enhance it wherever possible. In achieving the vision the objectives for planning are;

- Promote sustainable development – by ensuring biological and geological diversity are conserved and enhanced as an integral part of social, environmental and economic development;
- Conserve, enhance and restore diversity – by sustaining and where possible improving the quality and extent of natural habitat and geological and geomorphological sites; and
- Contribute to rural renewal and urban renaissance – by enhancing biodiversity in greenspaces and any developments so they are used by wildlife and valued by people, and recognising the role biodiversity can play in economic diversification and contribute to high quality environment.

The key principles to ensure that the potential impacts of planning decisions on biodiversity and geological conservation include:

- Planning policies and decisions should be based on up to date information about environmental characteristics of their areas. In reviewing the information local authorities should assess the potential to sustain and enhance these resources;
- Planning policies and decisions should aim to maintain, enhance, restore or add to biodiversity and geological conservation interest. Planning decisions should ensure appropriate weight is attached to designated sites of international, national and local importance, and to biodiversity and geological interests;
- Plan policies on the form and location of development should take a strategic approach to the conservation, enhancement and restoration of biodiversity and geology;

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- Plan policies should promote the incorporation of beneficial biodiversity and geological features within the design of development;
- Development proposals where the principal objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity and geological conservation interests should be permitted; and
- Where granting planning permission would result in significant harm to biodiversity, local planning authorities will need to be satisfied that the development cannot reasonably be located on any alternative sites that would result in less or no harm.

7.3.4 The UK Biodiversity Action Plan

This is the UK Government's response to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) signed in 1992. It describes the UK's biological resources and commits a detailed plan for the protection of these resources. The new UK List of Priority Species and Habitats has been published and the conservation approach for these 1150 species and 65 habitats is being developed by the statutory and non-statutory sectors.

The UK Biodiversity Action Plans describe, document the extent and set targets for the protection and enhancement of the UK's species and habitats.

The Local Biodiversity Action Plans describe the regions particular habitats and species identified by the LBAP partnership that are of particular interest to Warwickshire Coventry and Solihull.

The Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Local Biodiversity Action Plan outlines how landowners, land-managers and policy makers will protect the characteristic wildlife and landscapes of our sub-region. The plan contains 26 Species Action Plans for our threatened plants and animals. There are 24 Habitat Action Plans covering our farmland, woodlands, wetlands, grasslands, urban areas and post-industrial land.

7.3.5 Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006

Duty 40 - to conserve biodiversity.

“Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity.”

What this means for Parks and Countryside;

- Protecting and enhancing biodiversity on local authority land, leading to better connectivity of sites and provision for wildlife.
- Supporting appropriate access to nature and understanding of the natural world within schools, community engagement, education programmes and raising awareness of biodiversity to the public.
- Fulfilling statutory obligations for the protection and enhancement of biodiversity within the forward planning and development control processes.
- Influencing others within and outside of the Council to understand, protect and enhance biodiversity especially with regard to climate change pressures and development.
- Incorporating the conservation of biodiversity and its benefits into relevant strategies of the local authority. These include Corporate Strategies, sustainable development strategies, procurement strategies, asset management plans, economic development plans and environmental management systems.
- Having regard to biodiversity within partnership arrangements such as Community Strategies and Local Area Agreements.
- Taking account of the links between biodiversity and other environmental programs such as waste management, energy conservation and response to climate change.

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- Delivering the key principles for biodiversity set out in national planning guidance.
- Participating in local biodiversity partnerships with other organisations, to deliver objectives of Local Biodiversity Action Plans (and where appropriate UK Biodiversity Action Plans) and promote beneficial land management for biodiversity.
- Identifying policy drivers and ensuring up-to-date biodiversity data is available to the local authority including support to Local Record Centres.
- Identifying Local Sites of importance for biodiversity and managing systems, in partnership with others, to take these into account within the planning and land management processes.
- Using the benefits of access to biodiversity in the delivery of services to the public such as social care, community development, health, and recreation.

8.0 Cross-Cutting Benefits

8.1 General

The Urban Green Spaces Task Force Report states, “strategic planning for parks and green spaces must take place alongside strategies for housing, community development and safety and economic regeneration”. Local authorities should recognise that most open space, with good planning and management, can perform multiple functions. Amongst the most important are:

8.1.1 Recreation

Parks and open spaces provide the setting and facilities for formal and informal recreation. From walking the dog to playing football or bowls, it is important that people have a wide range of activities to choose from.

8.1.2 Culture, Education and Tourism

Many spaces form an important part of Nuneaton and Bedworth’s cultural heritage and are places where cultural activities take place. These activities can include community events, shows, carnivals and firework displays. The educational value of parks is also important. Some schools make use of nearby open spaces for ecology and sporting purposes.

8.1.3 Economic Development and Regeneration

Relevant council programmes should be including green space as an essential aspect of neighbourhood regeneration. Such space can significantly enhance the quality of life, promote community spirit and attract business and residents to an area.

8.1.4 Visual Amenity

Neglect can turn green spaces into eyesores. However, well maintained green spaces can provide variety in the urban scene and provide an outlook for those living nearby. They also contribute to a general appreciation of a local environment.

8.1.5 Community Identity

Parks and other open green spaces can contribute to a sense of community ownership, pride and belonging.

8.1.6 Health

Parks can be promoted to encourage exercise and as places for quiet and relaxation, they also provide a 'lung' of fresh air away from the traffic and pollution of the roads.

8.1.7 Environment and Biodiversity

There are possibilities for biodiversity in even the most built up areas of the Borough. Some sites may have potential to be corridors for flora and fauna. Green space also plays a role in collecting water run-off from developed sites helping to mitigate against flooding.

8.2 Conclusions and Recommendations

An Open Space Strategy is vital to bring all those who are responsible and have an interest together with a common purpose and a shared understanding of what can be done to enhance and maintain green space for the future.

9.0 Green Infrastructure and the Borough's Open Spaces Strategy

9.1 General Issues

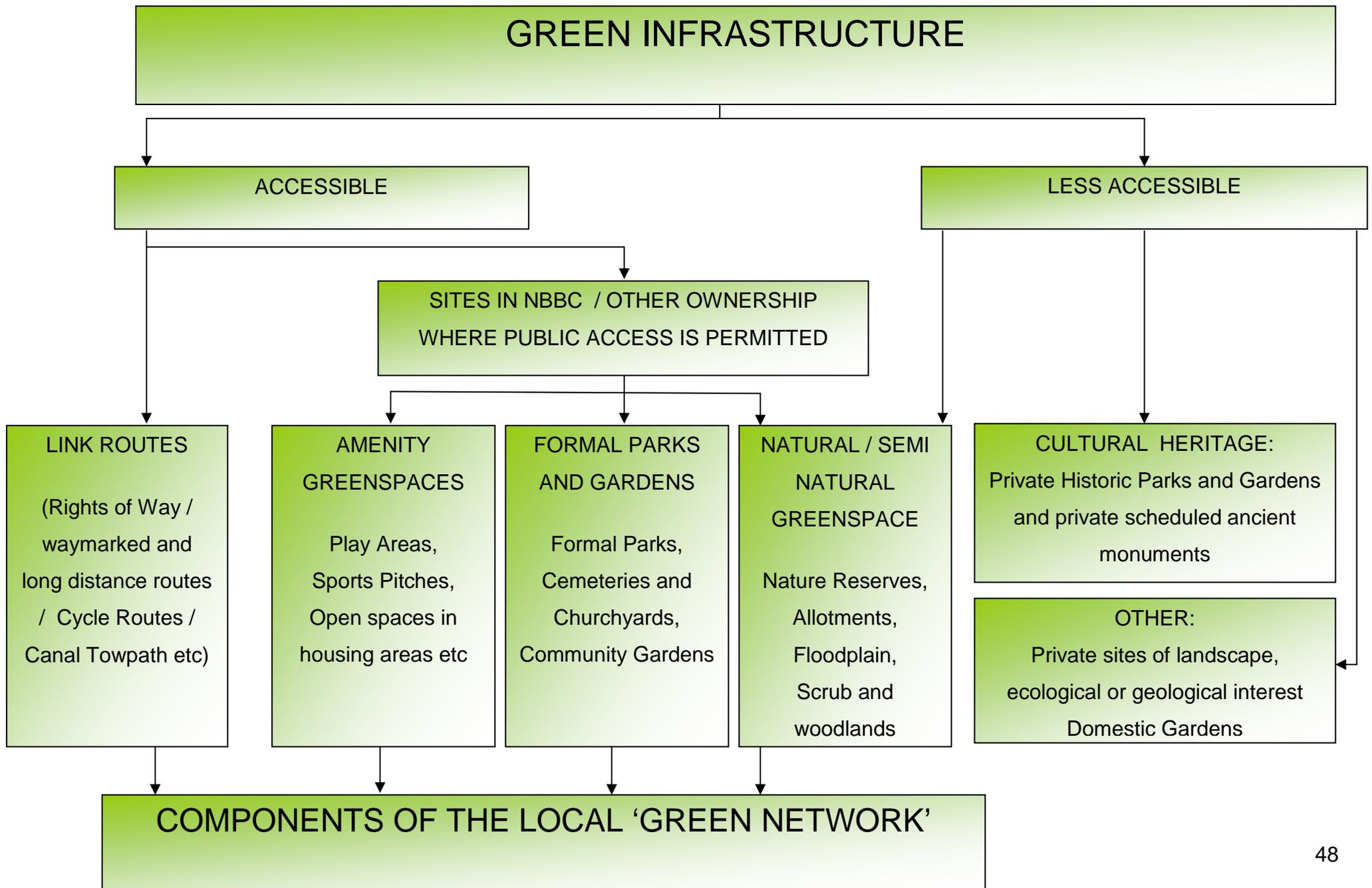
There is a close relationship between the Borough's Green Infrastructure Plan and the Open Spaces Strategy.

However Green Infrastructure planning deals at a strategic level with all the Borough wide ecological, landscape, cultural and informal recreational assets and the links and connectivity between those assets both in public and private ownership.

The Open Spaces Strategy, on the other hand, deals in detail with the degree of access to and the quality of formal and informal public parks and open spaces and also looks at linkages available to the public between such sites. (Policy in the Parks and Open spaces strategy on biodiversity does seek to positively influence private landowners but this is primarily through planning policy and partnership working)

The Parks and Open Spaces Strategy particularly focuses on Borough Council owned land along with other publicly accessible land and on the recreational / green travel linkages and networks between those sites to form a publicly accessible 'Green Network'. (It is primarily a recreational / green travel network but is still a multifunctional network with much of the land also acting as an ecological, landscape and cultural network)

These relationships are illustrated in the diagram overleaf.



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The Open Space Strategy alongside Green Infrastructure Plan and policy will significantly help deliver the creation and implementation of the publicly accessible Green Network. This could be through helping to fill existing gaps in the network, by developing privately owned land and generating funding sources. The funding may then be invested in signage and in various other forms of improvement to the existing Green Network.

The Green Infrastructure Study has identified and mapped a wide range of green infrastructure assets and linkages (shown below in Figure 1). To focus the Open Spaces Strategy specifically on successfully progressing delivery of the publicly accessible Green Network the key strategic existing and potential Green Network sites and linkages have been extracted and mapped in Figure 2.

In terms of the existing parks and routes the priority will be investment to achieve a Green Network Design Quality Standard in terms of appropriate facilities within sites and of path surfaces and the creation of distinctive Green Network signage in terms of routes.

As Part of the Green Infrastructure Network⁶ a number of projects and enhancements are set out. It must be noted however, these works are primarily dependant upon where future development will be directed in the Borough, which will be determined through the LDF process.

Consequently, it will be equally important to enhance existing provision to serve the needs of the Borough's current communities, as it will be to provide new future provision for new communities.

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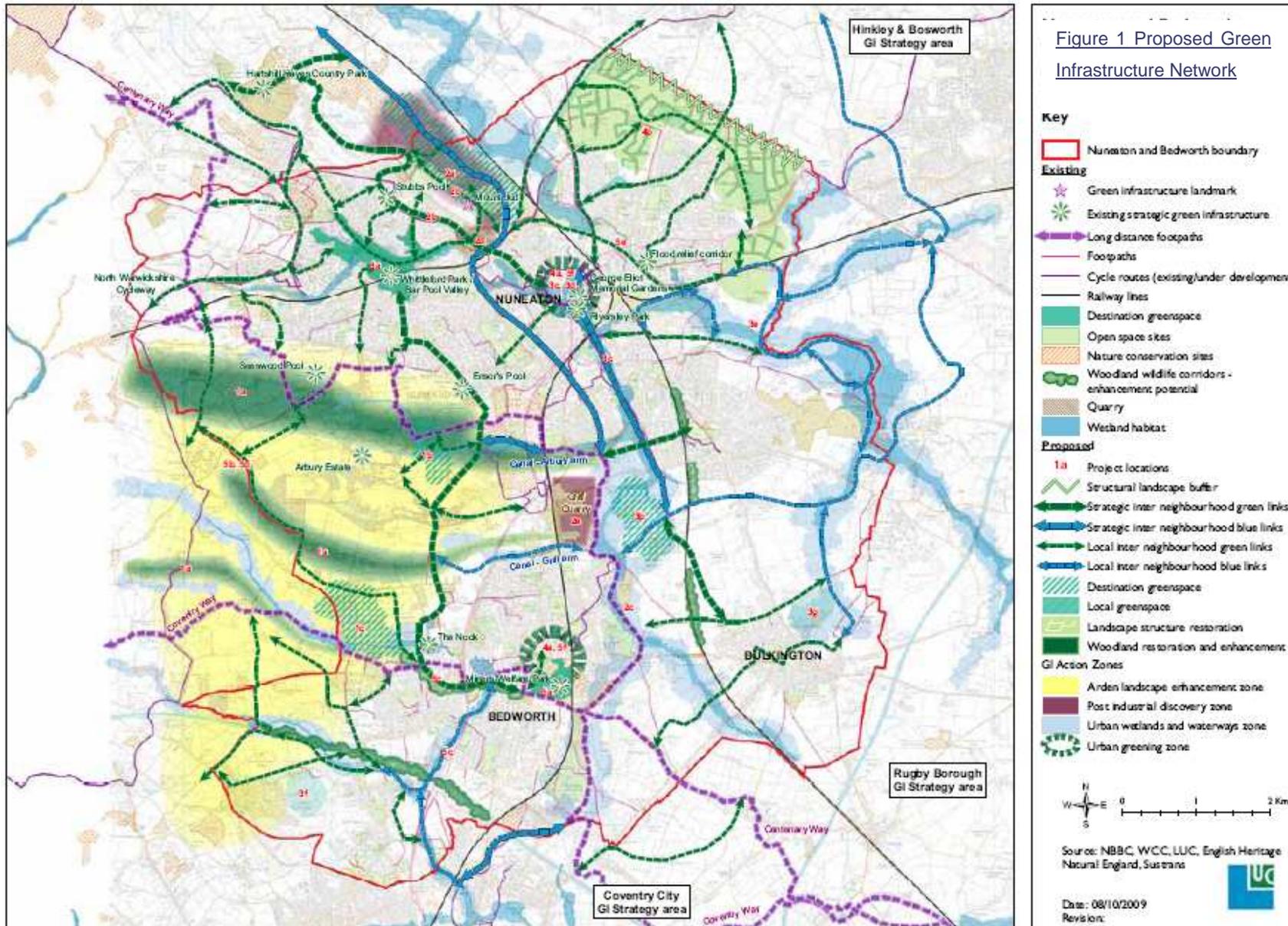
⁶ Land Use Consultants, on behalf of Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, *Nuneaton and Bedworth Green Infrastructure Plan* 2009, Figure 4.1 and Table 4.1

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Progress in achieving the desired network may be most rapid where development occurs. Funding secured from development can also justifiably be used to help address gaps in the wider network which will also serve residents / employees of the areas of development. . Table 5.1 of the Green Infrastructure Plan also provides advice on how parts of the proposed Green Infrastructure Network can be funded outside the planning process by accessing funds from various non-departmental public bodies, development corporations and Trusts.

Ideally the location of development selected by the LDF will partly be determined so as to help support the development of the desired route network.

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 File: S14400462_Nuneaton and Bedworth_Green Infrastructure Plan GIS Tools ArcGIS 9.4.1_025_Green Infrastructure_Options_v1.mxd

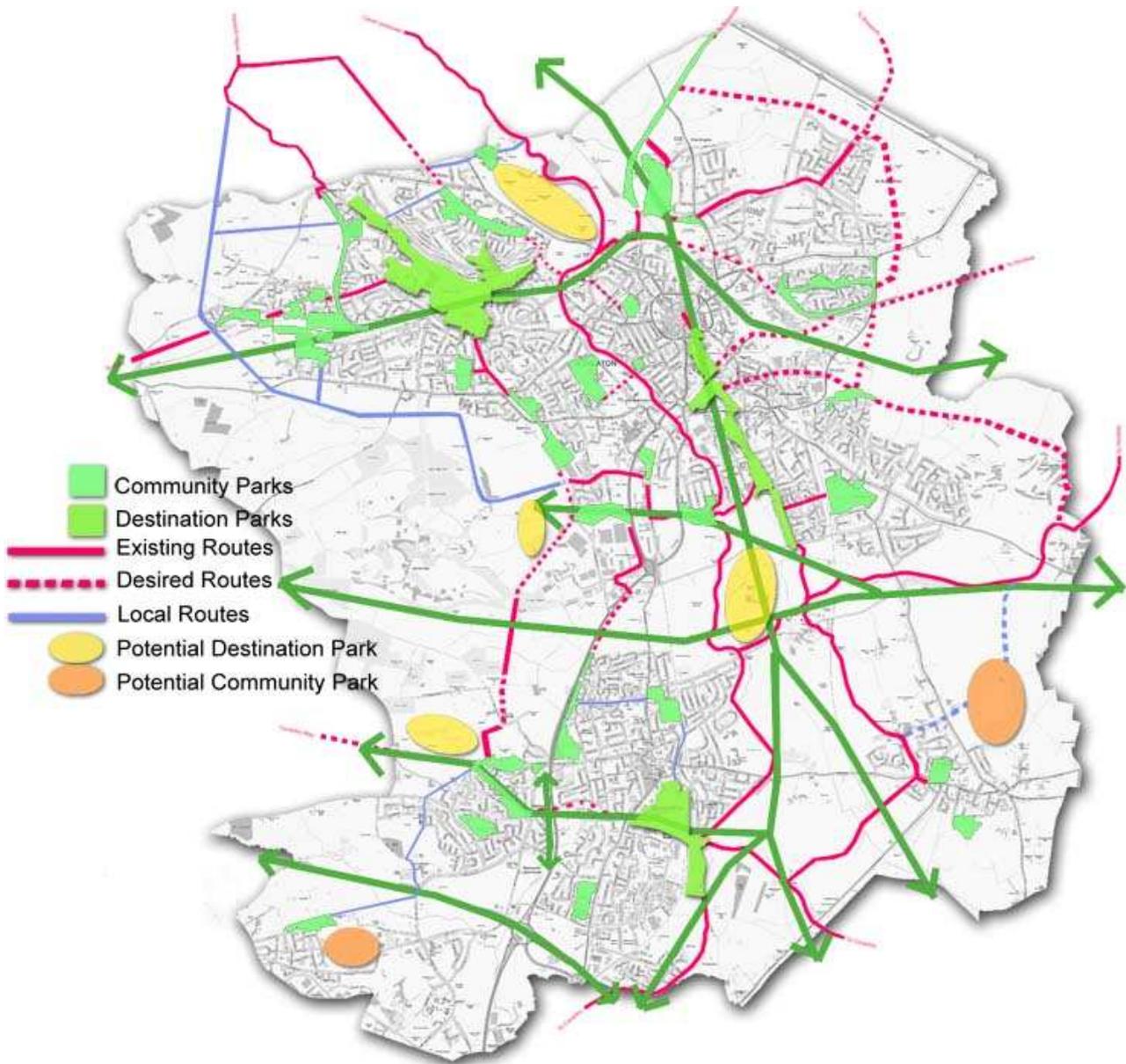


Figure 2: Proposed Green Network

N.B. The position of routes is indicative. In many cases existing routes would require improvement in terms of path surface, path width, signage and in some cases the permitted use (e.g. pedestrian routes might be desirably altered in status to permit cycling). In terms of desired routes and potential parks most are shown on private land which would only become accessible through land transfer / creation of public open space as a result of associated development.

9.2 Policies:

1) To provide a green network of open space that combines together publicly accessible green space (including that owned by third parties e.g. British Waterways) and privately owned land (where we can gain the necessary access agreements), to ensure that we have continuous green corridors which link together across the whole of the borough. (C)

2) We will work with the Planning system and partnerships to retain the existing green network and to fill gaps in the network. We will prioritise securing the missing links identified in the strategic green network plan above. (C)

3) Development applications will be supported where they help to create new wildlife habitat and corridors and new recreational links and particularly where they address significant gaps in the Borough's Green Infrastructure and its publicly accessible 'Green Network'. (C)

4) We will seek as a priority to strongly and coherently brand and identify the Green Network as a well signed publicly prominent network comparable in recognition to the road highway network – encouraging recreational use, use for healthy activity and exercise and use for green travel purposes. Signs will include key destinations such as schools, doctors surgeries, town centres, parks etc along with walking and cycle travel times and distances. (C)

5) We will seek funding to achieve the signage of the existing network (as a currently significantly underutilised resource) and to implement the Green Network design standards. This funding will be sought from a variety of sources, including where appropriate planning obligations and, if taken up by the Local Authority, the Community Infrastructure Levy. (C)

Figure3: Possible Green Network Branding for Signage / Marketing



10.0 Open Space Hierarchy

In light of NBBC's Open Space Assessment audit, current guidance on best practice and after researching a number of other open space strategies from around the country, the Borough Council has taken a strategic assessment of all the accessible public open space within the borough.

This information has been combined with our extensive knowledge of local circumstances, to produce a typology and hierarchy of public open space, which we have applied throughout this Open Space Strategy.

10.1 Hierarchy/Typology Of Public Open Space

- Regional Parks
- Destination Parks (Dest)
- Community Parks (Comm.)
- Neighbourhood/Local (Loc)
- Incidental (Inci)
- Cemeteries
- Allotments

For the purpose of the typology we have included formal, semi-formal and natural urban green space (Wildspaces) under the same typology.

10.1.1 Regional Parks

These particular sites normally cover an area in excess of 60 hectares and are in many cases major visitor attractions, containing facilities and experiences, which allow families to enjoy whole days out.

There are none of these types of greenspace within the borough, but we should not discount the need for people in the borough to have access to such areas, or the long-term desirability of achieving access to such a site within the borough itself.

Travel to them is typically accepted as being by car/ public transport and as such the catchments are very large – allowing sites outside of Nuneaton and Bedworth to deliver access at this level.

Such sites do exist in relatively short car journey times, for instance Coombe Abbey Country Park in Coventry, Bosworth Fields in Leicestershire and Kingsbury Water Park in North Warwickshire are all within 20 minutes drive time.

10.1.2 Destination Parks

These particular sites would normally cover an area of between 10 and 65 hectares and contain a whole range of quality facilities and experiences for all members of the public. These can be classed as our main parks and would allow the visitor to spend several hours enjoying the open space environment; there are three parks of this type within the borough:

Riversley Park

Miners Welfare Park

Whittleford Park

Collectively they cover an area in excess of 120 hectares and act as central hubs for recreational activities throughout a network of connecting pieces of Public Open Space.

Typically these should meet the following criteria:

Parking facilities

Toilet facilities

Refreshments

Community Involvement – Friends of Groups

Public Transport Links

Play Facility / Space

Good Quality Street Furniture

Information / Interpretation / Education

Community Space / Function

Horticultural / Biodiversity / Sustainable Excellence

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Green Flag Standard

Borough Wide Events

Easy access – DDA Provision

On site staff provision- e.g. Community Warden

High Quality Signage

Showcase of Good Techniques and Practices

Hub of Green infrastructure / network of connecting spaces

10.1.3 Community Parks

These sites are normally between 1 and 10 hectares and include some of the most established and utilised areas of public open space in the Borough. There are 30 of these sites within the borough covering an area of 177 hectares. These include:

Nuneaton Rec. / Pool Bank St.

Greenmoor Road

Stubbs Pool incl. The Dingle

Stockingford Rec.

Tiverton Drive

Marlborough Rec.

Sandon Park

Weddington complex

Sorrell Road

Griff Hollows and Wem Brook

Pauls Land incl Quarry area

Bailey Park

Bulkington Rec.

Heckley

Keresley

Blue Bell Drive

Newdegate

Crowhill Rec.

Bedworth Sloughs

The Nook

Bermuda Balancing Lake

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Ensor's Pool/Lingmoor Park

The Shuntings / Nuneaton Common

Windmill Hill

Heath Road Rec.

Barnacle Lane

Beverley Ave incl Whytell Pool

Kingswood

Chaucer / Chesterton

Tomkinson Rec

These sites are at the heart of our communities and provide a wide range of facilities and experiences to the communities they serve. These sites should meet the following criteria:

Play Facility / Space

Good Access

Public Transport Links within 600m

Partly Staffed – e.g. Mobile Ranger service.

Community Groups

Good Quality Street Furniture as appropriate

Information/Interpretation/Education if warranted

Sporting / Leisure Provision

Meets the standards identified within the Green Flag criteria for Horticultural /

Biodiversity / Sustainable Quality

Managed to Green Flag Standards

Community Events

Good Signage

Potential for Community Management

10.1.4 Local Parks

These sites are typically 0.4 – 10.0 hectares and contain in excess of 35 formal and wildspaces throughout the borough covering an area of over 50 hectares, including such significant sites as, Haunchwood Recreation Ground and Walkway, Cornish Crescent, Coronation Walk and Collycroft Recreation Ground. They act in many cases

NBBC Open Space Strategy

as the only useable pieces of Public Open Space in their locality and as the conduit linking together the green network.

These sites should meet the following criteria:

Play space

Basic Signage

Horticultural/Interpretation/Sustainable Quality

Community Engagement – Consultation and Local Management

Green Flag Standards

Support Local Appropriate Events

10.1.5 Incidental Open Space

These areas include all other pieces of public open space found throughout the borough and are normally up to 0.4 hectares in size.

They include such areas as grass verges but also some significant sites in housing areas such as Butlers Crescent and Black-a-tree Road, which form an important role in breaking up large blocks of housing.

The use / misuse for recreation of these areas will be considered later in this strategy - both in terms of pressure on them in areas otherwise deprived of open space and in terms of physical measures that can be taken to prevent their use.

10.1.6 Cemeteries

These are an important part of the councils green space, not only acting as functional sites as burial grounds but as places of sanctuary for the bereaved attending graves and seeking a place for quiet contemplation, areas for wildlife and biodiversity and also as a historical archive with the many memorials.

NBBC has five active sites within the borough and are currently seeking additional land to sustain burial space for the next 50-100 years. NBBC is also responsible for five closed churchyards.

These sites should meet the following criteria:

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Good quality signage

Horticultural Quality

Wide range of choice for the bereaved

Safe

Community/Historical Involvement

10.1.7 Allotments

There are 23 council owned sites across the borough, each of which form an integral part of the strategic network of green space. These will be dealt with in more detail under a separate strategy.

These sites should meet the following criteria:

Provided to a minimum standard

Self managed

Provided in sufficient numbers across the borough

Provided in the right locations

Support of Management Groups

10.2 Types of Greenspace Used In Typology

Drawing on a wide range of best practice examples – and input from the Parks and Countryside team about local circumstances –the following range of descriptions have been used to classify all publicly accessible land which can be audited and these sit within the hierarchy set out below:



Figure 4: Green Space Typology

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Criteria	Destination Country Park	Community Park	Local Park	Incidental
Walking Distance	Drive to & Walk to 1000m +	600m Walking Distance	400m Walking Distance	No Specific Distance
Horticultural / Biodiversity / Sustainability Excellence	LNR Status Maintained, or towards SINC status	LNR Status Maintained, or towards SINC status	Yes	Yes
Staffing	On Site	Mobile	Mobile	Basic Monitoring/Maintenance
High Quality Signage	Multiple Entrance / Interpretation / Directional / Trails	Entrance Signage Interpretation where significant interest	Basic sign at entrance rules / contact number	Basic sign at entrance
Hub of Green Infrastructure	Starting point for Green track walks / trails	Integral part of green network / trails (nodes)	Joined to network or rights of way network	Joined to network
Play Facility / Space	Formal 'sympathetic' or natural creative play facility	Formal sympathetic "or natural creative play facility	Formal "sympathetic" or natural creative play facility	
Sport & Leisure Provision	Yes	Yes	Dependant on Location	
Green Flag Standard	Green Flag Awarded	Green Flag Standard / Green Pennant?	Green Flag Standard	
Events	Borough Wide Scale Events	Community Scale Events	Support of locally organised events	
Community Involvement	Friends/users Groups	Friends Groups	Community Engagement e.g through contact With Residents Associations	
Easy access DDA provision	Specific easy access provision	Easy Access Provision	Improving Access arrangements	
Community Space Function	Yes	Yes		
Public Transport	To Site Entrance	Within 600m		
Leaflet	Yes	Where significant		
Information Interpretation Education	Yes	If strong historic/ Natural interest opportunities		
Parking	Yes			
Toilets	Yes			
Refreshments	Yes			
Showcase	Public Art etc			

Figure 5: Typology Criteria

Figure 6: Typology Standards

Criteria Standards		CAR PARK(S)	TOILETS	PLAY AREAS	PATH SURFACES	SITE LEAFLET	INFORMATION PANELS	DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE FOR PEDESTRIANS	NOTICEBOARD
Destination		Yes (Tarmac) To capacity related to visitor numbers	Yes	Yes (Toddler+ Junior to NBBC 'Destination Park Standard') (+ Teenage if site acts as a Community Park)	Destination Park - principal path network in Tarmac Country Park - Principal path network in crushed stone	Yes	Yes -	Yes - If site is a tourist destination	Yes
Community		No	No	Yes on formal sites (Toddler, Junior and Teenage to NBBC 'Community Park Standard') Informal – Enhanced 'Natural Play' opportunities as appropriate	Formal - Principal path network in Tarmac Neighbourhood Wildspaces - Principal path network in crushed stone	No	No - Unless very strong historic or natural heritage interest is a feature of the site	No	Yes
Local		No	No	Yes - on formal sites in appropriate geographical distribution (Toddler / Junior / Teenage to 'local NBBC standard')	Tarmac on formal sites Crushed stone or mown on informal sites depending on intensity of use	No	No - Unless very strong historic or natural heritage interest is a feature of the site	No	Only where funds permit and a high intensity of use occurs
Incidental		Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Tarmac on formal sites Crushed stone or mown on informal sites depending on intensity of use	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	No

11.0 Quantity Assessment

11.1 General

There are two principal national standards, which are widely used to assess whether local authority areas have adequate open space provision. - The National Playing Field Association's (NPFA) 'Six Acre Standard' and Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt).

11.2 Six Acre Standard

This standard relates to the acreage of certain types of sports facilities and formal open space in an area, measured against the population in the area - seeking to establish a minimum of six acres of provision per 1000 residents (equivalent of 2.4 hectares per 1000). The standard is still widely used by many authorities - both because it was a previous audit commission performance indicator and because it was seen as a relatively easy to assess blanket measure that could be incorporated into strategies and Local Plans.

The standard has some limitations if used as the key comprehensive assessment of provision - in that:

- a) it is heavily biased towards more formal sports provision - under-representing other forms of recreational land and wholly discounting wildlife areas and nature reserves.
- b) the standard is really only a measure of quantity and takes no account of accessibility let alone quality. If for example the standard is tested as a local authority wide measure - two very large but low quality sites in one corner of the authority area, sited away from the population, could still result in adequate provision being achieved
- c) If it is assessed on a locality area basis - to try to make it more locally relevant - an area could be identified as highly deprived despite lying immediately adjacent to a large high quality site in the immediately adjacent ward.

11.3 Accessible Natural Green Space Standard (ANGSt)

This standard relates to the amount of natural greenspace that can be accessed. The model states that no one person should live more than 300m from their nearest area of natural greenspace of at least 2 ha in size: that there should be at least one accessible 20ha site within 2km of home: that there should be one accessible 100ha site within 5km of home and that there should be one accessible 500ha site within 10km of home.

Natural England broadly defines natural green space as:

- Accessible nature conservation areas e.g. Local Nature Reserves (LNR), National Nature Reserves, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)
- Formal and Informal Parks, country parks, canals, rivers and unimproved farmland - *although rivers and farmland may not be accessible.*

This standard has limitations in that in many urban situations it would be almost impossible to meet the suggested quantities.

Recognising the limitations of both the '6 acre standard' and the ANGSt we are using them as a general baseline from which to compare Nuneaton and Bedworth's quantity of open space.

It should be noted that the NPFA have highlighted that many authorities are adopting their standard and often misinterpreting its appropriate purpose and uses. The NPFA indicated that despite being a minimum standard many authorities were wrongly treating this as all they should aspire to.

11.4 Assessment Methodology

Utilising the typology and representative colours for each differing type of green space, all the publicly accessible open space larger than 0.2 hectares was mapped on a borough wide scale, to indicate not only the distribution across the borough, but also the totals and that measurement against national standards and neighbouring authorities.

11.4.1 Quantity Audit Findings

Existing publicly accessible open space was mapped onto the GIS system and a map showing borough wide distribution is shown below:

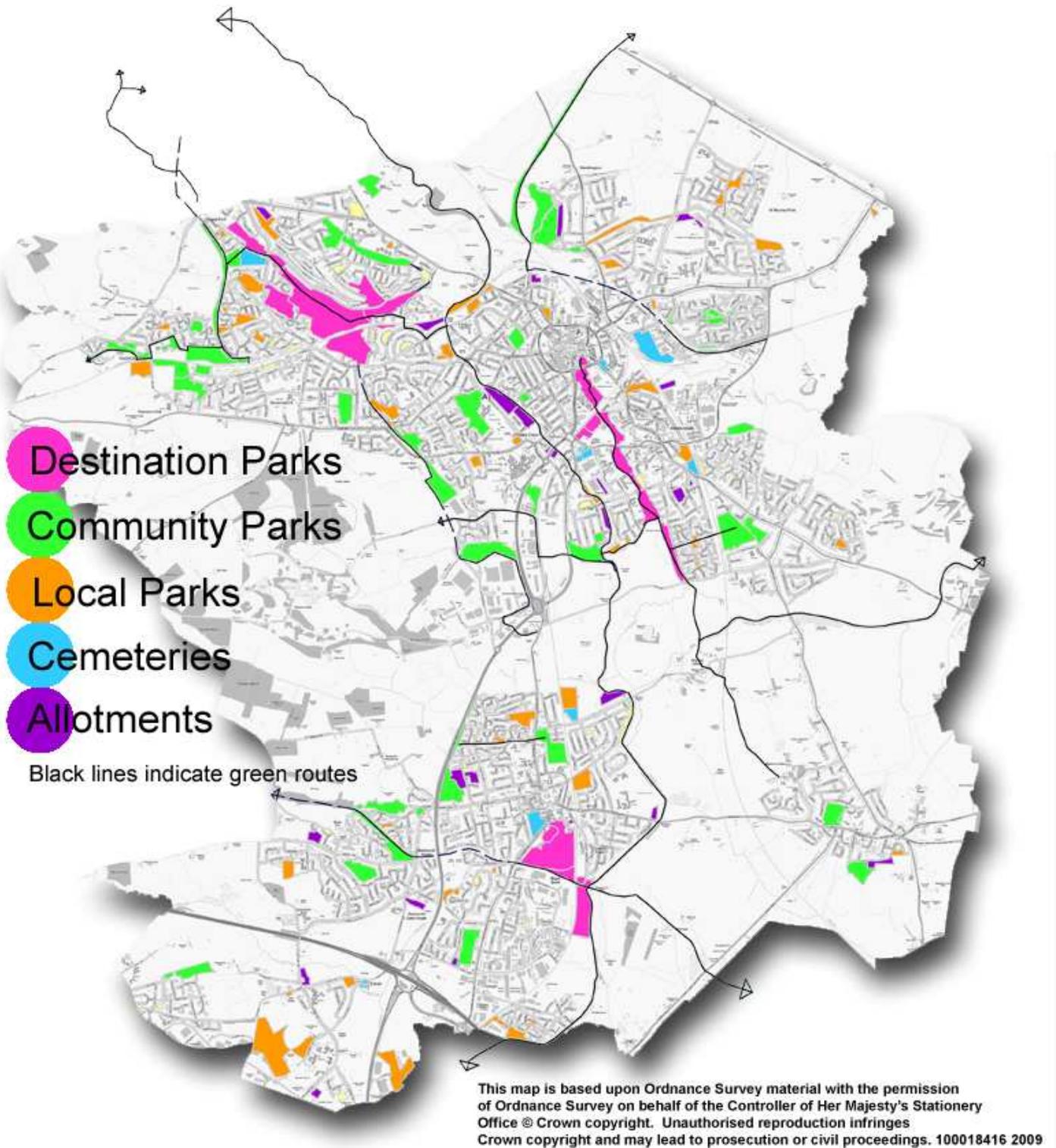


Figure 7: Open Spaces by Classification

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An analysis of the total quantity of accessible green space located in the borough was carried out, and this is summarised below.

Open Space Typology	Provision (ha)	Quantity per 1000 population*
Regional	Nil	Nil
Destination	120	0.99
Community/ Neighbourhood	177	1.47
Local	50	0.41
Incidental	110	0.91
Allotments	36	0.30
Cemeteries	16	0.13
Total	509	4.22

(* Based on Warwickshire County Council Mid 2005 estimate of borough wide population of 120,700)

This indicates that the borough is very green with over 500 hectares of accessible green space, with well over half of this amount distributed across three destination parks and 30 community / neighbourhood parks.

Of the 509 hectares of open space that can be identified as being accessible:

- 359 hectares is actively maintained inclusive of 249 hectares of which is formally maintained and 110 hectares of natural greenspace
- The remaining 150 hectares is managed less intensively, including parts of wildspaces and other areas, which are managed to promote biodiversity.

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Typology	Provision (ha)	Quantity per 1000 population*
Formal Open Space Managed by NBBC	249	2.06
Informal Open Space Managed by NBBC	260	2.16
Total	509	4.22

Using the ANGSt model we must also consider the amount of accessible natural green space managed and maintained by others, this would include canal and river corridors and permissive rights of way on farmland this equates to in excess of 10 hectares of land, which form an important role in connecting together the open space within the borough. The total of natural accessible greenspace is therefore 270 ha.

Using the broad assessment on the lines of the 6-acre standard, and looking at the formal provision within the borough, there would appear to be an overall **deficit** in provision (2.06 ha per 1000 population compared with the six acre standard of 2.4 ha per 1000 population).

Using the broad assessment of the ANGSt standard for a borough of our size it would appear that we have sufficient natural accessible greenspace at 2.24 ha per 1000 population – (when our landholding is combined with that accessible land in private ownership).

If we combine all accessible land provision together and compare with local authorities provision levels from within other members within the West Midlands Park Group (WMPG), this indicates that we have similar levels on average, of accessible greenspace within the borough.

Local Authority	Accessible Open Space Provision (ha) / 1000 population
Warwick DC	5.46
Walsall Council	4.98
Sandwell MBC	4.24
Nuneaton and Bedworth BC	4.22
Bridgnorth District Council	3.32
Lichfield DC	2.80

It will be essential to take into consideration the impact the RSS allocation of development will have upon the borough upto 2026. The construction of 11,000 dwellings and the potential of accommodating further growth from Coventry of 3,500 dwellings, together with allied retail and industrial development, will not only add pressure on land holdings within the borough (which the GIS will seek to address) but will increase pressure on existing facilities.

The proposed number of households will require a significant increase in accessible public open space, particularly in proximity to new development and/ or where there is current deficiency across the borough. – This will ensure the Council meets the broad assessments within the appropriate standards together with improvements in Council owned Public Open Space to provide for the needs of current and future communities.

The existing levels that exist would appear to be good news, although it is almost irrelevant if the quality and accessibility of the sites are poor.

Therefore, these factors need to be examined together with the quantity to determine where there are excesses and shortfalls in provision.

12.0 Quality Assessment

12.1 Assessment Methodology

A total of 69 green spaces (all destination, community / neighbourhood, and local sites) were assessed using a methodology derived from the national quality standard for parks and green spaces – the Green Flag Award. This award is the nationally recognised assessment tool for the quality of public open space and the assessment was undertaken by a consultant to give impartiality of results.

The Green Flag quality assessments focused on 8 headline factors, which were broken down into a set of 27 sub-criteria, examples including:

1. A Welcoming Place

Good and Safe Access

What is the access into and around the site like?

Is there public transport to the site?

Is there parking / pedestrian crossings nearby?

Clear, informative signage

What signage is there?

Is it easy to follow and is it signed from nearby roads?

Accessibility for All

Is the site accessible for all members of the community?

2. Healthy, Safe and Secure

Dog fouling measures

Are there dog bins on site and is there evidence of dog fouling?

Are there any warning notices about fines for fouling?

Appropriate provision of facilities for the community

Are the facilities appropriate for the size and type of site?

Will the site be attractive to all ages?

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Quality of facilities

What is the overall state of maintenance?

3. Clean and Well Maintained

Litter and waste management

Is there much evidence of litter on site?

Are there adequate litter bins?

4. Sustainability

Waste minimisation

Is green waste recycled on site? E.g. wood chipped and reused on site

Are there any recycling facilities for other waste on site?

Woodland/tree/hedge management

Is there evidence of recent management, recent planting?

Biodiversity

Any areas of grass left un-mown or with specific mowing regimes to encourage wildflowers?

5. Conservation and Heritage

Maintenance of grounds

Is the site generally well-maintained?

Is it executed to a high standard with tidy grass, flower beds and other areas?

Maintenance of buildings and infrastructure

Is maintenance to a reasonable standard – evidence of graffiti?

Maintenance of equipment

Does maintenance appear to take place and are repairs required?

Conservation of habitats and wildlife?

Has the site any valuable habitats and wildlife, any designations, etc?

Any evidence of habitat creation, bat boxes, nesting boxes etc

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Conservation of landscape features

Are there any significant features, man-made or natural? E.g. ponds, streams, lakes, crags, hills, cliffs, walls, statues

Conservation of buildings and structures

What buildings and structures are there, listed buildings, etc?

6 Community Involvement

Provision of education/interpretation information

Is suitable on-site information provided?

Is there any interpretation of the site's features/ history?

Is there any educational information on site?

7. Marketing

Does the site have appropriate marketing material?

8. Management Plan

Does the site have a management plan, and is it implemented?

Quality Audit Findings

12.2 Overview

In order to be successful in obtaining Green Flag status, there are two stages that need to be successfully passed; a desk based assessment (including a site management plan), and a field visit to assess the quality of the site. All sites that apply must score a minimum of 50% on the desk-based assessment (score 15 out of 30) and 60% in the field evaluation (score 42 out of 70) with a combined score of 66 or above, to achieve Green Flag Award status.

The quality assessments carried out for this strategy can be used as a baseline to compare performance against the requirements of Green Flag as they replicate the field visit stage of the Green Flag process. At present, no open space in the borough would achieve Green Flag Status from the quality perspective. Pauls Land is the highest

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scoring site with 55% but this still falls 5% below the required minimum level of the field evaluation. Therefore, there is a clear need to raise quality standards across all open spaces in the borough.

When considering realistic quality targets and expectations for different types of open spaces, it is important to realise that the council will only be considering a select few sites to formally apply for Green Flag status. Across the country, 743 parks and green spaces received a Green Flag in 2008/09, with only 42 sites in the West Midlands having achieved Green Flag status.

Each site identified within the typology as Destination, Neighbourhood and Local was assessed and given a score against the Green Flag criteria for quality. **(These individual site scores can be found as a separate appendix to this strategy.)** From this an overall percentage score was then calculated. The average quality score for the borough is 39% which when placed on the scale below indicates that overall green space quality is poor when compared to the expectations of the Green Flag award.

GREEN FLAG QUALITY SCALE				
VERY POOR	POOR	FAIR	GOOD	VERY GOOD
0% to 14%	15% to 44%	45% to 64%	65% to 74%	75% to 100%

Quality is shown visually below, and represents a variation from poor (orange) to fair (yellow) using the Green Flag quality scale.

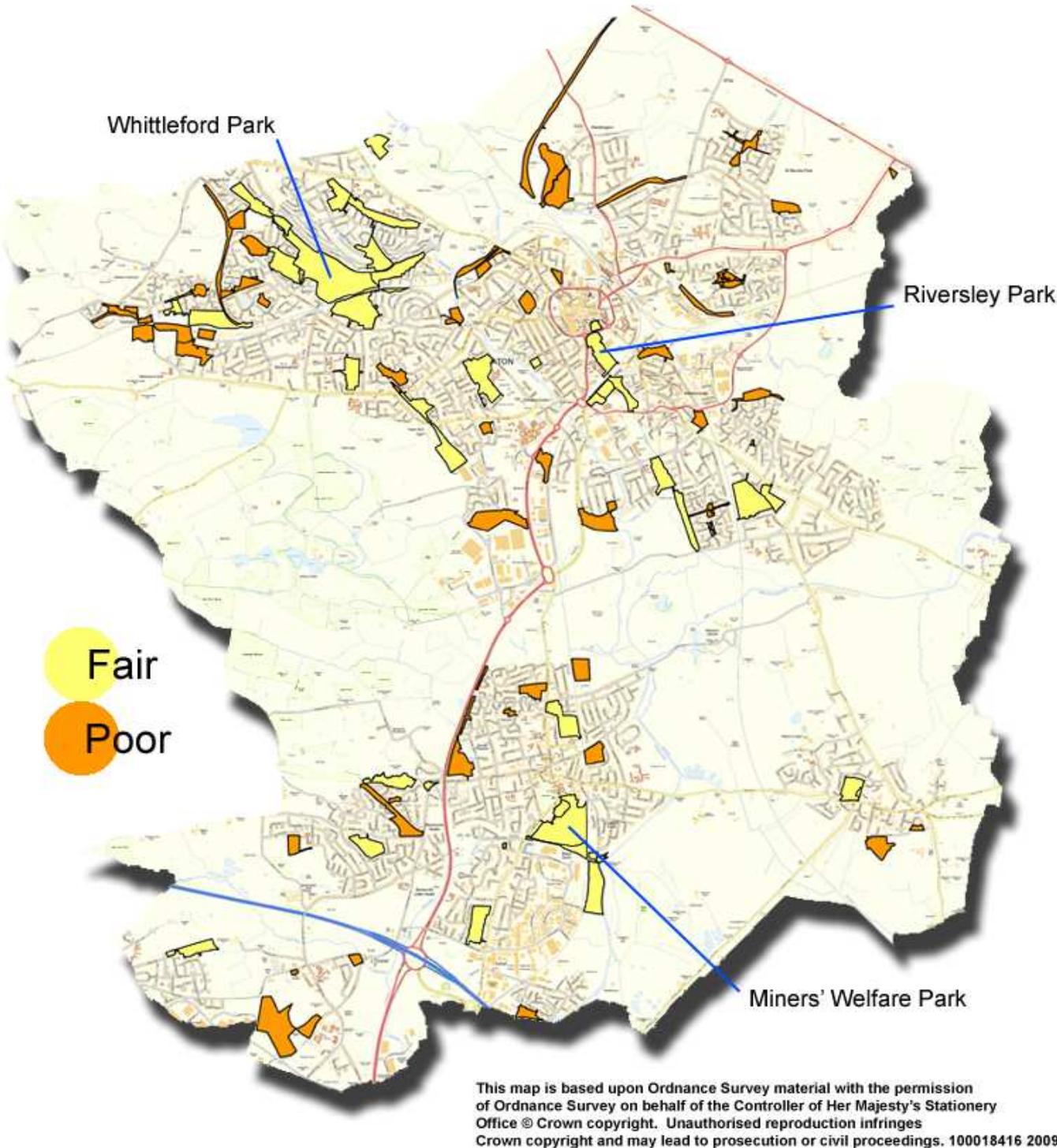


Figure 8: Quality scores mapped on borough plan

The individual site scores range from a lowest of 21% (Stanley Road open space), to a highest score of 55% (Pauls Land).

12.3 Quality based on Locality Areas

The Green Flag Assessment scores have also been analysed based on locality area, and these results are summarised below.

Locality Area	Number of Sites	Range of Scores (%)	Average Score (%)
Abbey and Wem Brook	10	21 – 53	39
Arbury and Stockingford	12	25 – 51	38
Bedworth North	14	25 – 52	39
Bedworth South	7	23 – 51	40
Camp Hill and Galley Common	9	29 – 54	41
Weddington and St.Nicolas	11	27 – 44	35
Whitestone and Bulkington	6	37 – 55	45

When viewing this table, it is noticeable that there is little variation in the quality between the different areas of the Borough, with “Whitestone and Bulkington” having the highest average quality score (45%), and “Weddington and St Nicolas” scoring the lowest (35%).

12.4 Quality based on Open Space Typology

It is also important to see whether the type of open space impacts upon the quality, and this is shown below:

Open Space Typology	Number of Sites	Range of Scores (%)	Average Score (%)
Destination site	3	50 – 53	51
Community / Neighbourhood site	30	29 – 55	43
Local site	36	21 – 45	34

This table emphasises that the hierarchy of open space classification does have an impact. The Borough's main parks (Riversley Park, Miners Welfare Park, and Whittleford Park), are all classed as destination sites and their scores are all above 50%.

Community / Neighbourhood spaces score lower than destination sites, but do contain the site with the highest quality score. However, the average score for local spaces is somewhat lower than the other two classifications, and falls 5% lower than the borough wide average score of 39%.

12.5 Future Quality Expectations

12.5.1 Green Flag Award Minimum Requirements

Although the majority of sites are not going to be submitted for Green Flag consideration, the council will continue to strive to meet the standards expected of the award scheme, and as a bare minimum, all open spaces should seek to be classified as fair on the Green Flag quality scale outlined at the beginning of this section. Concerning the open space hierarchy, minimum quality targets are as follows:

11.5.2 Destination Sites

All destination sites should seek to achieve a minimum score of 65% (14% higher than the current average for this type of provision). Any score less than this on the Green Flag Quality scale will lead to sites being designated as fair. Given that destination sites are the borough's main parks, they should be held up as examples of "good" practice, and to achieve this level of status, a score of 65% is required.

12.5.3 Community / Neighbourhood Sites

All community / neighbourhood sites should seek to achieve a minimum score of 50%. The current average score is 43%, which leads to a designation of poor. Raising the standards of these open spaces to 50% would show quality as fair. In addition to this, any sites that are being considered for Green Flag status would need to achieve 60%.

The overall quality target for this type of provision is set lower than for destination sites as it is unrealistic to expect the same standards. Whilst these sites are important and provide a wide range of facilities, they should have a site management plan, which would include for marketing and community involvement

12.5.4 Local Open Spaces

All local open spaces should seek to score a minimum of 45% (compared to the current average of 34%). 45% is the lower limit of sites that are deemed to be of fair quality and this is a realistic target for local open spaces. Whilst they may lack basic infrastructure and strategic management when compared to destination and community sites, they still should be managed and maintained to an acceptable standard. Whilst it is highly unlikely that a local open space would be considered for a Green Flag Award, should this arise, a minimum quality score of 60% would be required.

13.0 ACCESSIBILITY ASSESSMENT

13.1.1 General Issues

All publicly accessible green spaces in the Borough have been mapped that fall within the three main typologies - this indicates location / size / principal uses etc. This has then enabled a map based assessment of different forms of open spaces - thereby avoiding the pitfalls of assessment using artificial boundaries not present on the ground - such as the political ward boundaries.

The accessibility of sites can principally be examined from two perspectives:

For larger sites serving more strategic functions there will always be a significant number of visitors and rural residents accessing the sites by car or public transport - examples being tourist attractions, centralised sports facilities and large parks of town or Borough wide significance. In the case of this relatively limited number of sites it can be anticipated that quite large catchment areas extending well into rural areas and neighbouring authorities can be drawn up to reflect travel by car or public transport.

Due to the relatively small geographical size of the borough it is not felt that mapping against car travel distance would offer any meaningful information. Any small deficiencies maybe identified in travelling from one side of the borough to the next would depend on a relatively arbitrary travel time and e.g. a further 5 or 10 minutes of accepted travel time could rapidly remove most deficiencies but has negligible impact as a barrier to access for those owning cars.

The Warwickshire Observatory's key indicator of car ownership in 2004 identified that seven wards within Nuneaton and Bedworth had over 25% of households without cars.

These were primarily in the urban areas and would not provide significant barriers to access to local and community parks, but may have an impact on accessibility to Destination and Regional facilities.

Almost all such large sites also however serve a local function - still acting as e.g. the local park for those living close to them and for this reason should be closely examined for their degree of local accessibility to pedestrians.

The great majority of sites are intended for relatively local usage and as such can be approached as serving a catchment area within a pedestrian walking distance. For the purpose of this strategy the focus has therefore been placed on pedestrian walking distance catchment areas.

13.1.2 Accessibility and Cost

Any cost of entry to facilities can effectively reduce the degree of accessibility of facilities for those on lower incomes. The most obvious barrier is any form of entry charge, but currently all NBBC parks and open spaces are freely accessible without charge. (There are typically charges for formal sports provision).

Similarly all NBBC sites currently have no car park charges, although those visiting Riversley Park who choose to use the pay and display car parks in the Town Centre will obviously face a charge.

The 'flipside' of having no charges is that no income is generated to help offset maintenance costs or to improve the services, although it is often the case that the costs of collecting income almost outweigh the sums generated and the costs can act as a deterrent to use leading to lower usage, lower visitor numbers and lower income than may have been anticipated.

13.1.3 Accessibility in outlying Areas

An inevitable consequence of living in outlying area is that the level of access to 'higher-end' strategic facilities is going to be less favourable than in urban areas. Access to such facilities will almost always automatically necessitate journeys by car or public transport.

Although often accepted as a consequence of living in these areas, it does mean a degree of social exclusion (from these 'strategic' facilities) that inevitably affects those without the funds to own and run a car and that are poorly served by public transport.

The relatively small number of people affected would not however justify e.g. the creation of a 'Destination size' park or a new leisure centre in each area. In this case the key to reducing inequality and social exclusion is to optimise local provision and ensure low cost public transport exists - linking outlying areas and the larger settlements. This rural transport 'barrier' to access is a wider issue, which is outside the scope of this strategy.

We must consider at this point the accessible open space within neighbouring boroughs and what impact this has on our residents. It could well be that it provides a function that can not be provided within the borough now or in the future and that potential exists for partnership working to develop sites which benefit communities.

The crucial issue in outlying areas is to ensure that access at least to a moderate range of appropriate facilities exists and that the quality of these facilities is high and this strategy proposes a local standard for such provision.

13.2 Accessibility Mapping Techniques

At its most basic level identifying a centre point for each relevant site, then drawing a circle can create a map of an indicative pedestrian catchment area with a set 'walking distance' radius centred upon this point:

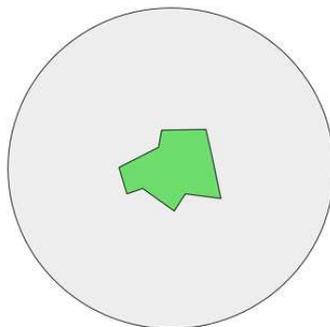


Figure i): Open space site with catchment radius from the centre

This can then begin to broadly indicate areas of deficiency and potential surplus in respect to different types of open space provision:

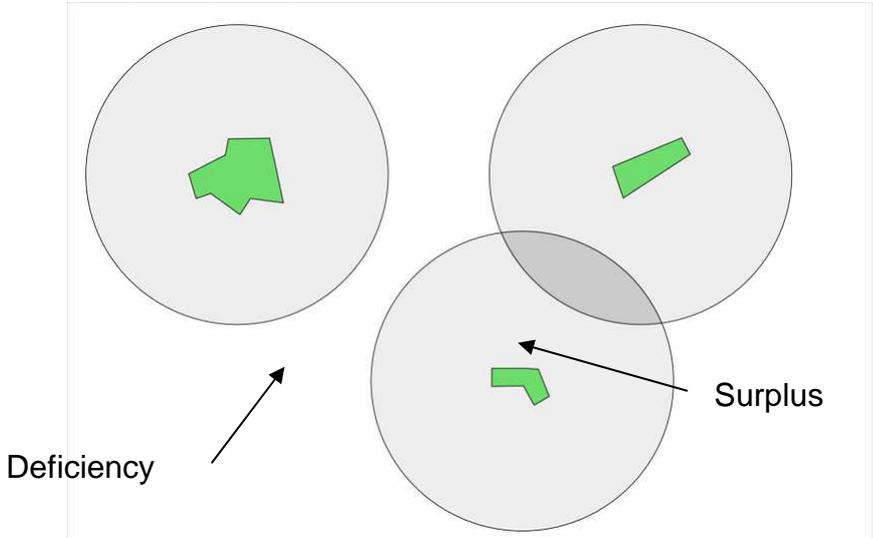


Figure ii): Open spaces showing deficiencies and surplus

Offsetting the catchment radius from the extents of the park rather than from a centre point can further refine the technique. On larger sites this will make a significant impact on the catchment area. When using this method the catchment area will rarely be perfectly circular, but will track the shape of the open space.

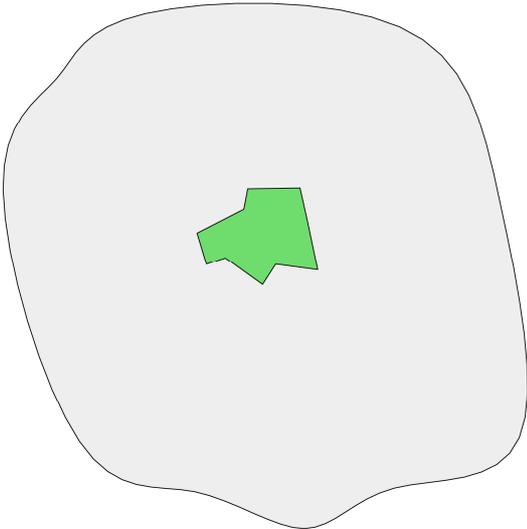


Figure iii): Catchment area offset from site boundary.

A more advanced method would allow for site access points and only apply the catchment buffer from these points

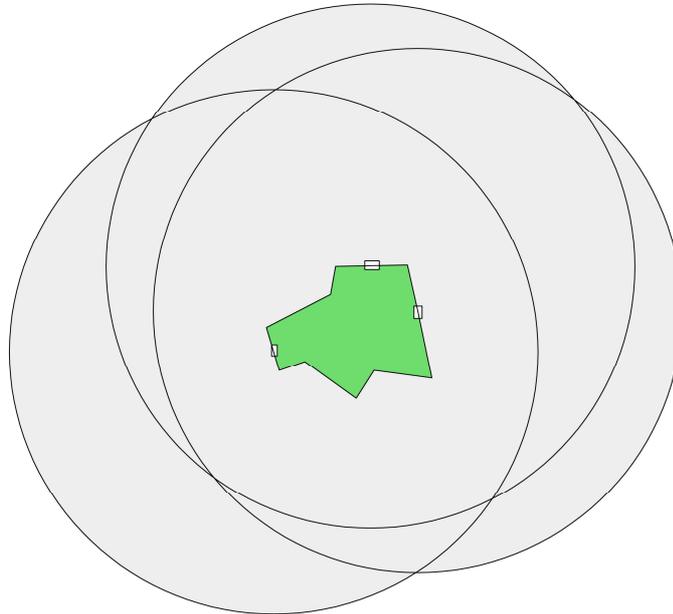


Figure iv): The catchment buffered from multiple site entrances.

This method allows for sites where access is limited to certain points and therefore does not include properties near the open space but not near an entrance, however the resulting catchment area tends to be not dissimilar to one buffered from the boundary (except in very large sites with limited access). A disadvantage to this technique is that it results in several buffers for a single site, making analysis more difficult when using a GIS system

A final technique is related to boundaries that will make access from within a catchment area very difficult or impossible. These boundaries may be actual boundaries such as railways, motorways or canals etc, or policy based boundaries such as not crossing an 'A' road to access an open space. Where there is a reasonable method of crossing the boundary the catchment area will be unaffected.

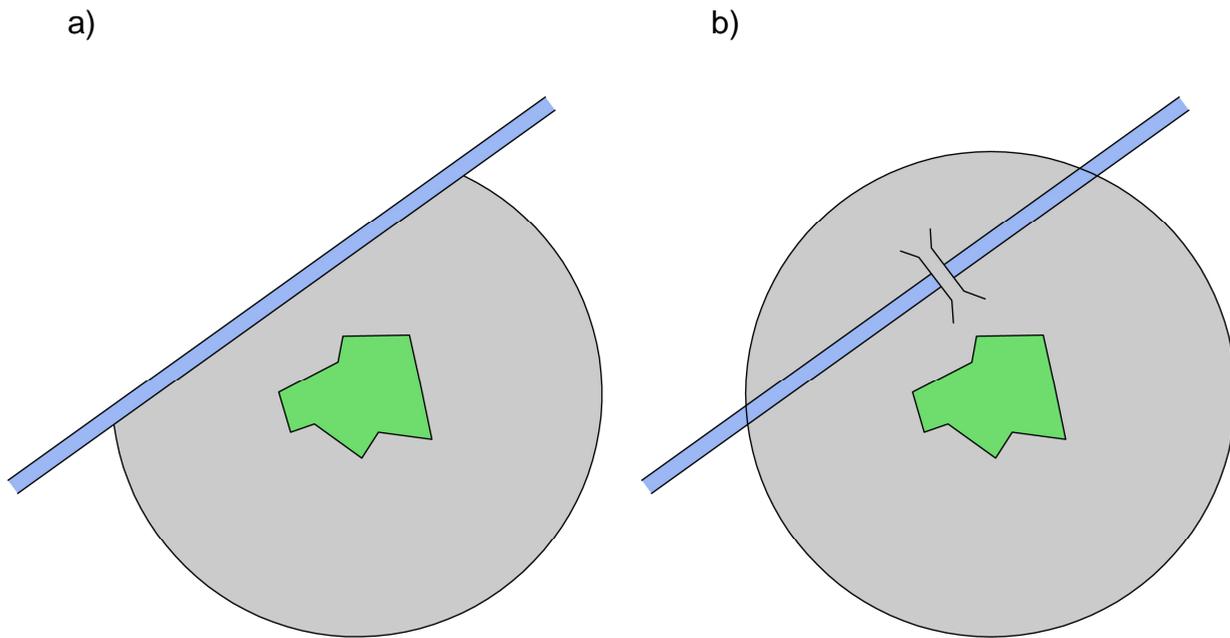


Figure v): a) Open space close to a canal showing the severance of the catchment area. b) The bridge negates the effect of the boundary.

13.2.1 Strategy Technique

This strategy has used a combination of the previous techniques to balance a representative catchment area against the need to generate clear and simple data that can be displayed graphically.

Each site has a catchment offset from its extents to the appropriate walking distance for its classification. There is no modification for entrance locations. Where a significant boundary (railway, canal etc) is present the catchment is modified to take this into account. Roads do not form a boundary unless they are dual-carriageways or larger.

13.2.2 Catchment area size

Whilst the NPFA and ANGst models can partly address accessibility to sport, play and natural habitat provision, there is no single nationally defined open space hierarchy or standards for catchment area size and associated walking distances. There are a wide range of more locally defined hierarchies, catchment area sizes and walking distances – with greatly varying degrees of clarity about the methodology that lead to the locally defined standards.

There is however a fairly high degree of commonality that emerges between the general form of hierarchy, broad catchment area sizes and walking distances.

For example:

Local Authority	Destination	Community	Neighbourhood
Walsall	1200	600	400
East Staffs	960	600	400
Nottingham	1000	500	300
Coventry	2000	600	400

Drawing on these broad commonalities and the input of officers an initial proposed set of local standards have been developed.

Local Standards for Open space Catchments:

<u>Greenspace Type</u>	<u>Catchment Area Radius</u>	<u>Walking Times</u>
Destination Park	1000 metres	15-20 minutes
Community Park	600 metres	10-12 minutes
Local Park	400 metres	5-8 minutes

13.3 Assessment

Having assessed the quantity and quality of open space provision within the borough, the next stage is to look at the accessibility of different types of provision.

Buffers of 1000 metres were created around all Destination Parks (the identified local standard). This is shown visually below:

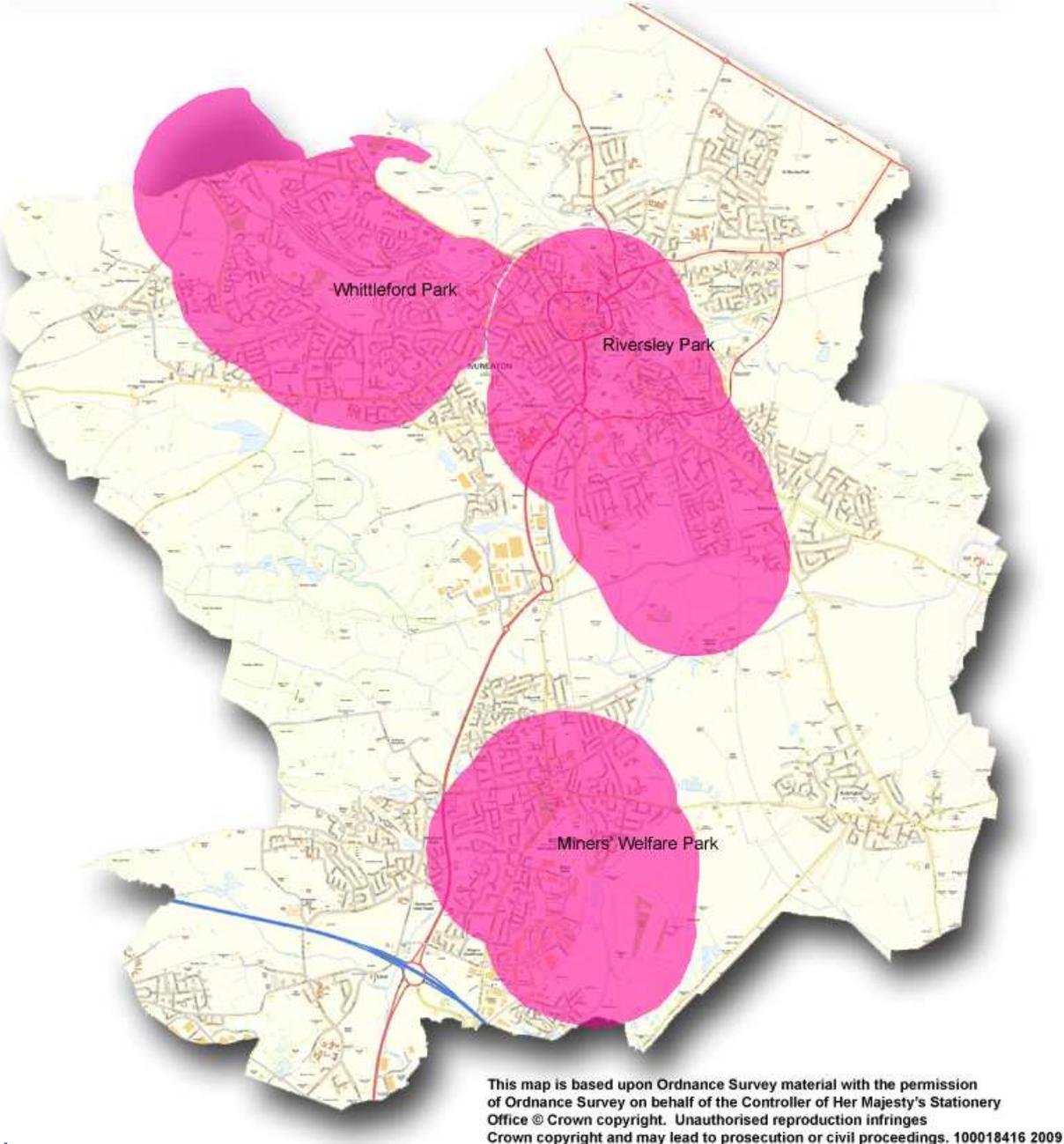


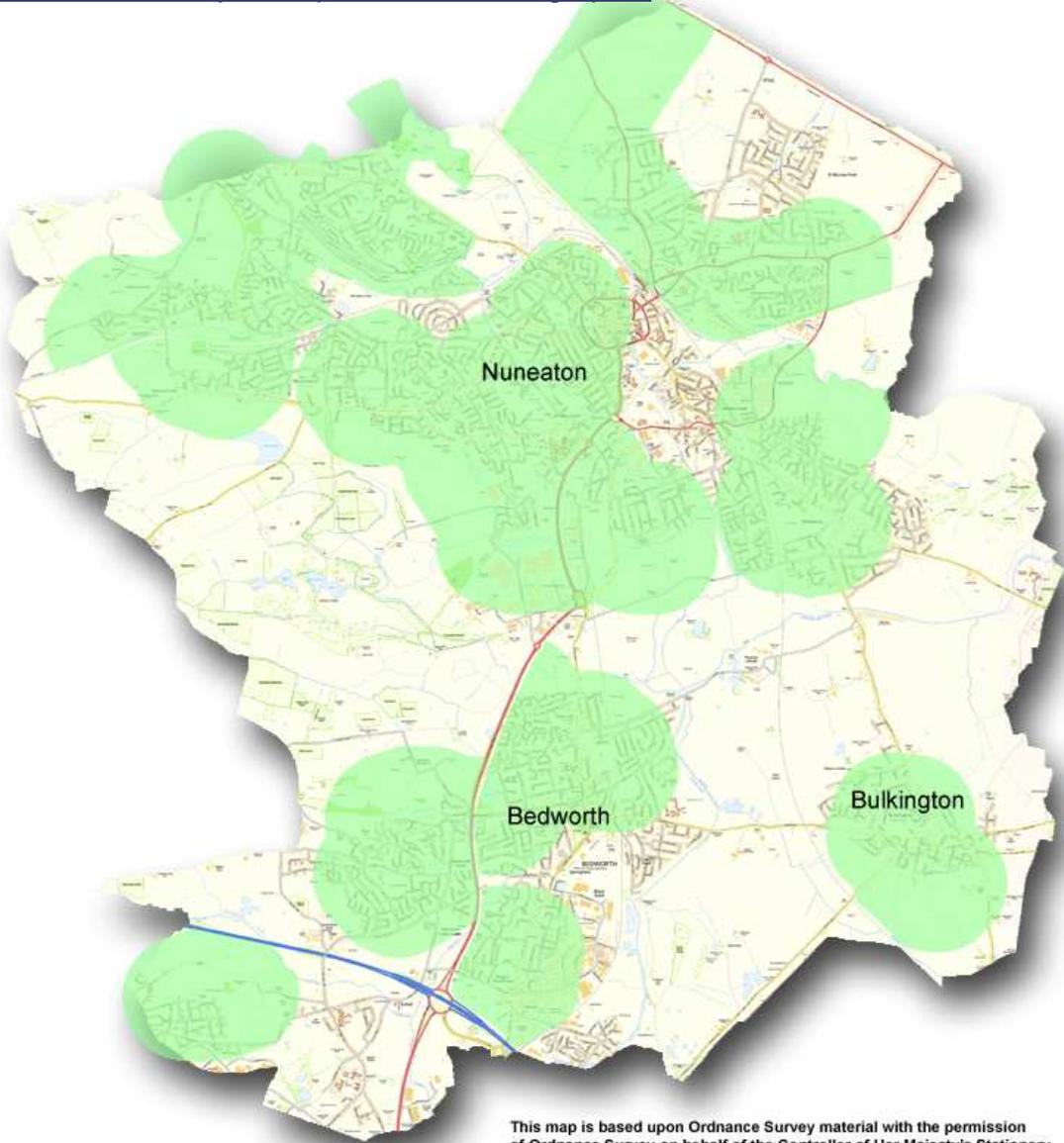
Figure 9: Destination site buffers plotted on borough plan

From this it can be seen that much of the main urban settlements of Nuneaton and Bedworth have access to destination sites, although areas within the north east and east of Nuneaton, Bulkington, and the south west pocket of the borough are lacking suitable access.

13.3.2 Community / Neighbourhood

Buffers of 600 metres were created around all Community / Neighbourhood sites (the identified local standard). This is shown visually below:

Figure 10: Community sites plotted on borough plan



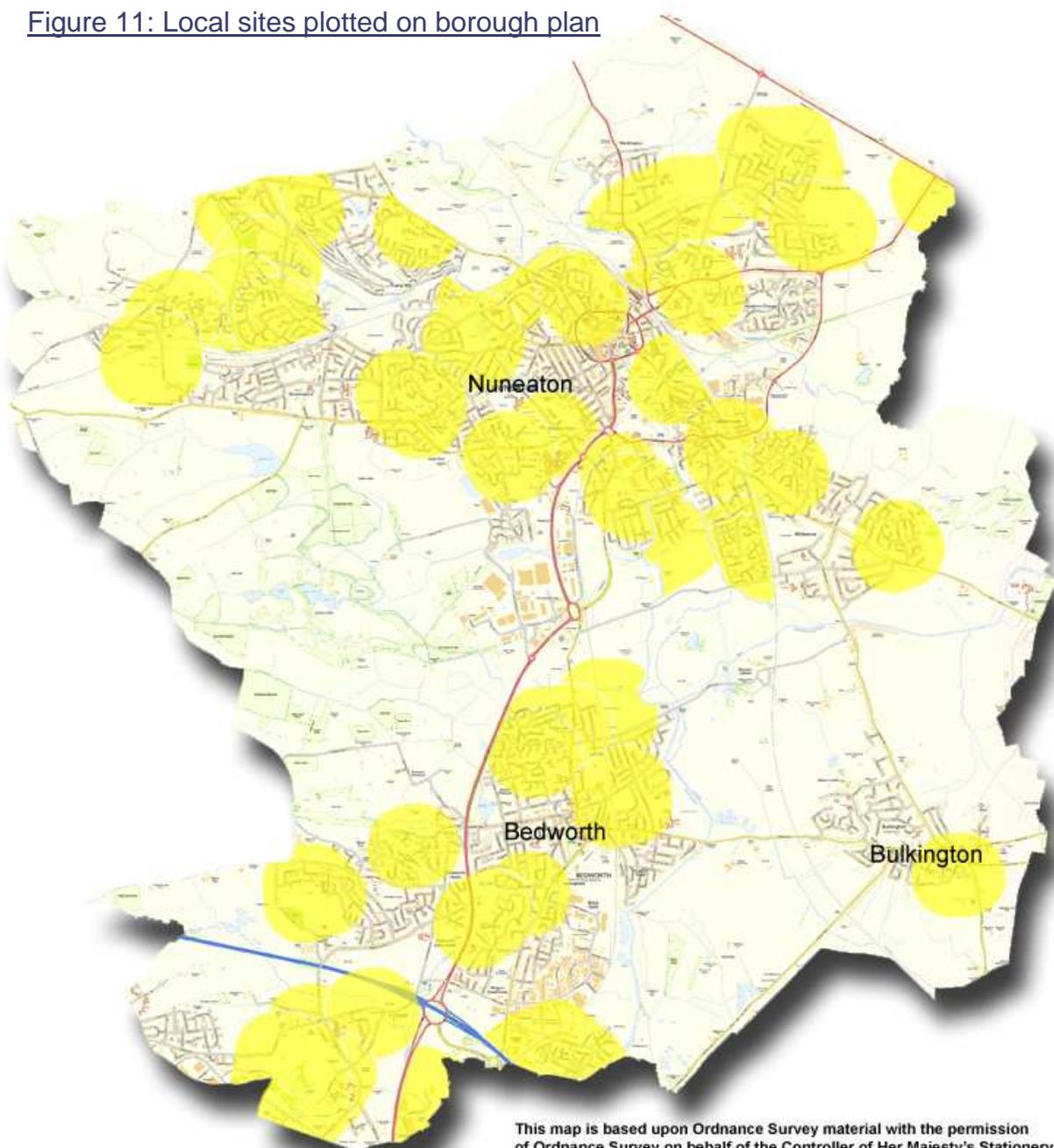
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From this it can be seen that there is good accessibility to community spaces across much of the borough. Notable areas where this is not the case include isolated areas of Whitestone and St Nicolas in Nuneaton, whilst a small part of Poplar within Bedworth does not have suitable access. As with destination sites part of the south west corner of the borough also appears to be lacking accessible provision.

13.3.3 Local

Buffers of 400 metres were created around all local sites (the identified local standard). This is shown visually below:

Figure 11: Local sites plotted on borough plan



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On viewing this map, it is noticeable that there are a number of gaps in accessible provision across the borough, with all main urban areas having identifiable areas that lack access. For instance, although the northern part of Bedworth has good access, there are clear gaps within the central and southern part of the settlement.

14.0 Accessible Provision

In order to fully understand where there are deficiencies in accessible provision, it is important to combine the catchment areas for destination, community/neighbourhood, and local spaces onto one map. This is shown below.

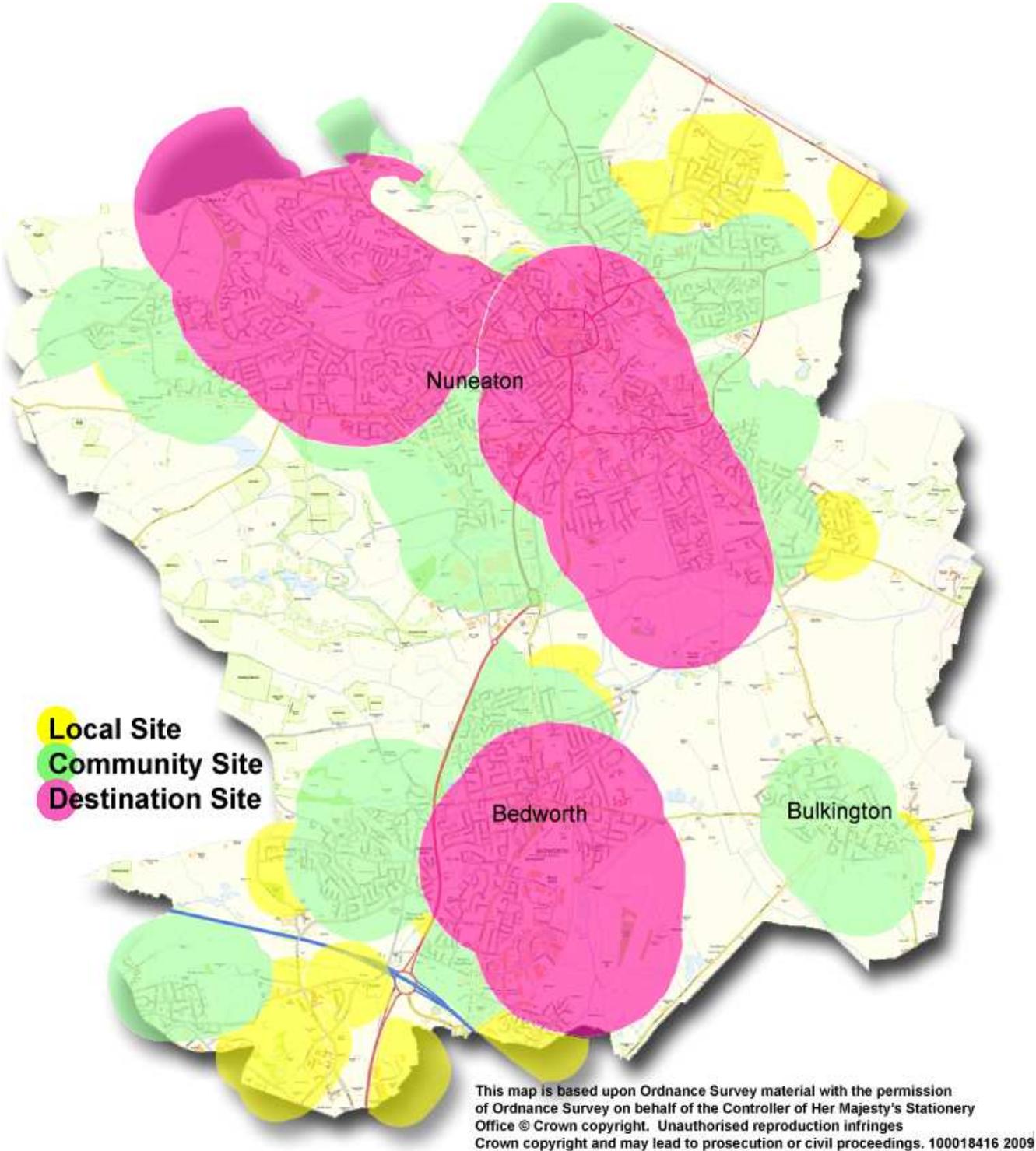


Figure 12: Catchments for site types

The plan above indicates an overlay of the three main types of park in the hierarchy, Destination, Community and Local. The colours are ranked in hierarchy order, so that the darker purple colour overlays directly onto both the green and yellow, so that the areas marked in yellow show where there is only access to Local spaces.

The accessibility plan shows that the majority of the borough is within walking distance of a Destination Park with the remainder within a short journey by alternative forms of travel. The Destination parks serve the function therefore of both Local and Community Parks for a large section of the borough

To meet our own access targets which is to ensure that all residents have access to at least a Community Park, it indicates key areas of deficiency, these are revealed as:

Area to the East of Whitestone, including the estate served by Thornhill Drive

Area to the North of St Nicholas Park Drive, including the estate served by Milby Drive

Area at the end of the Long Shoot, which borders with Hinckley and the A5

The area which includes for Ash Green and Wheelwright Lane as we border Coventry

Area to the West of Dark Lane which includes the Estate served by Cardigan Road

Area to the East of Bulkington served by Wolvey Road

These areas are currently covered with Local Park provision.

15.0 Overview of Open Space Provision

Quantity, quality and accessibility have so far been examined separately within this strategy. In order to guide the council's principles and future policies for open space, it is now necessary to combine the trends shown from all three of these distinct aspects.

The map below represents a visual summary of this three stage process in that it identifies all destination, community / neighbourhood, and local open spaces, highlights their quality and also shows the catchments that each site serves.

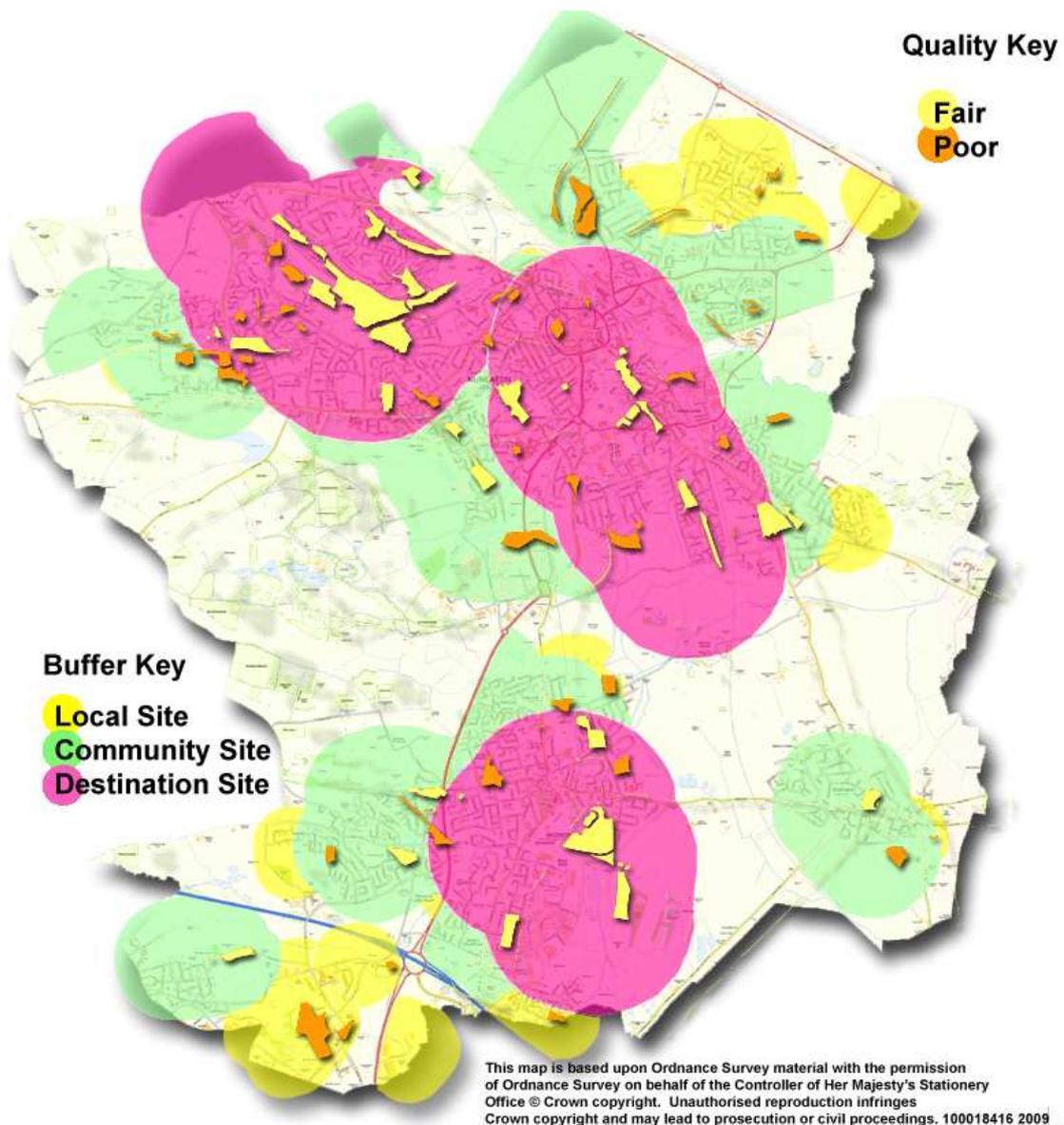


Figure 13: Catchments and quality scores

16.0 Opportunities to Address the Deficiencies

For the council to create a new Destination Park to cover those residents that currently don't fall within the catchment of our existing sites would be extremely expensive, particularly as the cost of not only acquiring the land but also providing the facilities would run into millions of pounds.

For that reason a pragmatic view would be that the creation of any new Destination Parks is unlikely apart from the most exceptional circumstances. This means that some residents will not be in walking distance of Destination Parks.

Establishing access routes from these deficient areas towards the Destination Parks to improve access needs to be addressed and a survey of these key points will be undertaken to determine potential and expected cost.

In terms of these deficiencies within the Borough therefore, we are stating that all properties within the borough should have access to a Community Park, and those residents that don't fall within the catchment of a Destination Park, can expect facilities and standards at their Community Parks to include elements expected at the Destination Parks. We have identified several areas not currently having access to a Community Park. The suggested means of bridging these deficiencies could be as follows:

- To undertake improvements to Changebrook Close open space, thus moving it from a Local Park designation into a Community Park. This would require considerable investment in the infrastructure and facilities.
- The upgrading of Buttermere Recreation Ground from a Local Park into a Community Park. This site already has some of the features and facilities required of a Community Park, but would require further investment to bring to the required level of facilities.
- It may not be practical following consultation to develop these sites further so there will a need to look at additional sites as part of future proposed

developments in the area. These will need to be developed to a Community Park standard, with the range of facilities as identified.

The deficiencies in accessibility to a Community Park in the Whitestone area cannot be addressed by the upgrading of an existing site so would require the provision of a new site as part of any future proposed developments in this location. This would have to be sited so that it serves not only the new site but also the area deficient in open space.

- The upgrading of St Giles from a Local Park to a Community Park. This site has some facilities common with Community Park but will need further upgrading to meet the necessary criteria.
- The upgrading of Blackberry Lane from a Local Park to a Community Park. This site will require considerable investment in both the infrastructure and facilities.
- The upgrading of Anderton Road from a Local Park to a Community Park. This has limited facilities and will require investment in the infrastructure and facilities.

The deficiencies in accessibility in the Long Shoot area could not practically be addressed by upgrading the existing site and therefore a new site as part of any future development in this locality would have to be provided to serve both the new and existing communities.

The deficiencies in accessibility in the Bulkington area again cannot be addressed by upgrading existing sites. Any new housing development would have to consider provision in this locality to provide for both the new and existing communities.

There is the potential for partnership working with North Warwickshire Borough Council in the development of the large public open space at Snow Hill which is in Hartshill, but which is accessible to a large number of residents of Camp Hill.

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It must be noted that there is an overall deficiency across the borough in the amount of formal open space that is available (six acre standard) and this will have to be addressed with future housing developments to bridge the gap.

The overall quality of our sites has been discussed and visually represented as either “Fair” or “Poor” on the above map. In general terms our sites are of poor quality with no particular area fairing worse than any other in terms of provision. The policies laid out in this strategy, outline our commitment to increase the quality scores to reflect the appropriate designation in the hierarchy and to provide open space that benefits the communities that it serves.

17.0 Policies and Proposals

The policies and proposals that are set out in the document are not only set against the general principles relating to the open space but also cut across the many issues that affect the management and maintenance of our public open space. They are broken down into the 14 areas identified below:

- General Principles Relating to Public Open Space
- Provision for Young People
- Partnership Working
- Community Safety
- Health and Well-being
- Health and Safety
- Marketing and Promotion
- Biodiversity and Sustainability
- Management and Grounds Maintenance
- Training
- Equality
- Performance Monitoring/Management
- Funding and Investment
- Strategy Monitoring and Review

18.0 General Principles Relating To Public Open Space

18.1 Introduction

The contribution that green spaces make to the local environment, quality of life, health and well-being of our residents and the local economy are well-documented – We have identified that although we have a lot of public open space the current quality of the resource is poor and showing limited signs of recovery.

Recovery is marked where we have undertaken major investment, examples of this are through our play area programme (which often only benefits/improves a small part of a large site) and where we have utilised external monies e.g. Section 106 funding.

Green spaces that are of poor quality therefore and are considered to be unsafe and that are declining will never make the positive contribution that they should be making to local communities.

18.2 Objectives

To raise the quality standards of all parks to meet the needs and demands of users and of local people.

To protect the historic and environmental context of the Borough's public open space.

To improve access for all for communities to use, appreciate and to enjoy.

To protect the borough's green spaces for the benefits they provide to the health and well being of residents.

To provide sufficient quality green spaces in appropriate locations.

To provide sufficient quality green space to meet the expected increased housing provision within the borough as part of the Borough Plan.

18.3 Policies

1) The council will adopt the hierarchy of accessible public open space together with the recommendations for the criteria base that each type of park should include. (D)

2) The council will adopt the accessibility standards identified within the document. (D)

3) Each household within the borough will have access as identified in the standards to a Community Park. (D)

It will normally be impractical to achieve the creation of new community park (except where there is the opportunity through development gain) to serve existing deficiencies in provision, so we will seek to address this where possible by upgrading Local parks (which have the ability to be upgraded) to Community Park status to bridge this gap.

Where appropriate and where open space cannot be provided in the catchment area due to the density of existing buildings, commuted sums can be utilised to upgrade the sites.

It would also be appropriate to seek contribution from developers in the provision of a Management Plan (A pre-requisite of the green flag criteria) for the site.

4) We will seek to address deficiencies both in quality and quantity in Open Space Provision through a variety of funding sources both internal and external. This will include grants secured either by ourselves or in partnership with outside bodies and interest groups and the use of planning gain, utilising developer contributions both on existing sites and on new developments. (C)

We will access external funding opportunities wherever possible both as an authority and also as a partner or facilitator for external bodies, identifying priorities and seeking to ensure that all funding streams where possible, are combined and used to make the largest impact on bridging deficiencies.

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We have previously identified that we will ensure that all residents within the borough will have access to a Community Park and the range of facilities that are available.

If a proposed new development falls within the catchment area of an existing Community Park and can be facilitated by that site, then any negotiated developer contributions could be dealt with in a number of ways, each of which could have a significant impact:

- If the existing site does not meet the quality standards that we have identified, then commuted sums could be utilised in bridging that gap, to enable both the existing community and any new community benefit from any improvements.
- If as above the site falls within the catchment, but the site already meets the required quality standards then the commuted sums may be used on the Local Parks that fall within the catchment, to assist in bringing them up to the required standard.
- In providing improved access from these areas to the Destination parks, this will require a survey to determine key access routes and possible improvements
- Links from wildlife corridors on the new developments can be linked directly into current open space provision. This maybe facilitated by the purchase of additional land agreements with landowners.
- Housing developer's are asked to provide on-site Local or Incidental open space provision, which can be linked into the wildlife buffers and identified links.

It will not be practical however, to provide this pledge throughout the whole of the borough, mainly due to the density of housing in certain locations and the lack of accessible open space.

If this cannot be achieved and a Local Park hasn't the ability to be upgraded then a much wider strategic view must be adopted in what type of Public Open Space is provided and where. Issues to be taken into account must include;

NBBC Open Space Strategy

- The size of the development
- Is it linked to other proposed developments
- Would it possible to create a larger piece of functional open space between more than one development
- Can it be linked to existing green space via wildlife corridors or private open space
- If a newly proposed area is not covered within a catchment for an existing Community Park, then this is the minimum standard of open space that can be provided
- The emerging Playing Pitch and Allotment strategies may identify that there is a requirement for increased provision within these new proposed developments
- An initial Management Plan must be provided as part of the design and Landscape Planning Conditions, which must be revised by the developer following extensive consultation with the new communities within five years of the laying out of the site. The council must formally adopt this.

5) That as an integral part of a combination of funding sources a percentage of negotiated developer contributions be utilised as a contribution towards the on-going development/improvement in quality of our Destination Parks. (C)

The costs associated with increasing the quality of our Destination Parks is vast and will require large investment. It can be argued that as all residents will be able to access and enjoy them, that new developments will increase the pressure on these facilities via additional numbers. Contributions should be made therefore to improve the quality of the sites, to facilitate this.

6) As an integral part of future development (both residential and industrial) there will be a requirement to ensure not only high quality publicly accessible open space (as defined within the strategy) is provided, but also high quality private space that makes a significant contribution to the street scene and physical and mental well-being. (C)

7) The council will adopt the Green Flag (the national quality standard) assessment model to measure the quality of its public open space. (D)

It is an excellent way to assess the quality of a park, it brings those managing the sites and stakeholders together. It ensures that Management Plans are produced for a park and considers maintenance, care, sustainability and community activity.

8) The council will aim to improve the quality scores of all of its public open space. Further to this its Destination Parks should be of Green Flag standard whilst all other sites should be managed along the principles of the Green flag criteria. (D)

The quality scores as identified within the appendices show that we require significant inputs and investment both in a financial sense and also in officer time to improve the scoring to meet our standards and to provide sites that communities want to access and to make benefit of.

9) We will seek to gain Green Flag Status for all of our Destination Parks and at least one formal community park and one community wildspace as benchmark sites to drive up community park/wildspace standards. (D)

Our destination parks should be seen as examples of 'good practice'. Achieving Green Flag status will help demonstrate this.

It is imperative that any links, continuous routes or wildlife corridors identified within the Green Infrastructure Study and that will aid the creation of the publicly accessible “Green Network” are positively pursued. As an illustration, the map below indicates some of these potential links as part of the possible future Green Network.

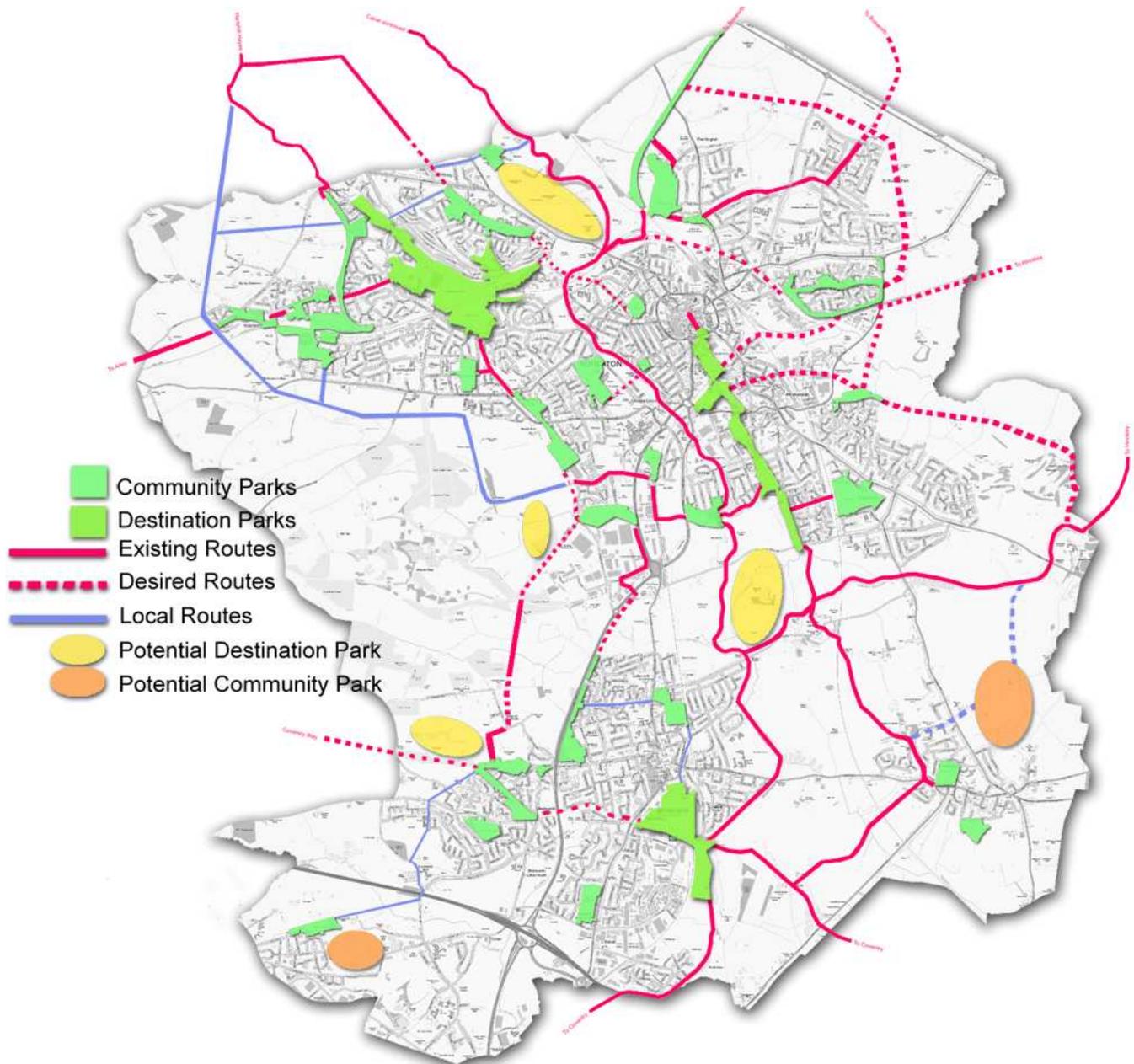


Figure 14: Routes and potential links

N.B. The position of routes is indicative. In many cases existing routes would require improvement in terms of path surface, path width, signage and in some cases the permitted use (e.g. pedestrian routes might be desirably altered in status to permit cycling). In terms of desired routes and potential parks most are shown on private land which would only become accessible through land transfer / creation of public open space as a result of associated development.

10) All council owned incidental open space and any higher level open space that can be removed without reducing catchment area coverage, to be audited and assessed using an assessment model based on the green flag criteria. This will determine significance and then subsequent treatment to either improve or dispose as appropriate. (D)

11) We will identify all areas of land and facilities that are surplus to requirements. (D)

The quantity and quality audits of land will identify those areas of land that do not meet local needs or are in excess of requirements. . Such sites will be reviewed to establish whether they are surplus to requirements and whether they therefore merit protection under emerging planning policy on open space. Any sites declared surplus to requirement will be considered for an alternative use as open space before being considered for disposal.

Any consideration could only proceed after a thorough local consultation process and consideration of any objections.

12) To develop a detailed design guide, which will determine the quality and style of all of our public open space by December 2012. (D)

A coherent, unified approach will not only be used in the design of our spaces but in the use of materials and the installation of features into sites.

This will have a positive affect on the quality of the sites and also ensure that grounds maintenance operations can be carried out more efficiently.

13) To develop an allotment strategy, which will sit alongside the open space strategy by December 2013. (D)

Allotments, like other open spaces, provide for leisure, recreation, relaxation, healthy exercise and social contact. And like other open spaces they can be havens for wildlife and provide a visual amenity for the local area that changes with the seasons. The big difference, and a considerable bonus, is that allotments are productive, yielding

seasonal fresh fruit and vegetables to rival anything that a supermarket can offer. A revival of interest in food growing has resulted in increased demand for our allotment plots.

14) To revise and adopt the playing pitch strategy to sit alongside the Open Space Strategy by August 2011. (D)

Our objective is to provide all residents with sufficient good quality formal outdoor recreation provision, both in terms of playing facilities and changing accommodation, in the right locations, to ensure increased participation. (D)

15) To create more stimulating and useful open spaces for local people by reducing the amount of unnecessary amenity grassland. To generate more appealing townscapes, by reducing the amount of green desert in the borough. (D)

It has been identified within the council's "Sustainability" strategy that any piece of land above 0.4 hectare should be considered for improvement to contain greater "diversity". We will assess all our open spaces with a view to identifying sites where an alternative treatment would be beneficial.

16) To protect and safeguard existing accessible public open space in the borough. (C)

The audits have indicated that there is adequate provision in the borough, but this must be retained to ensure there is no reduction in the standards we have achieved.

There may be circumstances when open space may be identified for future development and we must be flexible enough to consider this. However if there were to be a loss this would need to be outweighed by the need for development: whether alternative sites were available and any harm that may be caused could be offset by the provision of other open space of similar quality in the catchment area in question.

19.0 Provision For Young People

19.1 Introduction

The value and benefits of play have long being established; outdoor play has developmental and therapeutic benefits for children and young people, can be a tool to learning, helps develop an awareness of risk and danger and is important for building social, emotional and life skills. Access to these facilities can also help children and young people to stay healthy and tackle problems of obesity by providing opportunities for exercising and fresh air. In addition, these areas play a vital role in providing space where children and young people can meet and interact with others, to learn invaluable social skills away from their home environment and to establish a world for themselves independent of their parents.

This has been further supplemented by the three year Big Lottery funded Play Ranger project which plays an important role in promoting an active, healthy lifestyle for children and young people. Fun and dynamic activities help to combat obesity, by inspiring children to participate in stimulating and physically challenging activities – both during the sessions and during their own time. The Play Rangers also play an important role in educating parents and carer's on the importance of their encouragement and support of healthy living.

Formal leisure facility provision for children and young people in the Borough includes play areas, multi-use games areas (MUGAs - containing facilities for basketball, football land cricket), skateboard parks, teenage shelters and informal kick-about areas. Informal play is equally important and children use all kinds of open spaces, in addition to formally equipped play areas, for their games and social interaction and the Big Lottery funded Play Rangers form an integral part of encouraging children to use their open spaces in an appropriate way.

Outdoor play provision was the subject of a separate strategy document, which looked at a qualitative and quantitative audit of the Borough's play spaces and teenage facilities to ascertain the adequacy and accessibility of the existing provision to meet

current and future demand. Refer to the map shown over (Fig. 14) for locations and catchments of the council's current play spaces.

Within the Borough there are 80 of these formal facilities. They are all maintained by the Council's own play-fitting service that insures that they are visited at least once a week ensuring safety is paramount and consistency of approach.

We are currently in year 5 of our 8-year play refurbishment, which has seen the rebuilding of many of our play areas to meet current standards and incorporating many of the new design principles being advocated by Play England.

Of these facilities, there are 47 play areas, 22 MUGAs, 4 skateboard parks and several teenage shelters. The play areas vary in size, directly related to the hierarchy of Public Open Space.

19.2 Objectives

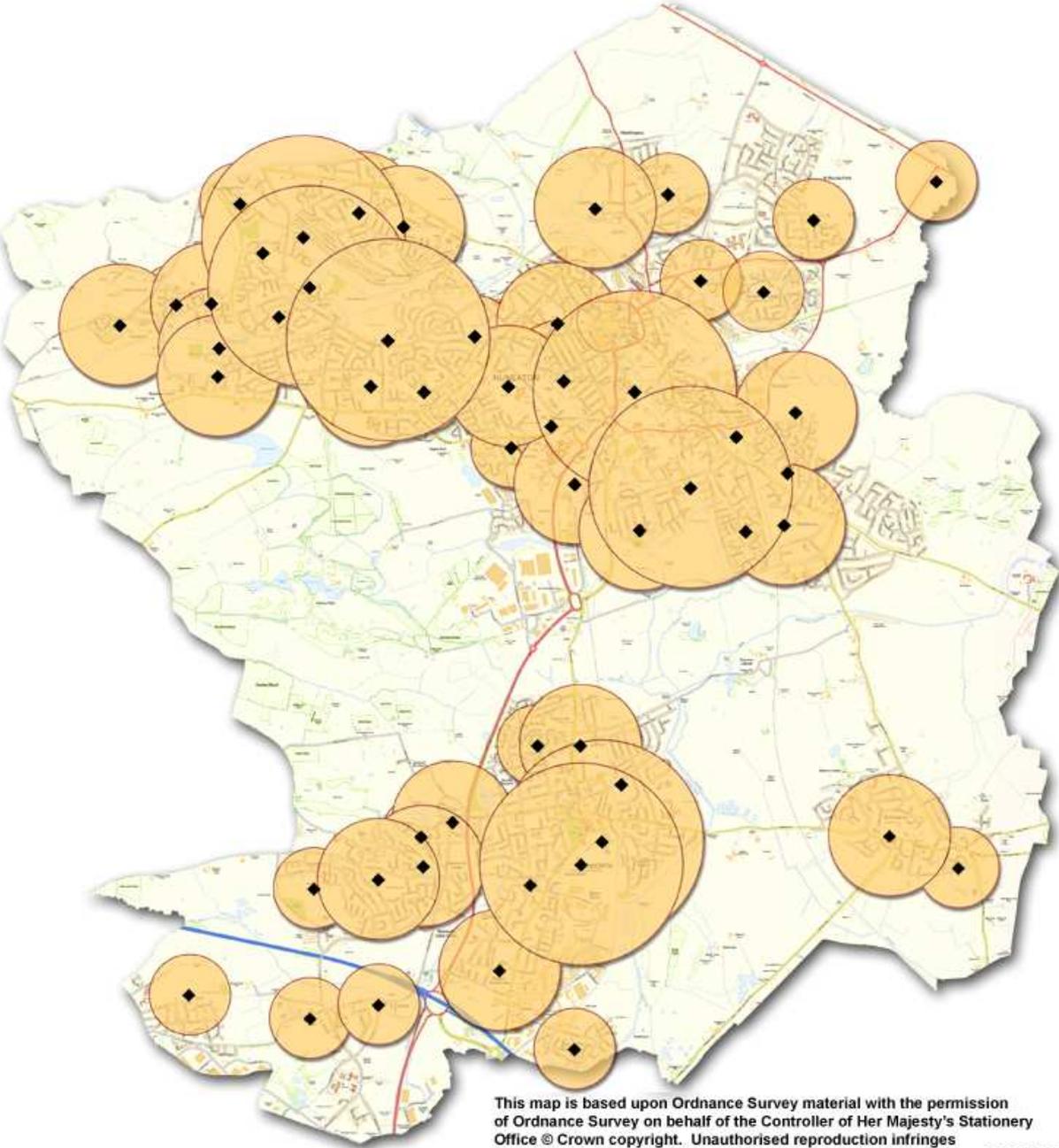
All children and young people living in Nuneaton and Bedworth to have access to play provision and teenage facilities that meet their needs in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility.

To provide, where appropriate, high quality play spaces and teenage facilities, such as MUGAs, to encompass all needs within the local community.

To ensure that the equipment on these play spaces and facilities is inclusive, appropriate and stimulating for a range of age groups and abilities and, wherever reasonable, accessible to all

To ensure that the children and young people have a continuous involvement in the design and management of these play spaces and teenage facilities

To ensure that all play spaces and facilities are safe to use and maintained to the highest possible standard by well-trained, dedicated operatives



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Figure 15: Play areas and buffers

19.3 Policies

1. To review the existing play area strategy for the borough in light of information raised from the access mapping and experience of delivery of the refurbishment programme, to include all aspects of equipped play, play spaces and teenage facilities. (D)

2. We will identify a play champion (elected member) for the Council and a Lead Officer. (C)

The Lead Officer will ensure that all aspects of Play are viewed strategically and that with regard to formal equipped play spaces there is co-ordination and communication between organisations and the public.

3. We will involve children and young people in the design; siting and management of their local play areas or teenage facilities. (D)

It is important that those who are to benefit from the range of high quality, inclusive and accessible to all, dedicated play spaces, the children and young people, are involved in the consultation, design, siting and management of these areas.

4. We will continue with our practical preventative maintenance programme of play area equipment inspection, monitoring and repair. (D)

Dedicated play fitters who will be appropriately trained will undertake weekly inspections and ensure equipment repairs to a high level of safety.

5. We will review existing play areas as part of the process of best practice and, as these areas are refurbished, where reasonably practicable, install at least one piece of inclusive equipment. (D)

Reasonable' essentially means achieving a balance between the provision required and the cost to the provider in terms of time, effort and resources.

6. To seek where justifiable and appropriate developer contributions to raise the quality of play facilities in line with the parks designation in the hierarchy. This will be further developed within the Design Guide for a specific hierarchy. (D)

If it falls outside of a catchment the size or type (if any) of any play equipped site will be determined by its future designation and the community it will serve.

7. To establish and maintain the Play Ranger service. (D)

The work of the play rangers has become an integral part not only in how children and young people play but also in how they interact with their surroundings and peers. Their actions can be directly related to the corporate initiatives relating to, Health, the Environment and Public Safety and have become a successful link in the delivery of the playground refurbishment programme.

Their roles can be further defined to include:

- By extending the choice and control that children have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it.
- Recognising the child's need to test boundaries and respond positively to that.
- Managing the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children safe from harm.
- Extolling the virtues of open spaces, proper behaviour and proper use of facilities.
- Maximise the variety of play opportunities.
- Fostering independence and self-esteem.
- Fostering children's respect for others and offers opportunities for social interaction
- Fostering a sense of ownership and pride of the open spaces in which the children play.
- Fostering the child's wellbeing, healthy growth and development, knowledge and understanding, creativity and capacity for learning.

20.0 Partnership Working, Consultation and Volunteering

20.1 Policies

1. We will continue to work in partnership with the public, private and voluntary sectors to manage and enhance our public open spaces. (D)

The Council has developed strong relationships with external organisations and its residents and works closely with these bodies and individuals to provide, develop and enhance services. It will continue to work with its partners to improve the Borough's open spaces: from listening to what local users want to adopt new ideas on their use, layout and management.

2. We will consult with local residents, users and Friends of' Groups, on all proposals, which will have a significant impact on the existing open space and facilities. (D)

The Council is committed to maintaining a dialogue with residents and users of all of its open spaces and facilities and will continue to consult on proposals for new and improved facilities through a variety of means.

The most important priority in this area is to move on from the current situation where consultation is focused only on gathering opinions on schemes or maintenance parks are already planning to do though, to a situation where community needs are informing the planning of works both capital and revenue.

This will not be a simple change to make and there are a number of issues that will need to be considered.

Many members of the community are not interested in getting involved in the detailed planning of parks and/or do not have the expertise to make operational decisions. The consultation must be constructed in such a way as that it is easy for people to give their views in a way that will provide information that Parks can use to direct improvements to the service.

The views of the wider public towards open space provision will continue to be monitored through the Citizens' Panel and the results used to inform the direction of the strategy.

3. To establish, develop and support of Friends of Groups for all Destination and Community Parks in a manner consistent with the views of local people and help guide the future development of facilities. (D)

These groups are potentially a big asset for our open spaces, not only assisting in building the numbers of people who use them, but also for their ability in attracting money for improvements.

It is not important what these groups are called or in what guise they are in, if they are interested in improving their local open space then we should support them in doing so.

4. To develop an information pack which will provide groups interested in getting involved within open spaces with clear guidance about how NBBC can help to support the setting up of groups and subsequent establishment. (D)

NBBC provide support to group activities such as initial assistance with constitutions, how to work and relate to local ward members, work programmes, how to take project's forward and what the group's function and role is, insurance, funding/grants, equipment, training and publicity.

5. To continue to support and develop the "Conservation Volunteer" programme to assist in the protection and enhancement of semi-natural open space, its wildlife value and to increase the quality of the sites for biodiversity and sustainability. (D)

The current Thursday volunteer programme, which operates throughout the year, provides a valuable resource for a variety of reasons: inclusive of a labour resource, education of the volunteers, pride and responsibility for the environment, social interaction, development and establishment of habitats.

As the volunteers come into contact with new techniques and machinery there will be a need to train the volunteers in these. An audit of the various members needs to be undertaken to determine what their current skill levels are and if any what deficiencies they have. This must be done on an individual basis and records made, so that appropriate training courses can be organised. This will ensure the volunteers are as effective as possible and feel as if they are appreciated, with improved morale.

They are also counted as a Key Performance Indicator with our target to sustain current levels of attendance.

6. To promote the role of a senior volunteer to encourage volunteering/rangers in all aspects of Open Space Management. (D)

Volunteers/Rangers are a largely untapped resource and to fully utilise this and so as to benefit all Public Open Space within the borough, there is a need to encourage volunteers/rangers to play a part not only within Friends of Groups as previously discussed, but also in undertaking physical tasks to improve the environments in which they live.

This could be as simple as regular monitoring of sites offering valuable information with regard to misuse and or litter picking to aid the works of the grounds maintenance contractors.

It is felt that the best form of “Champion” for this would come from within the volunteers/rangers themselves in the guise of a Senior Volunteer/Ranger, or an Officer with direct responsibility for developing volunteering as part of their remit.

A “handbook” will be developed which will outline the roles of a volunteer/ranger detailing such things as the roles they could undertake to the availability of training.

7. We will review the on-site supervision of Public Open Space. (D)

The need for a regular, visible presence in all Parks is recognised as a national issue and has been the subject of National campaigns.

We need to assess the viability of site-based staff / rangers whose primary role would be to out in the park engaging with the community to encourage use of the open space free of site management responsibilities.

The use of Volunteer rangers should be explored, there are established schemes throughout the country which complement employed staff /rangers and are treated equally including the provision of the same training and equipment to carry out the same tasks.

The range of activities and tasks that could make up a volunteer ranger has tremendous potential, additional staff would allow division of roles between management and rangers to allow more ranger work to be delivered.

There is excellent potential (un-harnessed in many ways) for partnership working, both internally and externally. There are many agencies delivering activities within our open spaces – particularly the police / motorcycle police, dog wardens, youth service, leisure trust, contractors and grounds maintenance employees and we need joint working / to look at how to maximise the on ground presence or appearance of that, as part of community safety work, youth diversionary activities and events provision.

The compact nature of borough would be a big advantage to a ranger scheme making it possible for a ranger to get round a number of sites relatively easily.

8. To Develop a Protocol/Procedure for working with community groups/external agencies when applying for or utilising grants for capital enhancement projects on Public Open Space. (D)

The importance of community groups in the management of our Public Open Space cannot be understated. Funders are making it progressively more difficult for local authorities to access external funding directly, with several of our recent applications to SITA and Veolia for example (for assistance with our Play programme and environmental projects) being rejected.

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At the same time though several of our active community groups in particular the Ford Residents Association and Bermuda Residents Association have been very successful in attracting capital monies for the development of on-site facilities. These works have included the provision of a BMX facility, lighting, footway improvements, street furniture and signage.

There will be an increasing emphasis on more “local” democracy with local communities being actively encouraged to play a more prominent role in the improvements and developments of their open space, including self-management.

Funders have indicated that they will be directing their funding towards such groups who can indicate that they are working in partnership with local councils in providing what “local people want”.

9. To establish an overall Nuneaton and Bedworth Parks Forum to share ideas / experiences etc. (D)

To include all stakeholders who have an involvement within Publicly Accessible Open Space.

21.0 Community Safety

21.1 Introduction

The perception of the public of the safety of our Public Open Space varies widely. Key factors affecting this perception include:

- Anti-social behaviour
- Fear of personal safety
- Nuisance ball games
- Vandalism
- Dog-fouling
- Graffiti
- Motorcycle nuisance
- General congregating of youths.

These factors have a fundamental affect on usage and are primary barriers to why the public will not use sites. In many cases whole sections of the community are being disenfranchised and sites are only being utilised by the young.

A large proportion of the Parks and Countryside ad-hoc budget is spent simply maintaining and repairing the fabric of the land that NBBC provide following the mis-use of sites and much time and resources will continue to be required in tackling these issues.

Significant steps are already in place with the works undertaken by the councils Community Safety Team via the mechanisms of the Community Safety Partnership. We are active members of the various groups and they offer up important intelligence and assistance in meeting head on a number of the issues. For example, in partnership with the Fire Service in Camphill, removing all accumulated potential bonfire materials on a daily basis in and around the 5th November. This saw a significant reduction in the number of arson incidents during that period.

21.2 Vision

To work with our partners to tackle the underlying issues impeding the increased use of our Public Open Space by all sections of the community.

21.3 Policies

1. We will review the on-site supervision of Public Open Space. (D)

Greater presence in some form as previously identified - inclusive of the role of the Volunteer Rangers who would complement the work of a paid rangering service.

2. To continue to be an active member of the community safety partnerships, enabling us to link into the council's corporate objectives and to have a direct influence on future operations and issues affecting Public Open Space. (C)

There are a number of partners the council is already working with, at corporate, strategic level –

Nuneaton and Bedworth Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP).

Nuneaton and Bedworth Community Safety Partnership (CSP).

The Community Confidence Group (CCG-managed by the council's Community Safety Team) supports the CDRP.

Partners should include if not already within the CCG: -Police / PCSO's, W.C.C., Trading Standards, Probation Service, Leisure Trust, Neighbourhood Watch.

Increased co-ordination between the various agencies will enable better use of resources in tackling these issues including by Identifying and mapping areas of concern, Developing joint funding opportunities/initiatives, Sharing of Information, Promoting of Good News.

3. To regularly liaise with the Police's architectural Liaison Officer to have an integrated approach to the design of new housing developments. (D)

This will enable potential safety problems to be determined at an early stage and designed out before construction.

4. To develop specific action plans and initiatives with partners that will address incidents of: Anti-social behaviour, Nuisance youth and Motorcycle nuisance. (D)

Real solutions though to these varied problems will involve physical changes; emphasis will need to be placed on solutions to the causes of anti-social behaviour as well as the symptoms, e.g. diversionary activities and additional facilities, funding will form an integral part of this.

Regular liaison with Police, PCSO's and Trading Standards in relation to under-age drinking, will help target those sites suffering from high incidences of such problems and allow the authorities to identify those individuals and outlets that are at the centre of distribution of alcohol.

5. To remove offensive graffiti visible from within Public Open Space, (be it on private or council owned property), the next working day after being reported. (D)

Graffiti walls are provided within a number of our sites and are particularly allied to those facilities provided for the teenager groups e.g. skate parks and youth shelters.

It has been found that by using these as a focus, wider problems with graffiti can be somewhat contained. We will endeavour to continue these partnerships so allowing free expression in isolated pockets.

It has been found that by continued removal of graffiti it not only improves visually the sites making them more appealing to visit and use, but it also discourages further graffiti.

We will continue to work in close liaison with Waste Management in the control of the graffiti.

Continued liaison with the local police in identifying tags and “hot-spots” of problems will allow improved use of resources.

6. To continue the support of protective planting to deter the nuisance and damage caused by the playing of ball games in inappropriate locations, reaffirm the council’s commitment to the non-erection of “No Ball Games” Signs on Public Open Space. (D)

7. To review of the council’s policy towards dog fouling on Public Open Space is undertaken by summer of 2013. (C)

It has been identified in consultations undertaken, that one of the public’s primary concerns which act not only as a deterrent to use but also detract from the quality of public open space, is that of dog fouling.

Consideration is to be given to the use of dual bins as opposed to the use of bins specifically for the use of dog waste, this will have the affect of making more bins available for use in more varied locations.

Issues to be considered must include:

- Greater enforcement capacity
- Additional signage
- Exclusion areas

22.0 Health and Well-being.

Parks and open spaces are essential to people's health and well-being. The recent nationwide summary published by Greenspace in June 2007 confirmed that parks and green spaces represent a considerable attraction for members of the general public.

When asked why they visit a park the answers given were:

- A quarter of respondents (25%) visit simply to relax or think
- Over a fifth (21%) visit for peace and quiet
- Over a quarter (27%) visit to enjoy flowers and trees
- Just under a quarter (22%) visit to see birds and wildlife
- Over 11% visit to feed the birds or ducks
- Over a quarter (28%) visit to enjoy the beauty of the surroundings
- A little under half (43%) visit to get some fresh air
- Nearly half (45%) visit to go for a walk
- One in ten (10%) visit to ride their bike
- Nearly a fifth (19%) visit to walk their dogs
- 18% visit for a family outing or with children
- One in ten (10%) visit to meet friends
- 16% use their visits to keep fit and around 10% visit to improve their health
- 12% of people visit to play sports or games whereas only 4% do so to watch Sports or games being played.

All of the above impact upon a person's mental or physical well-being. This shows that parks can play a vital role in providing opportunities for sport and recreation on a much wider scale, provided certain barriers that deter people from visiting parks are overcome.

Increasing participation in physical activity is now a top priority both nationally and locally. Regular participation in sport and recreation is defined as taking part on at least three days a week in moderate intensity exercise for at least thirty minutes continuously in one session.

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In 2006, Sport England carried out the most thorough study into the participation rates, based on the criteria outlined above, of 1000 people in every local authority in England- The Active People Survey

Nuneaton and Bedworth's result was 18.9% of adults undertook this level of activity. This is below the national average of 21%. Nuneaton and Bedworth's results were among the bottom 25% of England's council districts for regular participation in sport.

It has proven difficult to increase the activity levels and this has recently been confirmed with a smaller sample survey indicating no change in participation rates.

This research was done with a view to produce recommendations on reaching populations – extract from a recent D of H indicates:

Progress: Research being undertaken in 4 geographical wards of deprivation (2 in Nuneaton & 2 in Bedworth) and focussed on the following sections of the community:

- Women and young girls

Nuneaton and Bedworth has a large proportion of younger people, this specific target will also link to teenage pregnancy work within the borough. The Social Exclusion Unit report (1999) identified low expectations, ignorance and mixed messages from society relating to teenage sexuality as three main factors underlying the UK's high teenage pregnancy rates, we have a rate that is higher than the England average. Increase in activity levels for this group will contribute to an increase in self-esteem

- Socially excluded groups

To include persons with a disability (physical/sensory/learning) and mental health service users. This will incorporate people with a learning disability; this group are a historically socially excluded category. Black and Minority Ethnic and New and emerging communities. We have a new second wave' Polish population of between 1000-1500 people in N&B. Amongst other minority ethnic groups we have more people from routine and manual occupations, susceptibility to certain conditions /chronic illnesses i.e. Stroke, Coronary Heart Disease, Diabetes etc is increased for these group, increase in levels of activity therefore will contribute to closing the gap with the majority ethnic categories and ultimately reduction of inequalities at local level.

- Older Persons (over 50)

Type 2 Diabetes increases with age (although it can present in younger adults), half of all cases nationally are diagnosed in the 55 and over age group, and we have a high proportion of residents with Diabetes locally.

- Unemployed/Worklessness

We have a high number of people on incapacity benefit; experience of ill health is higher. Economic inactivity has fallen slowly for women and risen for men. Research includes 50 interviews in each ward, basic demographic information is being collected (quantitative) responses will be analysed in relation to age, sex, employment status & health of the respondent etc. along with anecdotal (qualitative) information which will enable understanding the meanings people assign to social phenomena and to elucidate the mental processes underlying behaviours of individuals. Intended to link to fundamental review of leisure services/facilities provision. Will follow and build on from recent Active People survey(s), Peoples Panel results & Cultural Services Inspection

This is a serious issue as the people of Nuneaton and Bedworth generally have poorer health than the average for England. The level of deprivation varies widely but some areas are within the fifth most deprived areas in England. The difference in life expectancy between the least and most deprived areas is 5.9 years for men and 5.0 years for women. Life expectancy for men and women is lower than the England average while the rates for early deaths from heart disease and strokes are higher.

Average life expectancy in Nuneaton and Bedworth was 78.43 years in 2006. By comparison, the Coventry & Warwickshire figure was 79.34 years, the West Midlands figure was 78.89 years and the national figure was 78.63 years.

Nuneaton for males as at 2009 is: 76.5 and females: 80.4

There is increasing evidence that parks and open spaces can have a positive impact on a person's health. This is important as we move towards a more preventative rather than reactive medical model. Research in America has shown that park users have fewer visits to the doctor than do non-park users. It has also been shown that park users show better health indicators than non-users (Godbey et al 1998)

When a person's health is considered holistically, including the physical, psychological and social elements, the benefits of parks and open spaces on these elements are obvious. A large scale American study In Cleveland parks examined the relationship

between park use and individual health among people of 50 or over. Findings showed that approximately two thirds of older park visitors were highly or moderately physically active (Godbey 1998). These people were healthier than passive or non-users on a number of measures such as body mass index, blood pressure, depression and the perception of general health.

In the U.K., research by Dr. Richard Mitchell and Dr. Frank Popham published a report in *The Lancet* in November 2008 that looked at how the inequality in health between rich and poor can be halved with the help of green space. The researchers expressed the view that exposure to green space or the “natural environment” had an effect upon people’s health and on their health related behaviors. There is also a known relationship between health and income, with wealthier people generally being healthier. They proved that this health gap was significantly less pronounced in areas with more open space. In the greenest areas, the death rate was approximately 50% less than those areas with the least green space. They were surprised by the difference. They argue that promoting outdoor recreation and boosting health can help get rid of stress and decrease heart disease. This, in the long run, could offer significant savings on health spending.

Medical opinion has for some time been expounding the benefits of parks. In September 2007, the Regional Director of Public Health in the North West was joined by many other regional figures in calling for urban parks to be returned to their former glory in order to tackle obesity and poor health. They argued that the decline in public parks coincided with the decline in physical activity levels, which has led to increased obesity and poor health. They pointed out that if current trends continue, nearly one third of children under eleven are predicted to be obese or overweight by 2010.

Their report recommended that the health benefits of parks could be maximized by:

- Developing the role of parks staff to champion health
- Active promotion of parks by health practitioners
- Review park facilities to encompass the needs of all users.
- Encourage schools to use parks
- Develop a regional park website with details of location and facilities on site.

Sitting alongside the sporting and more active opportunities that parks afford is another important health based activity-contact with nature. This can be experienced by simply enjoying the seasons, experiencing solitude or the actual process of working with and growing plants. This is increasingly being seen as a means of providing relief from everyday stresses associated with life and work. This council, as with many others, is receiving a number of requests for support from groups and organizations who recognize that involvement in environmental matters is a wonderful way to enjoy leisure time for all sectors of society. The inbuilt need for contact with nature is an area that will need to be addressed by this council in the future. The increasing uptake in allotments is an example of this need but there is also a burgeoning involvement within the health sector, where the therapeutic qualities of horticulture, gardening and environmental exposure is becoming increasingly valued.

22.1 Parks, Health and NBBC.

Although parks are well regarded by the majority of residents there is no doubt that they could and should be utilized far more in order to achieve the goals outlined within the Community Plan. The existing contributions parks make, via the investment in children's play and play rangers, opportunities for sport, informal recreation are well recognized. However, as we confront what is considered one of the most serious problems facing people today, the physical and mental well being of our residents, it is clear that parks and open spaces must be more accessible.

Equally, our park managers must look to working in partnership with local communities, organizations and individuals and ensure that an open space leisure option becomes a real choice for young and old alike.

To achieve this, the following should be considered:

- An open space-working group should be established including representatives from the health sector, as this has been evidenced as a route to reach local populations

- The opportunities for much greater delivery of active and passive recreation by the Leisure Trust within parks should be examined.
- Current facilities that are degrading i.e. bowling greens, tennis courts, paddling pools etc should be restored.
- New facilities such as bmx tracks, skateboard parks should be installed.
- Local activity should be encouraged and small grants made available to purchase sports equipment.
- A model garden established in Community Parks to advise, educate and inspire people to grow their own flowers, fruit and vegetables.
- Cycling should be encouraged on designated footpaths linking with the wider cycling network
- Volunteer gardening groups established.
- Outdoor gyms should be established at every community park utilizing the specialist equipment now widely available.
- Marked distance posts installed for walkers and joggers to measure distance travelled.
- Semi permanent shelter established to act as meeting points and a focus for outdoor activity.
- Yoga, Tai-chi and exercise class practitioners encouraged to run their programmes in parks
- Planting to be truly reflective of the seasons with areas for walking and contemplation.
- Women's jogging groups established.
- Play Rangers in every park throughout the year.
- Mobile Health Screening housed in parks where practicable.

23.0 Workplace and Site Health and Safety

23.1 Introduction

In addition to The Parks and Countryside Services normal statutory duty as an employer to ensure the Health and Safety of all its employees, its most significant responsibility is the safety of the public when using its accessible public open space.

Safe sites have a direct coloration with a reduction in our liabilities as landowners, not only from an insurance perspective but also from both a legal and moral perspective.

Regular inspections of our varied sites are a key responsibility of all staff working within Parks and Countryside as these identify the many issues that affect the safety of our sites.

A considerable part of our existing revenue budgets are utilised in maintaining the integrity of our sites - this must remain as our priority above developmental and enhancement works, so ensuring the safety of the public.

It is identified that there is excellent work that is currently undertaken to ensure the safety of staff at work and this needs to be built on, taking into account the additional legal requirements placed on the council.

23.2 Vision

To ensure that all work practices are safe, staff are appropriately trained and that sites are as safe as possible for all users to enjoy.

23.3 Policies

1. To Train of all officers and staff who have a responsibility for writing risk assessments for both work based practices and operational issues, to a competency level equivalent to the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH). (D)

This training programme has already started with 10 of the existing staff members undertaking the IOSH Managing Safety refresher course in March 2011 and specific risk

assessment training with RoSPA in relation to water safety. A generic method of approaching risk assessments was the main focus of the course and will enable staff to approach the creation of risk assessments in a uniformed way. It is essential that as new staff joins the authority that they attend the same course's and attain the relevant qualifications.

2. To create of a suite of operational, site based risk assessments of all our Destination, Community and Local Parks by April 2012 and a formalised approach be developed for the routine monitoring of these sites. (D)

These risk assessments must be regularly checked and reviewed as sites develop and a general programme of checking for condition and safety established, together with a system for resolving any issues that are highlighted.

The differentiation/prioritisation of the various risks/hazards must be determined and a rationale determined that will clearly identify our response time to repairs.

3. To develop water safety risk assessments for all bodies of water that are publicly accessible within the borough. (D)

In light of the potential serious consequences that could surround an accident on one of our water bodies, we have been working with Rospa in developing a generic approach to how to look at the issues relating to water safety, including: signage, vegetation, monitoring etc. This has seen the creation of a number of site-specific assessments, which will continue to be built on.

It is essential that all water bodies are subject to a regular monitoring regime and if necessary additional resources be made available to ensure that our duties are being met.

4. To Develop Manual Handling Assessments (MAC) to cover the full breadth of works undertaken by Parks by Dec 2011. (C)

In light of the changing legislation relating to manual handling, it has been necessary to identify all the works that require the MAC assessments to be developed for. These assessments will be undertaken in the next 18 months with a view to reducing the number of incidents/accidents that are a consequence of poor methods of lifting.

5. To development an overall signage strategy that incorporates “safety issues” and potential hazards that could occur on public open space, by December 2012. (D)

It is important that the signage does not become negative though as this could have a major detrimental affect on use. Signage needs to be balanced with “dos” as well as “don’ts” and must also be reflective of the wider branding, marketing and image of our open space.

6. To continue to develop risk assessments for volunteers and wardens when working on behalf of and on land owned by NBBC. (D)

These have been created over the last twelve months, leading to improved co-ordination of skills and identified training needs. They will continue to be monitored as new techniques and skills are utilised and as new group members join.

7. To continue to develop risk assessments relating to the holding of events on Public Open Space. (D)

A pack has been developed over the last twelve months, which acts as a guide to any person, or organisation that wishes to hold an event on public open space within the borough.

This pack will be further refined following customer feedback and changes with insurances etc.

8. The purchase of the “Playsafe” software system to assist in building a detailed and accurate health and safety database in relation to our play area assets by Autumn 2012. (D)

Currently all formal monitoring is undertaken utilising paper based systems. This system combines an asset inventory for all sites, together with a record keeping system. It can be linked directly to ordering and will allow for more accurate forecasting and trends in costs. This will show in time justification for additional revenue funding that maybe required to sustain the facilities.

9. To develop a tree strategy, including a formalised tree-monitoring programme, developed by a suitably qualified person, together with the appropriate budget to act on the results of the monitoring. (D)

Included within the Grounds Maintenance specifications there is a programme of inspections that have to be undertaken by the respective contractors. Apart from this however, tree inspections are carried out on an ad-hoc basis, as we receive queries relating to them.

In many cases therefore, there are a significant number of trees that are not included in any inspection programme. The potential risk therefore is considerable and this needs to be addressed as a priority.

24.0 Marketing and Promotion

24.1 Introduction

An integral part of the overall drive to improve not only the usage of our public open space, but the image and customer perception, needs to be based on a customer orientated service, where we openly consult and communicate our wants, priorities and expectations:

Good examples of communication include:

- Site leaflets, walks leaflets and event leaflets
- Welcoming Information boards on site
- Interpretive boards at points of interest
- Relevant Posters
- Press Releases and Media Coverage
- Good website
- Range of events

Improvements have been made over the last three years particularly with the number of events held within open space and the amount of good media coverage we have been able to attain.

There is a need and desire however to look at the whole “raft” of marketing issues and promote the service in a positive manner and to exude the benefits of what public open space has to offer.

24.2 Vision

To ensure the positive promotion of our Public Open Space, through a variety of media, thus delivering a coherent strategic approach to marketing the service.

24.3 Policies

1. To review Parks and Countryside’s current Marketing and Promotion and develop a strategy by December 2013. (D)

2. To develop a strong brand identity, which the public can immediately recognise, by April 2013. (D)

3. To introduce the brand identity for generic signage, street furniture, fencing and colours in relation to the specific types of Public Open Space, by December 2013. (D)

As has been identified we have six types of Public Open Space:

- Destination Parks (Dest)
- Community Parks (Comm.)
- Neighbourhood/Local (Loc)
- Incidental (Inci)
- Cemeteries
- Allotments

For each type of public Open Space we will develop a particular identity.

Destination

These will be bespoke in nature although the brand identity will be evident on signage, publications etc.

Community Parks

These can be broken down into three distinct types.

Wildspaces

Traditional

Contemporary

Each of the sites will fall into one of these categories.

Local Parks

Again these can be broken down into the three categories above.

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Incidental

Some of the smaller, incidental sites, are intended only to be used by residents in the immediate area and will generally need no interpretation or publicity.

Cemeteries

We already have a strong formal identity to these sites, this will need assessing with the new brand.

Allotments

These will be developed as part of a wider allotment strategy that will incorporate the brand.

4. To design, procure and install “Welcoming” entrance signs to all Destination, Community and Local Parks by, March 2015. (D)

An integral part of the Green Flag quality assessment, is to consider how welcoming the entrances to sites are. The quality assessment undertaken as part of the process of developing the strategy indicates that we score very badly as an authority in this particular area.

There is an opportunity to portray a very positive image at all our entrances, which can include for all safety matters as indicated previously.

25.0 Biodiversity and Sustainability

Some of the reasons for conserving biodiversity:

- It plays an important role in tackling climate change.
- It is an indicator of the wider health of our environment.
- It helps to sustain local economies
- It supports other vital services that sustain life on earth (Ecosystem Services) such as the provision of clean air and water, defence against floods and storms, and the management of waste and pollution.
- It contributes to our health and wellbeing.
- It is an important part of our cultural heritage and identity
- It offers opportunities for community engagement and volunteering
- It provides us with essential products and materials.
- We have a responsibility to conserve biodiversity

25.1 The 'NERC' Act Duty and West Midlands Biodiversity Pledge

The NERC Act (2006) is the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006). This legislation means that, from 1 October 2006, all local authorities and other public authorities in England and Wales have had a duty to promote and enhance biodiversity in all of their functions.

The act aims to raise the profile of biodiversity and to make sure that it is considered in all local authority decisions and policies.

The Council has also signed the West Midlands Biodiversity Pledge which commits the Council to:

1. Ensure the conservation of biodiversity is incorporated into all relevant corporate strategies, plans and programmes.

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2. Take a leadership role for, and champion the benefits of, biodiversity within local partnerships including Community Strategies and Local Area Agreements.
3. Consider the impacts of climate change on biodiversity and review policies and actions to assist wildlife to adapt
4. Participate actively in Local Biodiversity Partnerships and assist with the delivery of Local Biodiversity Action Plans.
5. Protect and enhance biodiversity within the planning system and deliver the key principles for biodiversity set out in national planning guidance.
6. Support the maintenance and development of Local Record Centres and seek to ensure that up-to-date biodiversity data is available and used appropriately.
7. Work in partnership with others to identify, protect and enhance Local Sites of Importance for Biodiversity, taking them into account within the planning and land management systems
8. Protect and enhance biodiversity within the local authority estate
9. Promote the social benefits of biodiversity in the delivery of public services including social care, health, and recreation.
10. Supporting access to nature and understanding of the natural world within schools, education programmes and community engagement.
11. Raise awareness of all staff, elected members, contractors and the general public with regard to biodiversity issues.

25.2 Biodiversity Action Plans

At a national and regional level there are Biodiversity Action Plans which identify key wildlife species and wildlife habitats to be conserved and increased in number / area.

The Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Local Biodiversity Action provides a local response to the UK Government's National Action Plans for threatened habitats and species. The LBAP contributes to national targets wherever these are relevant to Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull but also sets local targets.

The Plan outlines how landowners, land-managers and policy makers will protect the characteristic wildlife and landscapes of our region. The plan contains 26 Species Action Plans for our threatened plants and animals. There are 24 Habitat Action Plans covering our farmland, woodlands, wetlands, grasslands, urban areas and post-industrial land.

The Council is a partner in the West Midlands Biodiversity Partnership and is committed both to progressing the delivery of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan and to supporting the Habitat Biodiversity Audit and Biological Record Centre which maintain up to date Biological Survey and Records information for the Borough to inform Planning and other Policy decisions.

25.3 Wildspaces and Wildlife Corridors

Within the Borough there are many natural or semi-natural green spaces such as woodlands, scrub, grasslands, wetlands, open and running water that act as the principal habitat for wildlife. Along with farmed land, parks and gardens these resources form the 'Green Infrastructure' of the Borough.

In Nuneaton and Bedworth many of the semi-natural greenspaces are owned and managed by the Borough Council. Other organisations also manage and offer public access to some areas – with the Coventry and Ashby Canals (managed by British

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Waterways) being of particular importance. Other important wildlife sites are in private ownership - often within farmland.

The publicly accessible areas are important because they:

- provide accessible green spaces close to where people live providing opportunities for recreation and exercise that can significantly benefit health
- provide areas, particularly for children, which can be used for informal play where they can learn and develop life skills
- provide habitats for wildlife in urban areas
- provide an opportunity for people to experience and learn about nature and wildlife close to where they live
- offer visual amenity benefits softening otherwise harsh urban landscapes

The main threats and weaknesses affecting the publicly accessible land are pressures to use such land for development particularly in the urban areas. This can further fragment and isolate such areas.

The areas without public access are also equally valuable as they provide refuge areas for wildlife – both from public disturbance and from intensive agricultural management. The main threats to the areas are that these areas are also fragmented and possible intensification of food production to provide ‘food supply security’ would further destroy and fragment such areas. In urban areas the privately owned land is particularly likely to be seen as appropriate land to develop despite often having far greater wildlife value than farmed / greenbelt land.

The key broad zones of greatest ecological interest and key existing or potential wildlife corridors are shown in a simplified manner on figure 14 below (derived from the Green Infrastructure study and Local Biodiversity Action Plan Opportunity mapping). This is not

to say there are not other important corridors and areas of high ecological interest that should also be retained and enhanced - but the zones show key areas that if prioritised and primarily managed to benefit nature conservation can provide a robust core ecological network for the Borough. (In the case of agricultural land it would particularly involve the targeting of additional payments for more environmentally friendly approaches on that land from within the agricultural subsidies system).

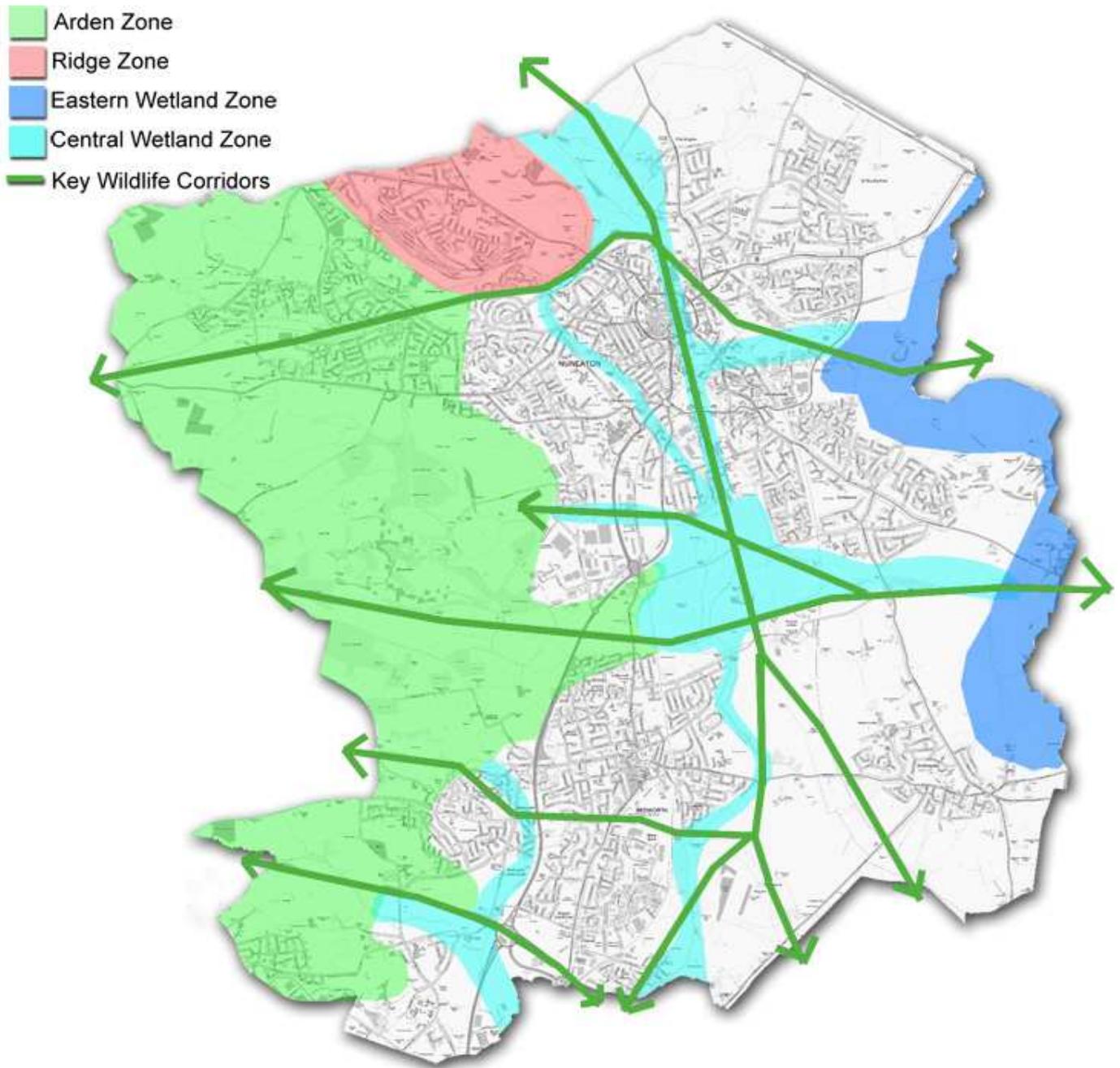
The Borough Council can primarily support progressing the establishment of this robust network by working with other agencies including Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, The Warwickshire Coventry and Solihull Local Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership, Natural England and DEFRA, through the management of it's own 'Wildspaces' and through the Planning system (in terms of development and any associated Green Infrastructure creation and improvements secured through planning conditions and community infrastructure / section 106 payments).

In general terms the Borough should not pursue extensive housing or industrial / commercial development within the broad zones that are identified. Smaller scale developments may be appropriate in these zones where they can help enable gaps in the local green infrastructure network to be overcome through land transfer / access agreements etc and can clearly demonstrate a significant net gain in biodiversity.

If larger scale development were to be contemplated in such areas, the scale and nature of mitigation would need to be appropriately greater and such development should still not be permitted to completely sever key green infrastructure linkage.

In the 'white areas' the greatest opportunities exist to appropriately locate significant new development whilst creating local and strategic wildlife corridors and sites within and adjacent to the development areas - resulting in significant net gain in biodiversity / wildlife value.

Figure 16 - Key Wildlife Habitat Zones and Corridors



25.4 Vision

Our vision for wildlife within the borough is to protect and enhance wildlife sites and corridors and to increase the area of, quality of and amount of linkages between habitat areas - as a wildlife habitat network – and in this way to retain and enhance wildlife species numbers and diversity.

In terms of publicly accessible land we will work with residents, community groups and partner organisations to provide a ‘green network’ for people to enjoy for recreation, to experience and learn about nature close to where they live.

25.5 Policies

1. We will seek to protect and enhance wildlife sites and a network of wildlife corridors - through partnership working, through the Planning system and by making appropriate designations of specific sites to help protect them. (C)

2) We will pursue the establishment of a robust ecological network including the creation and enhancement of wildlife corridors between existing areas of high quality habitat to reduce habitat fragmentation. (D)

3) We will work with local residents, community groups and partner organisations to increase public involvement in and sense of ‘ownership’ of the Borough Council’s semi-natural areas (branded as ‘Wildspaces’). This will involve consultation, involvement in management and development plans and seeking to secure grant funding and in volunteering. (D)

4) We will work with partner organisations to enhance Borough Council owned ‘Wildspaces’ and the Borough’s wider Green Network and Green Infrastructure both for the benefit of people and wildlife. This will involve co-ordinated Biodiversity initiatives such as working within the

Warwickshire Coventry and Solihull Biodiversity Partnership to help deliver County Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAP) targeting particular habitats and species.

It will also involve joint working to secure improvement of the publicly accessible Green Network for recreational, landscape and sustainable transport purposes. In the case of Wildspaces it will also involve production of and implementation of site-specific management plans. In the case of farmed land it is anticipated other agencies will take the lead role – e.g. through agri-environment schemes etc. (D)

5) We will continue to support the work of the West Midlands Biodiversity Partnership and the ongoing Habitat Biodiversity Audit and Biological Records Centre and to honour the other commitments made by the Council in signing the West Midlands Biodiversity Pledge. We will also work to support all other Council Departments in meeting those commitments and duties under the NERC act. (C)

6) We will work to improve biodiversity within the Council's formal Parks and Open spaces. This will involve a specific review of all of these areas to identify opportunities to enhance and create wildlife habitat and to if necessary alter and improve grounds maintenance and other management practices. (D)

7) We will work with our planning officers on the Local Development Framework, on Development Control procedures and on individual planning applications in accordance with PPS9 and PAS 2010 to wherever possible avoid development of any land of wildlife value or impact on wildlife species and to add to and enhance wildlife habitat.

Where development will unavoidably impact on wildlife habitat or species then adequate pre application survey work, working practices during development and mitigation measures will be required.

Where developments will unavoidably sever or damage existing or potential key corridors or links within the Borough's Green Infrastructure and its publicly accessible 'Green Network', then these links will be replaced or enhanced to compensate. (C)

8) We will work to increase resident and visitor understanding, enjoyment of and value placed upon wildlife and wildlife habitats. This will involve 'interpretation' of wildlife and wildlife habitats through signage, publications and formal and informal educational work and events. (D)

9) We will record and report biodiversity based performance management indicators. This will include reporting on NI197, which measures the degree to which positive management is occurring within Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation managed by the Borough Council and by private landowners. It will also include helping the Authority to report on the Community Plan, Audit Commission Use of Resources Assessment, NI188 and the Warwickshire LAA. (C)

25.6 Environmental Policy and Sustainability

25.6.1 Introduction

In addition to the specific land management aims set out in section A) above, the Parks and Countryside Service plays a significant role in delivering the Council's wider responsibilities for Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability but these responsibilities also fully apply to the whole range of Council services and service delivery.

There is a wide range of legal acts that apply – with particular key acts including:

Planning Acts

The Wildlife and Countryside Act

The Environmental Protection Act

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC)

The NERC act places wide ranging duties on all Council department and sections to ensure best practice is applied to ensure protection of the Natural Environment. The Council has also in 2009 signed the West Midlands Biodiversity Pledge, which reinforces the Council's commitment to comply with the NERC act and to aspire to go beyond the act in terms of actions and good practice.

25.7 Vision

Our vision is to ensure the Parks and Countryside Service apply best practice in terms of environmental policies and sustainability in its operations and its management of the Council's landholding. We will also encourage and support Council wide application (and regular review) of best practice to all areas of the Council's operations and services that can impact on the natural environment - so as to minimise negative impacts and maximise positive impacts.

25.8 Objectives

- To minimise detrimental impacts of the Parks and Countryside Services operations and management on the natural environment and to maximise positive impacts.
- To encourage and support work to minimise detrimental impacts of the Borough Council's operations and management on the natural environment and to maximise positive impacts.

25.9 Policies

10) We will regularly and fully review the Parks and Countryside Service's operations and management to minimise detrimental impacts

on the natural environment and to maximise positive impacts. This will involve review of existing legislation and good practice (e.g. in terms of pesticides, procurement, waste and recycling, pollution, water and energy efficiency and avoiding use of non renewable global resources). This will lead to production of reports highlighting any areas of discrepancy, possible options and any associated cost implications. (D)

11) We will similarly encourage and support work to minimise detrimental impacts of the Borough Council's operations and management on the natural environment and to maximise positive impacts. This will involve supporting the delivery and regular review of the Council's Environmental Sustainability Strategy and policies. It will also involve supporting the full application of the duties of the NERC act and of the commitments made by the authority in signing Biodiversity Pledge to the work of all Council Departments and Services and to policies including the Community Plan Corporate Plan and Procurement Policy. We will also encourage the Council to consider the possible merits of the production of its own Biodiversity Strategy. (C)

12) When the council considers disposal of any land within its portfolio it is both necessary and appropriate to consider the Biodiversity implications of disposal which may be negligible, may appropriately require 'mitigation' to reduce or offset the impact of the disposal, or may in some cases require the disposal to be avoided either in terms of part of or the whole of the land.

This is necessary both to comply with legal duties under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities act (2006) and also is good practice and demonstrates the council's commitments to protect and enhance biodiversity made in its corporate plans, in its Environmental Sustainability Strategy, its membership of the Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Biodiversity Partnership and in its signing of the West Midlands Local Government Association Biodiversity Pledge.

To ensure this consideration is made in all disposals - the standard report template for land disposals will be amended to specifically incorporate a section considering biodiversity implications and requiring consultation to be sought with relevant officers within the authority with expertise in biodiversity (and if appropriate/necessary with other external expert bodies such as Natural England, Warwickshire County Council and Warwickshire Wildlife Trust). (C)

25.10 Angling on Council Waters

Historically fishing on council waters has been unregulated allowing residents and just as readily those from outside of the Borough to fish on all and any Council owned lakes and watercourses.

The only regulation in place is a signed prohibition on fishing at Ensors Pool – which is a European status (SAC) wildlife site due to its large population of Native White Clawed Crayfish. Two other wildlife sites make reference to a ban on fishing but this is only signed on a single information board at one point within the site.

The only form of bailiffing currently in place is very occasional spot checks of possession of the National Rod Licence carried out by the Environment Agency.

There is value in the presence of responsible anglers on council sites in that their presence - sometimes overnight and in winter months when less people use open spaces - can provide some degree of informal 'policing' and some problems on sites may be reported by anglers. On the other hand the majority of waters on which angling occurs sit within the councils wildlife sites ('Wildspaces') and there is a degree to which the presence of angling can conflict with the management of such sites for wildlife.

Unregulated and unbailiffed angling (without risk of penalty / expulsion from a club / club waters) risks several significant problems from a minority of irresponsible anglers:

Possible conflicts between angling and other site users / uses

- Overfishing
- Unauthorised introduction of non native fish / plant species
- Unintentional spread of disease from one site to another
- Unauthorised work to aid angling such as digging of banks, cutting of vegetation
- Unauthorised fires and fire debris
- Failure to dispose of rubbish
- Leaving of line / hooks that can cause significant injury to or death of wildlife
- General unintentional impact on the ecology of important wildlife sites

Advantages of the council letting its waters to an organised angling club via a formal conditional lease:

- Bailiffing by the angling club / clubs restricting inappropriate behaviour that would affect the site / its wildlife / other site users
- Single point of contact for liaison / influence between the Council and all anglers using Council Waters
- Opportunity to review which sites / which parts of sites should have angling permitted in terms of impact on wildlife sites (including those that are required to be 'positively managed for wildlife' by National Performance Indicator 197)
- Source of moderate level of income which would at least help offset / reduce additional costs incurred by the Council as a result of angling – e.g. additional rubbish bin emptying and retrieval and disposal of discarded line etc

25.11 Polices

13) Following a review of which sites / parts of sites can appropriately continue to be fished without unacceptable detriment to wildlife - the Council will seek to let its waters to a formally constituted angling club.

(D)

The allocation of the waters to a club / clubs being primarily determined by the successful clubs ability and proposals to bailiff the waters and positively promote appropriate behaviour sympathetic to the wildlife value of the sites and needs of other site users and the clubs willingness to participate fully with and help support the councils management plans, proposals, activities and site user and friends of groups.

26.0 Grounds Maintenance

26.1 Introduction

An external contractor in undertakes the grounds maintenance operations within the borough. The borough is split into three distinct contracts based on geographical areas

- Contract 1 – which predominately covers the area to the west of Nuneaton.
- Contract 2 - which predominately covers the Bedworth area.
- Contract 3 – which covers the areas to the east of Nuneaton including the town centre and Bulkington.

Contracts 1 and 2 have recently been tendered and awarded on a six-year contract.

The delivery of a quality grounds maintenance service is an essential element not only in how the boroughs appears in a visual sense but also in how it is perceived by the various communities and visitors as they pass through the borough. It is an integral part of the “Green Flag” criteria and we will work with our contractors in improving delivery.

The monitoring of the grounds maintenance works therefore, will continue to be an integral part of the works of staff working within grounds maintenance. This will ensure rigorous compliance with the specifications, customer contact at varying levels and ensure that value for money is being achieved for the residents of the borough.

26.2 Vision

To ensure the delivery of a quality grounds maintenance service, which meets not only the specifications, but also, the needs and requirements of all the residents within the borough.

26.3 Policies

1) To work with our grounds maintenance contractors, in striving to ensure that there is continuous improvement in the quality of the grounds maintenance of all our open spaces, to meet the needs and demands of users and of local people. (D)

2) To review the current level of contract monitoring in light of the award of Contracts 1 and 2. (D)

As the grounds maintenance contracts are externalised, a comprehensive but fair system of monitoring is being developed to ensure that value for money is being delivered by the contractor, this is particularly important given the significant budgetary sums involved and the crucial role that grounds maintenance has in delivering objectives within the Corporate Plan.

Seasonal monitoring when works at their peak could also be considered.

3) To continue to work closely with developers and contractors when adopting open space on new developments, so as to ensure quality sites are not only transferred but future maintenance is identified and undertaken. (D)

We must ensure that we provide the contractors with not only maintenance plans but also the contractual information required for them to properly undertake the works. The management of sites may change in time following consultation with local residents. This is highlighted as part of the Management Plan that the developer will deliver as a condition within the Planning consent.

4) We will undertake a review of grounds maintenance operations on an annual basis, to determine whether features are still pertinent and that current maintenance regimes meet with both customer expectation and with budgetary pressures. (D)

This will be an on-going process, but one must be minded that by improving the overall quality of our Public Open Space and making them more attractive and welcoming places to visit and enjoy, there maybe a perception that the grounds maintenance regimes need to be improved.

27.0 Training

27.1 Introduction

We are committed to the training of all staff, to deliver the targets and objectives required by the delivery of the various roles within Parks Development and Grounds Maintenance. We are currently accredited with the Investors in People Award and there is a small budget in place for training requirements.

We undertake Personal Development Reviews (PDR's) annually and as part of that process any deficiencies in competency are identified and appropriate training needs either organised or brought to the attention of the HR Training Team for Post Entry Training.

It is identified that a well trained staff:

- Increases job satisfaction
- Increases morale amongst staff
- Increased efficiencies in processes (resulting in financial gain)
- Increased capacity to adopt to new technologies and methods of working
- Reduced employee turnover
- Enhanced image of the council
- Adherence to Risk Management

27.2 Vision

To continue to train staff in appropriate methods and techniques so as to deliver the objectives identified in this strategy and all other relevant council delivery plans.

1) To continue with the IOSH training for all identified members of staff working within Parks and Countryside, so as to retain the consistency of approach when drafting risk assessments. (D)

The rationale is identified elsewhere within the document.

2) To continue to support applications for Post Entry Training and to up-skill staff both manual and clerical in new methods, techniques and technologies, taking into account new legislation that affects daily working operations. (D)

3) To undertake appropriate training with our Countryside Volunteers to ensure our and their own compliance with Health and Safety and that they are competent in the use of machinery and techniques involved with the works they undertake. (D)

The rationale is identified elsewhere within the document.

28.0 Funding and Investment

28.1 Introduction

The delivery of the policies and priorities identified within the strategy are and will be totally dependant on the future funding and investment (both internally and externally) that can be afforded to the service.

The main planks of the policies relate to the improving of the overall quality of our Open Spaces within the borough from their current “poor” status, (as identified against the national “Green Flag” judging criteria) to a minimum status of “fair”.

This will require a review of our financing to determine how these policies will be shaped and how they can be delivered and maintained over the life of the strategy.

The benefits that can be derived from high quality public open space are well documented and are a main vehicle in the delivery in achieving a range of corporate priorities including health, environmental and community safety objectives.

Work undertaken by CABI (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) and Greenspace, national organisations reinforces this with papers and research ensuing the benefits of quality greenspace.

28.2 Current Funding

The current funding arrangements fall into five main categories, together with the potential use of generated income.

- Revenue expenditure
- Capital expenditure
- Section 106 – Planning contributions
- External grants
- Income generation

28.3 Revenue expenditure

This relates to the day-to-day running costs of the grounds maintenance service and includes for staff wages, vehicles, purchase of equipment, materials, internal service costs, rent on business premises and so on.

It covers the three contracts currently undertaken both by our own in-house team and Glendale, with the two contracts currently undertaken by our own team currently under review.

The review of the Contracts has taken a rigorous look at the specifications of work relating to the current maintenance arrangements, focusing on methodology and delivery of quality grounds maintenance.

The overall revenue budget is based on maintaining the integrity of the existing infrastructure, but it cannot keep pace with the ravages of time and the aspirations of local communities.

Facilities become tired and require replacing and in many cases updating, sites are subject to misuse and damage to the infrastructure is beyond the scope of the revenue budget.

Material costs have also risen substantially in the last five years, this has been over and above the increases in the amount of revenue available, this has seen our ability to maintain the larger parts of our infrastructure e.g. footpaths dramatically reduced.

28.4 Capital expenditure

Capital expenditure can be defined as expenditure where the benefits last more than 12 months. For the most part, this means expenditure on assets such as buildings or equipment, which can be used over a long period

The capital programme is closely related to the priorities within the Corporate Plan.

Capital items are significant assets that will have a life of many years, such as land, new buildings, playgrounds etc. and need to be funded separately to revenue to reflect this difference.

The current capital programme supports our 8 year Playground Refurbishment Programme and is being utilised for the extension of Marston Lane Cemetery and additional cemetery land in Nuneaton.

28.5 Section 106 – Planning obligations

Section 106 (Sc106) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 allows a local planning authority (LPA) to enter into a legally binding agreement with a landowner/developer in association with the granting of planning permission. The obligation is termed a Section 106 Agreement.

These agreements are a way of delivering or addressing matters that are necessary to make a development acceptable in planning terms. They are used to support the provision of services and infrastructure, such as recreational facilities, education and health.

The council currently has a tried and tested mechanism when working with any developer. An agreed figure per dwelling has been set by council for its contribution towards parks and recreation facilities normally within one kilometre of the development. This can relate to a single dwelling development or to a large housing estate.

Policies relating to developer contributions will be reviewed through the Borough Plan process.

The Council may choose to implement the Community Infrastructure levy (C.I.L), this allows for many other priorities within the borough to be considered, for example education and transport and expenditure will be prioritised against the needs within the areas of development.

The expectations required from a large housing development however could be the creation new areas of open space and this is dealt with elsewhere in the strategy.

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A council's approach to securing benefits through the Section 106 process should be grounded in evidence and this strategy has indicated those areas where priority spend is required.

It is essential that monitoring and reporting arrangements for how money is utilised is developed.

The anticipated requirement for new properties within the Borough will potentially put additional pressure on the existing facilities within the borough. The Borough Plan will be looking at the potential areas for development and this strategy can positively support this process, in determining those areas that require the investment in either new facilities, or enhancement of existing sites through the use of Section 106 or if implemented, the Community Infrastructure Levy.

28.6 External Grants

The importance of external grants can not be understated in the delivery of projects within our open spaces, we have managed to secure funding for the delivery of our Play Ranger service with a grant from the Big Lottery Fund for £282,000 and are currently working on the securing of monies from Play England for works relating to the refurbishment and Construction of Play areas in the borough.

In many of these cases there is often the requirement for "match-funding" with at least 20-30% of the total cost of the projects being made available by the council and it could be argued that a use of capital as "seed" money could be the catalyst to much wider schemes and improvements.

There are significant potential untapped opportunities however that need to be considered. These could be a useful source of income and could well embellish the excellent work already undertaken, these could include:

- Forestry Commission Grants

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- Stewardship Schemes
- Tree Wardens Support
- Various Lottery Type Grants
- Landfill Tax Applications
- Warwickshire County Council

We also have developed excellent partnerships with organisations such as Building Sustainable Neighbourhoods where we have worked together in providing beneficial schemes to various communities including adding additional value to some of our play area refurbishment programme, which has seen wider park improvements included.

These types of partnership can be further developed with organisations such as Sustrans where further cycling initiatives can be encouraged and Art organisations that could potentially fund art projects within our open spaces.

Further links can be explored with our colleagues in re-cycling in developing links into the “Waste Strategy” and the provision of joined up approach to litter collection.

The successes of council only sponsored schemes however, are not often fruitful with several failed bids to Landfill Tax Credit Organisations and to the HLF with our Riversley Park application. Working with and supporting community groups however, has been found to be extremely successful with many grants being awarded to various groups for projects across the borough. These have made a significant impact and have truly engaged the communities that have got involved with developments within their open spaces. This we wish to emulate across the borough.

There are revenue implications attached to many of these grants however, which the council often finds difficulty in meeting. A methodology for working with groups will need to be further developed so that the revenue implications relating to capital enhancements can be reconciled.

28.7 Income Generation

The current operations undertaken by Parks and Countryside raise significant levels of income; this in the main however is to offset or cover expenditure in providing services such as burials, events and sports pitches.

The current charging levels are set each year by cabinet but in some cases don't actually cover the costs of the operations undertaken in providing the facilities and services.

There is great potential in increasing our income levels and not only by increasing charges (which if raised to high, would potentially make our services cost prohibitive to use) but moreover by increasing potential income streams and maximising those we currently have.

Potential Income streams could include:

- Franchising including ice cream vendors and tea facilities
- Sponsorship
- Leasing of the Golf Course
- Events Space
- Increased Memorialisation opportunities with the proposed new cemeteries in both Nuneaton and Bedworth
- Increased levels of events including guided "walks and talks"
- Car parking charges within our main recreation grounds

28.8 Policies

The strategy has identified there is a need to improve the "quality" of our public open spaces, so that the benefits that can be derived from them, can be enjoyed by as wide a cross-section of the community as possible.

This needs to be tackled in a number of ways but the funding and investment is critical in how and over what time frame the desired changes can be implemented.

1.To scrutinise existing revenue expenditure to determine whether, the Council is delivering what the public want in terms of services and to align our future spend more closely to the priorities identified in the strategy by April 2013. (D)

This will require a detailed analysis of what we currently offer and undertake. This will realise valuable management information into what changes can be made (as long as they are contractually allowed), realigning our priorities and if necessary re-directing finance into those areas where the most benefit can be made.

2. To develop a detailed Capital Programme of Improvements to Public Open Space linked to the key aims identified both within the Corporate and Community Plans and reinforced within this Strategy. (C)

This strategy has aligned itself with the aims within the Corporate Plan, so any future Business Cases presented to the council's corporate management team for consideration, has already identified justification to support an application.

Feasibility studies are required for our parks to assess the level of investment required to bring about the changes identified in both quality and accessibility within the strategy and within the timescales indicated.

3. To revisit the basis and use of the Section 106 sums allocated for parks and recreation and tightly align to the delivery of the priorities identified by this strategy and those within the Core Infrastructure Delivery Plan. (C)

We have identified in detail within this strategy, how Section 106 monies can be used in the future not only for new build, but also for the desired improvements to the existing infrastructure.

Our existing Open Spaces will come under increased pressure from the planned housing requirement under the LDF and the future use of the funding is critical in delivering the quality open space that will be required.

It is imperative that the methodology is agreed so that we can defend and avoid potential future legal challenge and that the sums are “ring-fenced” for this use.

4. To continue to support and assist “groups” raising external funding to invest in improvements to the open space infrastructure. (D)

This is integral to the delivery of improvements within our open space.

We have worked closely with groups over the last five years and assisted in bringing in hundreds of thousands of pounds of funding which have been utilised directly in improving facilities.

The access to funds within communities will determine to some degree, which sites we can prioritise and the funding we have to make available in some cases to match fund bids.

5. To make a Heritage Lottery Bid for Riversley Park within the next funding “round”. (D)

This is to take into account the comments made following our previous bid and to concentrate purely on returning the Heritage to the park.

This will require the capital funding package identified for the original bid to be made available for the new bid.

6. To continue to access external funding opportunities wherever possible in delivering the priorities within the strategy. (D)

We are currently working on a bid via Play England to deliver improvements for children’s play within the borough and using that as a potential catalyst for wider parks improvements. This is one of many opportunities that raise

themselves and we must be well placed to take advantage of these as an aid to delivering the desired improvements.

7. To combine wherever possible capital sums, sums from section 106 agreements and external funding to deliver larger packages of work. (C)

This will require the support of not only the funding bodies but also the flexibility of our own financing in the delivery of such schemes. Opportunities would need to be investigated via the Infrastructure Planning and Delivery Group.

8. To explore opportunities for closer working with the Leisure Trust and the Health Agencies in delivering their agendas within our open spaces. (D)

The use of open space as a vehicle for health is a huge untapped resource although the benefits are well documented. We need to tap into this potential and make available our sites through the facilities we offer and the quality of the visit.

9. To adopt a clear council policy following the disposal of surplus land to ensure re-investment of receipts into the remaining open space infrastructure, and/or to fund further improvements. (C)

This is key in the delivery of future improvements. Existing land holdings will come under scrutiny as part of the LDF process and it is necessary to safeguard any capital receipts so that the delivery of the expected quality improvements can be delivered within the life of the strategy.

10. To set priorities identified in the strategy against known funding opportunities and against potential partnerships for delivery and staff

allocated the task of taking forward the most time effective opportunities. (D)

This is reinforcing much of what has been discussed elsewhere in the document and ensure the delivery of future works.

11. To establish a Full Time Tree Officer Post. (C)

This is critical from a public safety perspective and in the future maintenance and management of the councils extensive tree stock.

12. The establishment and continuation of the Play Ranger service. (C)

The continuation of the Play Ranger service, Current staffing levels include for one senior play ranger and six part-time rangers working between 15 and 18.5 hours per week.

13. To investigate potential income streams and to seek agreement on the “ring-fencing” of income to facilitate improvements to the existing open space infrastructure, for example via the priorities set out in the Borough Plan’s Infrastructure Delivery Plan. (C)

29.0 Performance Monitoring/ Management and Strategy Review

Finding the right form of performance monitoring for measuring the quality of our Public Open Space has proved difficult even nationally – as the Audit Commission does not currently require any national indicators in this area. The free and open nature of the access to public greenspace and the qualitative nature of much of the experience creates challenges and valuable public benefits which are not easily measurable.

The audit commission has visited us recently however and have indicated that rather than them being prescriptive, they wish us to measure ourselves on a monthly/quarterly basis, with a number of locally agreed performance targets. These targets must be easily measurable and be available to the public in determining our effectiveness and value for money.

29.1 Policies

1) To have an independent annual quality assessment undertaken on our open spaces against the green flag criteria – with a rolling programme of such work covering all Destination, Community and Local Parks on a three year cycle. (D)

The raising of the quality standards of our open spaces is one of the main planks of the strategy with the overall aim in achieving Green Flags for our Destination Parks.

Community and Local Parks will be measured in using the same methodology and the outcome of these ongoing assessments will inform management planning for each site and help identify if the quality of the sites is improving or slipping for any reason.

2) To agree a mechanism for determining the communities' satisfaction of our Public Open Space by December 2012 (C)

3) To develop additional locally agreed performance targets that can be easily measured, collated and potentially bench marked against other authorities by December 2012. These must be based on key quality issues identified in the strategy. (C)

Key issues identified through previous consultation include:

- Degree of dog fouling – or at least perceived levels of it.
- Degree to which people feel safe utilising our sites
- Degree of vandalism (cost analysed)

4) To continue to develop and maintain the weekly/monthly performance monitoring regimes and targets to ensure continued improvement and customer satisfaction with the service delivery.(D)

5) To continue to provide management information relating Performance Indicators NI 197 and 199 and Local Indicators as required. (C)

- NI 197 – relates to active management of Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation (Sinc sites)
- NI 199 – Local Play indicators, which measure:
 - Participation
 - Accessibility
 - Quality
 - Satisfaction

29.2 Strategy Review

The progress and performance of the action plans in the implementation of the strategy will be reported to Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel (OSP) on a six monthly basis together with the findings of the annual Quality Assessment's.

An annual review will also be carried out as part of "Service Planning" to address any key changes in corporate policy, new corporate plan annual

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milestones, new legislation and any changes necessitated by other major influences on policy and working practice.

A more comprehensive review will be carried out 5 years into the adoption of the strategy, in January 2016 and will be updated as required to relate to and reflect the impact of the future implementation of the Borough Plan.

30.0 Glossary of Terms

ANGSt - Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard – minimum standard of natural greenspace

CABE Space - Commission for the Built Environment – national body assisting in the delivery of well designed and managed greenspace

CIL – Community Infrastructure Levy – It is a new levy that local authorities can choose to charge on new developments in their area. The money can be used to support development by funding infrastructure that the council, local community and neighbourhoods want.

CLG - Communities and Local Government – Government Department with the rationale of creating communities where people want to live, work and raise a family

CCG -Community Confidence Group - Group charged with delivering safer neighbourhoods through police and community liaison

CBD - Convention on Biological Diversity - An international treaty to sustain the diversity of life on Earth

CDRP - Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership – Partnership of agencies working together to reduce the fear of crime

D of H - Department of Health

Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (DDA)

ESS - Environmental Sustainability Strategy - Borough strategy which looks at impact of climate change and planning development

EIA - Equality Impact Assessment – An assessment of policies and their impact and affect on different groups in the community

GIS - Geographical Information System - Digital mapping system

GI - Green Infrastructure – Study on the greenspace within the borough to determine land use options as part of the Borough Plan

Ha - Hectare

HLF - Heritage Lottery Fund

IMD – Index of Multiple Deprivation - based on six indicator domains. Each

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Domain consists of a separate set of indicators. These include: income, employment, health and Disability, housing, education, skills and training and geographical access to services

IOSH - Institution of Occupational Safety and Health – Recognised national safety practitioners

LAA- Local Area Agreements – They set priorities for local areas between central and local government and other key partners

LBAP'S - Local Biodiversity Action Plans – Local partnership to identify local priorities in the delivery of the national species and habitat targets

LDD'S - Local Development Documents – These include a range of documents assisting in future planning within the borough

LDF - Local Development Framework – Suite of documents and evidence that guide development

LNR - Local Nature Reserves - Local designation of natural greenspace

LPAC 2000 - Local Planning Advisory Committee – Strategy that looked at planning for industry in London

LPA - Local Planning Authority – A public body that can determine planning matters

LSP - Local Strategic Partnership - harnesses the work of all Government Departments, local public services, the community and private and voluntary sectors to tackle deprivation and drive through improvements.

LTP - Local Transport Plan – Statutory requirement of local councils in how they implement local transport needs

MAC - Manual Handling Assessments - Method to assess manual handling work activities

MUGA - Multi Use Games Area – Outdoor tarmaced sports arenas

NI 188 - National Performance Indicator 188 – Climate change

NI197 - National Performance Indicator 197 – Positive management of SINC sites

NI 199 - National Performance Indicator 199– Management of play grounds and play experience

NPFA- National Playing Field Association - National Body

NERC Act - Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 – Act that puts duties on local authorities to take regard of biodiversity and conservation in all of their functions.

NBBC - Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council

NASCOP - Nuneaton and Bedworth Safer Communities Partnership - Statutory duty placed on various agencies to work together to reduce crime and disorder in their local areas

ODPM - Office of The Deputy Prime Minister – National Office

PDR's - Personal Development Reviews - Annual review of staff performance and to determine training and development needs

PPG 17 - Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 – Sets out policies needed to be taken into account by Planning authorities

PPS9 - Planning Policy Statement 9 -

PAS 2010 - Planning to halt the loss of biodiversity – Sets out planning policy on protection of biodiversity and geological conservation

PCSO'S - Police Community Support Officer's

Sc 106 - Section 106 – These are agreements are a way of delivering or addressing matters that are necessary to make a development acceptable in planning terms and include for contributions towards open space and recreation.

SINC - Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation – Site designation for locally important sites

SSSI'S - Sites of Special Scientific Interest – national designation of importance to a site

SAC's - Special Areas of Conservation – European designation of importance to a site

SOA'S - A Super Output Area - is a geographical area designed for the collection and publication of small area statistics. SOAs give an improved basis for comparison throughout the country because the units are more similar in size of population than, for example, electoral wards.

WCC - Warwickshire County Council

WMPG – West Midlands Parks Group – A constituted officer group of local authority Parks and Countryside departments, who meet to discuss national and local issues and inform various government departments on future policy.

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32.0 Summary of Policies

32.1 Green Infrastructure

1) To provide a green network of open space that combines together publicly accessible green space (including that owned by third parties e.g. British Waterways) and privately owned land (where we can gain the necessary access agreements), to ensure that we have continuous green corridors which link together across the whole of the borough.

(C)

2) We will work with the Planning system and partnerships to retain the existing green network and to fill gaps in the network. We will prioritise securing the missing links identified in the strategic green network plan above. **(C)**

3) Development applications will be supported where they help to create new wildlife habitat and corridors and new recreational links and particularly where they address significant gaps in the Borough's Green Infrastructure and its publicly accessible 'Green Network'. **(C)**

4) We will seek as a priority to strongly and coherently brand and identify the Green Network as a well signed publicly prominent network comparable in recognition to the road highway network – encouraging recreational use, use for healthy activity and exercise and use for green travel purposes. Signs will include key destinations such as schools, doctors surgeries, town centres, parks etc along with walking and cycle travel times and distances. **(C)**

5) We will seek funding to achieve the signage of the existing network (as a currently significantly underutilised resource) and to implement the Green Network design standards. This funding will be sought from a variety of sources, including where appropriate planning obligations and, if taken up by the Local Authority, the Community Infrastructure Levy. **(C)**

32.2 General Principles Relating To Public Open Space

1) The council will adopt the hierarchy of accessible public open space together with the recommendations for the criteria base that each type of park should include. (D)

2) The council will adopt the accessibility standards identified within the document. (D)

3) Each household within the borough will have access as identified in the standards to a Community Park. (D)

4) We will seek to address deficiencies both in quality and quantity in Open Space Provision through a variety of funding sources both internal and external. This will include grants secured either by ourselves or in partnership with outside bodies and interest groups and the use of planning gain, utilising developer contributions both on existing sites and on new developments. (C)

5) That as an integral part of a combination of funding sources a percentage of negotiated developer contributions be utilised as a contribution towards the on-going development/improvement in quality of our Destination Parks. (C)

6) As an integral part of future development (both residential and industrial) there will be a requirement to ensure not only high quality publicly accessible open space (as defined within the strategy) is provided, but also high quality private space that makes a significant contribution to the street scene and physical and mental well-being. (C)

7) The council will adopt the Green Flag (the national quality standard) assessment model to measure the quality of its public open space. (D)

8) The council will aim to improve the quality scores of all of its public open space. Further to this its Destination Parks should be of Green Flag standard whilst all other sites should be managed along the principles of the Green flag criteria. (D)

9) We will seek to gain Green Flag Status for all of our Destination Parks and at least one formal community park and one community wildspace as benchmark sites to drive up community park/wildspace standards. (D)

10) All council owned incidental open space and any higher level open space that can be removed without reducing catchment area coverage, will be audited and assessed using an assessment model based on the green flag criteria. This will determine significance and then subsequent treatment to either improve or dispose as appropriate. (D)

11) We will identify all areas of land and facilities that are surplus to requirements. (D)

12) To develop a detailed design guide, which will determine the quality and style of all of our public open space by December 2012. (D)

13) To develop an allotment strategy, which will sit alongside the Open Space Strategy by December 2013. (D)

14) To revise and adopt the playing pitch strategy which will sit alongside the Open Space Strategy by August 2011. (D)

15) To create more stimulating and useful open spaces for local people by reducing the amount of unnecessary amenity grassland. To generate more appealing townscapes, by reducing the amount of green desert in the borough. (D)

16) To protect and safeguard existing accessible public open space in the borough. (C)

32.3 Provision For Young People

1. To review the existing play area strategy for the borough in light of information raised from the access mapping and experience of delivery of the refurbishment programme, to include all aspects of equipped play, play spaces and teenage facilities. (D)

2. We will identify a play champion (elected member) for the Council and a Lead Officer. (C)

3. We will involve children and young people in the design; siting and management of their local play areas or teenage facilities. (D)

4. We will continue with our practical preventative maintenance programme of play area equipment inspection, monitoring and repair. (D)

5. We will review existing play areas as part of the process of best practice and, as these areas are refurbished, where reasonably practicable, install at least one piece of inclusive equipment. (D)

6. To seek where justifiable and appropriate developer contributions to raise the quality of play facilities in line with the parks designation in the hierarchy. This will be further developed within the Design Guide for a specific hierarchy.

7. To establish and maintain the Play Ranger service. (D)

32.4 Partnership Working, Consultation and Volunteering

1. We will continue to work in partnership with the public, private and voluntary sectors to manage and enhance public open spaces. (D)

2. We will consult with local residents, users and Friends of' Groups, on all proposals, which will have a significant impact on the existing open space and facilities. (D)

3. To establish, develop and support Friends of Groups for all Destination and Community Parks, in a manner consistent with the views of local people and help guide the future development of facilities. (D)

4. To develop an information pack that will provide groups interested in getting involved with open spaces clear guidance about how NBBC can help to support the setting up Friends of Groups. (D)

5. To continue to support and develop the "Conservation Volunteer" programme to assist in the protection and enhancement of semi-natural open space, its wildlife value and to increase the quality of the sites for biodiversity and sustainability. (D)

6. To promote the role of a senior volunteer to encourage volunteering/rangers in all aspects of Open Space Management. (D)

7. We will review the on-site supervision of Public Open Space. (D)

8. To Develop a Protocol/Procedure for working with community groups/external agencies when applying for or utilising grants for capital enhancement projects on Public Open Space. (D)

9. To establish an overall Nuneaton and Bedworth Parks Forum to share ideas / experiences etc. (D)

32.5 Community Safety

1. We will review the on-site supervision of Public Open Space. (D)
2. To continue to be an active member of the community safety partnerships, enabling us to link into the council's corporate objectives and to have a direct influence on future operations and issues affecting Public Open Space. (C)
3. To regularly liaise with the Police's architectural Liaison Officer to have an integrated approach to the design of new housing developments. (C)
4. To Develop specific action plans and initiatives with partners that will address incidents of: Anti-social behaviour, Nuisance youth and Motorcycle nuisance. (D)
5. To remove offensive graffiti visible from within Public Open Space, (be it on private or council owned property), the next working day after being reported. (D)
6. To continue the support of protective planting to deter the nuisance and damage caused by the playing of ball games in inappropriate locations, reaffirm the councils commitment to the non-erection of "No Ball Games" Signs on Public Open Space. (D)
7. To review the council's dog fouling policy on Public Open Space by the summer of 2013. (C)

32.6 Workplace and Site Health and Safety

1. To Train all officers and staff who have a responsibility for writing risk assessments for both work based practices and operational issues, to a competency level equivalent to the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH). (D)

2. To create of a suite of operational, site based risk assessments of all Destination, Community and Local Parks by April 2012 and formalising an approach for the routine monitoring of these sites. (D)

3. To develop water safety risk assessments for all bodies of water that are publicly accessible within the borough. (D)

4. To develop Manual Handling Assessments (MAC) to cover the full breadth of works undertaken by Parks by Dec 2011. (C)

5. To develop an overall signage strategy incorporating “safety issues” and potential hazards that could occur on public open space, by December 2012. (D)

6. To continue to develop risk assessments for volunteers and wardens when working on behalf of and on land owned by NBBC. (D)

7. To continue to develop risk assessments relating to the holding of events on Public Open Space. (D)

8. The purchase of the “Playsafe” software system to assist in building a detailed and accurate health and safety database in relation to Council owned play area assets by Autumn 2012. (D)

9. To develop a tree strategy, including a formalised tree-monitoring programme, developed by a suitably qualified person, together with the appropriate budget to act on the results of the monitoring. (D)

32.7 Marketing and Promotion

1. To review Parks and Countryside’s current Marketing and Promotion and develop a strategy by December 2013. (D)

2. To develop a strong brand identity, which the public can immediately recognise, by April 2013. (D)

3. To introduce the new brand identity for generic signage, street furniture, fencing and colours in relation to the specific types of Public Open Space, by December 2013. (D)

4. To design, procure and install “Welcoming” entrance signs to all Destination, Community and Local Parks by, March 2015. (D)

32.8 Biodiversity and Sustainability

1. We will seek to protect and enhance wildlife sites and a network of wildlife corridors - through partnership working, through the Planning system and by making appropriate designations of specific sites to help protect them. (D)

2) We will pursue the establishment of a robust ecological network including the creation and enhancement of wildlife corridors between existing areas of high quality habitat to reduce habitat fragmentation. (D)

3) We will work with local residents, community groups and partner organisations to increase public involvement in and sense of ‘ownership’ of the Borough Council’s semi-natural areas (branded as ‘Wildspaces’). This will involve consultation, involvement in management and development plans and seeking to secure grant funding and in volunteering. (D)

4) We will work with partner organisations to enhance Borough Council owned ‘Wildspaces’ and the Borough’s wider Green Network and Green Infrastructure both for the benefit of people and wildlife. This will involve co-ordinated Biodiversity initiatives such as working within the Warwickshire Coventry and Solihull Biodiversity Partnership to help

deliver County Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAP) targeting particular habitats and species.

It will also involve joint working to secure improvement of the publicly accessible Green Network for recreational, landscape and sustainable transport purposes. In the case of Wildspaces it will also involve production of and implementation of site-specific management plans. In the case of farmed land it is anticipated other agencies will take the lead role – e.g. through agri-environment schemes etc. (D)

5) We will continue to support the work of the West Midlands Biodiversity Partnership and the ongoing Habitat Biodiversity Audit and Biological Records Centre and to honour the other commitments made by the Council in signing the West Midlands Biodiversity Pledge. We will also work to support all other Council Departments in meeting those commitments and duties under the NERC act. (C)

6) We will work to improve biodiversity within the Council's formal Parks and Open spaces. This will involve a specific review of all of these areas to identify opportunities to enhance and create wildlife habitat and to if necessary alter and improve grounds maintenance and other management practices. (D)

7) We will work with our planning officers on the Local Development Framework, on Development Control procedures and on individual planning applications in accordance with PPS9 and PAS 2010 to wherever possible avoid development of any land of wildlife value or impact on wildlife species and to add to and enhance wildlife habitat.

Where development will unavoidably impact on wildlife habitat or species then adequate pre application survey work, working practices during development and mitigation measures will be required.

Where developments will unavoidably sever or damage existing or potential key corridors or links within the Borough's Green Infrastructure and its publicly accessible 'Green Network', then these links will be replaced or enhanced to compensate. (C)

8) We will work to increase resident and visitor understanding, enjoyment of and value placed upon wildlife and wildlife habitats. This will involve 'interpretation' of wildlife and wildlife habitats through signage, publications and formal and informal educational work and events. (D)

9) We will record and report biodiversity based performance management indicators. This will include reporting on NI197, which measures the degree to which positive management is occurring within Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation managed by the Borough Council and by private landowners. It will also include helping the Authority to report on the Community Plan, Audit Commission Use of Resources Assessment, NI188 and the Warwickshire LAA. (C)

10) We will regularly and fully review the Parks and Countryside Service's operations and management to minimise detrimental impacts on the natural environment and to maximise positive impacts. This will involve review of existing legislation and good practice (e.g. in terms of pesticides, procurement, waste and recycling, pollution, water and energy efficiency and avoiding use of non renewable global resources). This will lead to production of reports highlighting any areas of discrepancy, possible options and any associated cost implications. (D)

11) We will similarly encourage and support work to minimise detrimental impacts of the Borough Council's operations and management on the natural environment and to maximise positive impacts. This will involve supporting the delivery and regular review of the Council's Environmental Sustainability Strategy and policies. It will

also involve supporting the full application of the duties of the NERC act and of the commitments made by the authority in signing Biodiversity Pledge to the work of all Council Departments and Services and to policies including the Community Plan Corporate Plan and Procurement Policy. We will also encourage the Council to consider the possible merits of the production of its own Biodiversity Strategy. (C)

12) When the council considers disposal of any land within its portfolio it is both necessary and appropriate to consider the Biodiversity implications of disposal which may be negligible, may appropriately require 'mitigation' to reduce or offset the impact of the disposal, or may in some cases require the disposal to be avoided either in terms of part of or the whole of the land.

This is necessary both to comply with legal duties under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities act (2006) and also is good practice and demonstrates the council's commitments to protect and enhance biodiversity made in its corporate plans, in its Environmental Sustainability Strategy, its membership of the Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Biodiversity Partnership and in its signing of the West Midlands Local Government Association Biodiversity Pledge.

To ensure this consideration is made in all disposals - the standard report template for land disposals will be amended to specifically incorporate a section considering biodiversity implications and requiring consultation to be sought with relevant officers within the authority with expertise in biodiversity (and if appropriate/necessary with other external expert bodies such as Natural England, Warwickshire County Council and Warwickshire Wildlife Trust). (C)

13) Following a review of which sites / parts of sites can appropriately continue to be fished without unacceptable detriment to wildlife - the

Council will seek to let its waters to a formally constituted angling club.

(D)

32.9 Grounds Maintenance

1) To work with our grounds maintenance contractors, in striving to ensure that there is continuous improvement in the quality of the grounds maintenance of all our open spaces, to meet the needs and demands of users and of local people. (D)

2) To review the current level of contract monitoring in light of the award of Contracts 1 and 2. (D)

3) To continue to work closely with developers and contractors when adopting open space on new developments, so as to ensure quality sites are not only transferred but future maintenance is identified and undertaken. (D)

4) We will undertake a review of grounds maintenance operations on an annual basis, to determine whether features are still pertinent and that current maintenance regimes meet with both customer expectation and with budgetary pressures. (D)

32.10 Training

1) To continue with the IOSH training for all identified members of staff working within Parks and Countryside, so as to retain the consistency of approach when drafting risk assessments. (D)

2) To continue to support applications for Post Entry Training and to up-skill staff both manual and clerical in new methods, techniques and technologies, taking into account new legislation that affects daily working operations. (D)

3) To undertake appropriate training with our Countryside Volunteers to ensure our and their own compliance with Health and Safety and that they are competent in the use of machinery and techniques involved with the works they undertake. (D)

32.11 Funding and Investment

1. To scrutinise existing revenue expenditure to determine whether, the Council is delivering what the public want in terms of services and to align our future spend more closely to the priorities identified in the strategy by April 2013. (D)

2. To develop a detailed Capital Programme of Improvements to Public Open Space linked to the key aims identified both within the Corporate and Community Plans and reinforced within this Strategy. (C)

3. To revisit the basis and use of Section 106 sums allocated for parks and recreation and tightly align to the delivery of the priorities identified by this strategy and those within the Borough Plan's, Infrastructure Delivery Plan. (C)

4. To continue to support and assist "groups" raising external funding to invest in improvements to the open space infrastructure. (D)

5. To make a Heritage Lottery Bid for Riversley Park within the next funding "round". (D)

6. To continue to access external funding opportunities wherever possible in delivering the priorities within the strategy. (D)

7. To combine wherever possible, capital sums, sums from section 106 agreements and external funding to deliver larger packages of work. (C)

8. To explore opportunities for closer working with the Leisure Trust and the Health Agencies in delivering their agendas within our open spaces.

(D)

9. To adopt a clear council policy following the disposal of surplus land to ensure re-investment of receipts into the remaining open space infrastructure, and/or to fund further improvements. (C)

10. To set priorities in the strategy against known funding opportunities and against potential partnerships for delivery and staff allocated the task of taking forward the most time effective opportunities. (D)

11. To establish a Full Time Tree Officer Post. (C)

12. To establishment and continuation of Play Ranger service. (C)

13. To investigate potential income streams and to seek agreement on the “ring-fencing” of income to facilitate improvements to the existing open space infrastructure, for example via the priorities set out in the Borough Plan’s, Infrastructure Delivery Plan.(C)

32.12 Performance Monitoring/ Management and Strategy Review

1) To have an independent annual quality assessment undertaken on our open spaces against the green flag criteria – with a rolling programme of such work covering all Destination, Community and Local Parks on a three year cycle. (D)

2) To agree a mechanism for determining the communities’ satisfaction of our Public Open Space by April 2012 (C)

3) To develop additional locally agreed performance targets that can be easily measured, collated and potentially bench marked against other

authorities by December 2012. These must be based on key quality issues identified in the strategy. (C)

4) To continue to develop and maintain the weekly/monthly performance monitoring regimes and targets to ensure continued improvement and customer satisfaction with the service delivery.(D)

5) To continue to provide management information relating Performance Indicators NI 197 and 199 and Local Indicators as required. (C)

33.0 Appendices

**Appendix 1 – Site Assessments Based on Green Flag Scoring
Criteria**

Green Flag Quality Assessments



April – May 2009

