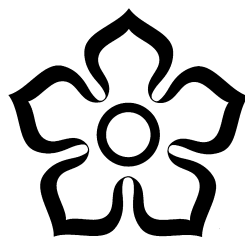


Leicester City Council

Greenspace Strategy (2009 - 2015)



Leicester
City Council

Parks and Green Spaces

CONTENTS

	Page (s)
1.0 Context	1
2.0 Introduction	2 - 5
3.0 Strategic Context	6 - 9
4.0 Supply and Demand Analysis	10 - 21
5.0 Analysis of issues, opportunities and priorities	22 - 39
6.0 Recommendations and action plan	40 - 44
7.0 Risk Assessment	45 - 46

Appendices

Appendix 1 Summary statistics on green space

Appendix 2 Maps showing green space provision by ward

Appendix 3 Maps showing access to green space across the City

Background papers

- Quality
- Planning standards
- Crime and Safety
- Partnerships, volunteers and wider community participation
- Woodlands, shelter belts and screen plantings

1.0 CONTEXT

Leicester City Council, through its Parks and Green Spaces service, manages 1,250 hectares of green space. To successfully manage this portfolio it is necessary to regularly assess performance and to plan for the future; this Strategy forms part of this management process.

Recommendations from the previous Strategy (Leicester City Council: Parks, Open Spaces and Countryside Strategy 2001-2006) recognised the need to focus on raising the profile of the service, as:

- Over a ten-year period it had suffered budgetary reductions (in real terms operating on 50% of its 1992 revenue budget).
- The service had, and still was, losing staff with key skills.
- Delivery of the service was split across services and departments.
- There was a lack of strategic focus – more effort was spent on ‘fire-fighting’ than forward planning.

Since the last Strategy the service has undergone a number of changes. It has been examined, as part of the Local Environmental Services Best Value Review (2002), resulting in major organisational change, bringing together the service purchaser and the service provider, elements that had been separate since 1988 under the arrangements for Compulsory Competitive Tendering (The Local Government Act 1986).

Additionally the service has benefited from an increase in revenue funding, an increase of £650,000 per annum, so that it is now operating on approximately 62% of its 1992 revenue budget.

Locally, regionally and nationally the service has had success in raising the profile of Leicester’s parks. Public satisfaction has increased significantly (MORI 2005), we are founder members, and Chair, the GreenSpace East Midlands Forum. National recognition has been gained through a number of Green Flag Awards (administered by The Civic Trust), the CABE Space ‘Parkforce’ Award and the ILAM innovation award for the ‘Passport to Parks’ scheme.

Underpinning, and driving these changes has been the service’s response to community needs. This has been demonstrated by an increase in satisfaction, a steady increase in user numbers, and an increase in the number of Green Flag Awards held. These three measures of success form the basis of the service’s contribution to Leicester’s Local Area Agreement along with the additional measure of play area provision to meet the EN Standard – a target that the service is achieving.

This Strategy has been written to build upon recent successes and to enable the service to evolve in order to meet local, regional and national agendas and demands such as; Safer, Cleaner, Greener Communities, and Strong and Prosperous Communities, over the next five years.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 What is a Greenspace Strategy?

'A greenspace strategy sets out an authority's vision for using its green space, and the goals it wants to achieve, plus the resources, methods and time needed to meet these goals' (*CABE Space, Greenspace Strategies: A good practice guide*).

Leicester's Greenspace Strategy has been developed to meet these objectives, with a particular focus on the needs and aspirations of Leicester's community and Greenspace resource.

The strategy includes the following sections:

2.1.1 Strategic Context

This section considers national, regional and local strategies or policies that influence Leicester's Greenspace Strategy, to ensure it is informed and can contribute in an effective way.

2.1.2 Supply & Demand Analysis

Leicester has already developed an open space, sport, and recreation facilities needs assessment (PPG17 assessment). This study has made a comprehensive analysis of the existing and future supply and demand of green space in the City.

It is not the purpose of the Greenspace Strategy to cover all aspects of the PPG 17 study, but it will summarise key findings from the study and demonstrate how the Greenspace Strategy and the PPG17 study inform each other.

2.1.3 Analysis of issues, opportunities and priorities

This section looks at the issues, opportunities and priorities for the Greenspace Strategy. This is approached in two ways, firstly by considering the different types of open space in the City, such as parks, woodlands and play areas. It will also consider 'themes' related to the Strategy, such as involving the community and staff development.

2.1.4 Strategy aims, objectives and policies

In considering the above issues, this section will draw together clear aims, objectives and policies for the Greenspace Strategy.

2.1.5 Action Plan

This is a summary of the key actions and recommendations that emerge from the Strategy to be implemented over a ten-year period.

2.1.6 Specific background papers

As part of the Greenspace Strategy, Leicester City Council have identified the need for a number of specific background papers to support the strategy and provide additional information, these are:

- **Quality**
A summary of the quality of different types of green space across the City. It draws on a proposed 'hierarchy of parks', and outlines priorities for investment.
- **Planning standards**
This section demonstrates the link between the Greenspace Strategy, the PPG17 study and other relevant planning policies.
- **Crime and Safety**
This section considers the effect of crime on both users and non-users of Leicester's parks and green spaces – how, at the local level, might this be mitigated?
- **Partnerships, volunteers and wider community participation**
This section looks at how to achieve greater participation and co-ordination with the third sector at the local level.
- **Woodlands, shelter belts and screen plantings**
This considers the opportunities for both bringing into management the recent (20-30 years) extensive plantings and better managing the mature woodland stock.

2.2 Scope of the strategy

2.2.1 What is included in the strategy?

Leicester's Greenspace Strategy covers the whole City of Leicester, and includes all publicly owned, accessible green space. Allotments are referred to throughout the Strategy, however, recommendations in relation to allotments are dealt with in the existing Allotment Strategy.

Leicester City Council own and manage some 1,250 hectares of publicly accessible open space across the City, including the following: (detail in appendix I)

- 1 City Park
- 10 District Parks
- 80 Local Parks
- 4 Cemeteries
- 7 Local Nature Reserves

The River Soar runs through Leicester, and this provides a valuable green corridor through the heart of the City. The land holding also includes tracts of woodland, amenity areas, highway verges and school grounds. Together, these green spaces provide a huge range of facilities that benefit the community, including children's play areas, sports pitches, golf courses, rivers, lakes and ponds.

2.2.2 Why is a strategy needed?

Parks and green spaces are integral to urban life – they provide breathing space and are crucial to the successful functioning of urban communities. People pass by green space, walk through it on the way to work or the shops, or stop to enjoy it. Parks offer places to relax and enjoy the natural environment away from the stresses of everyday life, to take children to play, and for sport and recreation. In fact parks and green spaces are one of the few free facilities, which are used by the majority of a highly diverse population.

The significant health benefits of parks and green spaces are well documented. Not only are they ideal venues for formal and informal sport and active play, but they provide an environment which has been proven to improve mental well-being. In addition trees and woodlands help to reduce the effects of urban pollution, and allotments provide the opportunity for more sustainable and organic living.

Well managed good quality green spaces greatly improve the perception of an area - on a citywide level it helps bring tourists to the city and helps attract investment from the relocation of businesses, at a local level it makes people feel good and have pride in where they live.

Parks and green spaces offer an important environment for children to learn through play and social interaction. In addition they can offer an education resource to schools – one recognised by government but as yet largely untapped in Leicester.

Green space and green corridors provide habitats for a range of species, enabling a rich diversity of wildlife to thrive and enabling people to experience and engage with the natural environment.

Good quality green space is crucial to our quality of life – a significant part of the urban fabric of the city – an integral part of providing balanced and sustainable communities.

2.2.3 Methodology

The Greenspace Strategy has been prepared by independent consultants, who initially carried out the PPG 17 study for the City Council. The findings from this study have been developed in close consultation with key stakeholders in Leicester to develop the Greenspace Strategy.

The Greenspace Strategy is therefore informed by the extensive research and consultation carried out as part of the PPG17 study, and by consultation already carried out by Leicester City Council related to open space (a summary of this is provided in the greenspace background paper on 'Partnerships, volunteers and wider community participation').

2.2.4 Aims of the Greenspace Strategy

The key aim of the Strategy is to provide a clear framework for practical action to protect and improve green spaces within Leicester over the next ten years.

2.2.5 Objectives

Specific objectives of the Strategy are:

- To develop a hierarchy of parks and green spaces, with a framework for prioritisation and resource allocation for management and improvement;
- To understand and meet the needs of community attitudes and expectations in providing green space in the City;
- To provide standards of green space provision which are adopted within the Local Development Framework;
- To ensure Leicester builds on its strengths in green space management, and builds on its status of delivering good practice in green space provision.
- To improve the accessibility of Leicester's parks and green spaces.

3.0 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

3.1 National context

The future of green space within UK cities must be seen in the context of planning for urban growth. The need for green space to meet the needs and expectations of the future urban population continues to intensify, as pressures on finding land for development increase. In recognising that future cities must be both liveable and sustainable, it is important to establish what type and quantity of green space is required to ensure the right balance is struck between the built environment and green space.

Three key publications emerged in 2003 that highlighted the need for a strategic approach to green space management and development.

First, the *Department of Transport, Leisure and the Regions (DTLR)* published the final report of the *Urban Green Spaces Taskforce 'Green Spaces, Better Places'*. It asserted that 'local authorities should develop (or update) and implement a green space strategy, which integrates with neighbourhood renewal, regeneration, planning, housing development, community development, local health improvement, culture, children's play and sports strategies'.

Second, was the emergence of *Living Places: Cleaner, Safer, Greener*, published by the *Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)*, which indicated that 'evidence from the Beacon Council process shows that preparing local parks and green space strategies is effective in developing a shared vision for service planning'. It added that 'park authorities who operate a strategy are by far the most successful at ensuring that good park stocks continue to improve'.

Third, was the publication of *Planning Policy Guidance 17 (PPG 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation)*, and its companion guide *Assessing Needs and Opportunities – July 2002*. This provides guidance for setting local standards for the provision of open space and sports and recreation facilities.

3.2 Regional context

Leicester is the largest city in the East Midlands, the traditional county town of Leicestershire, and, since 1997, has been a self-governing unitary authority. It is the 13th largest city in the UK, covering 75 km² and is located at the centre of the county. The wider conurbation of Leicester, which includes the satellite towns of Oadby, Wigston, Braunstone Town, Birstall, Glenfield, Blaby, Thurmaston, Syston, and Leicester Forest East, is home to 65% of Leicestershire's population and is very culturally and economically diverse.

Whilst the Leicester Greenspace Strategy is aimed at Leicester City, there are a number of important regional links, which need to be considered, if the strategy is to be delivered effectively.

3.2.1 GreenSpace Regional Forum

GreenSpace is a registered charity supported by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). The organisation aims to be the UK's leading advocate for the economic, social and environmental benefits of better planned, designed and managed parks, gardens and green spaces for their positive contribution to our economic, physical and spiritual health, social cohesion, and bio-diversity. To support advocacy GreenSpace are establishing a national network of Regional GreenSpace Forums to:

- Facilitate exchanges in information and expertise
- Collect and disseminate good practice
- Provide funding information and opportunities to secure funding
- Lobby for improvements to policy in collaboration with the Regional Government agenda

Leicester City Council was chosen to host the first Regional Forum Manager with responsibility for the East Midlands. The Manager was appointed in late 2005, and the Forum established in 2006. This meets on a regular basis. In addition Leicester is a member of the established Leicestershire Parks, Open Spaces and Countryside Network.

3.2.2 East Midlands Green Infrastructure Scoping Study (EMGISS)

The EMGISS categorised greenspaces into functional types derived from Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 17 recommendations, to enable assessment of their form and function. Green Infrastructure Planning will become an essential part of Local Development Frameworks (LDF's) and, in time, will become standard terminology within planning policy and development control.

Clearly, Leicester's PPG17 study and Greenspace Strategy will need to consider relevant findings and recommendations that arise from the EMGISS, particularly in terms of taking forward policies into its future LDF.

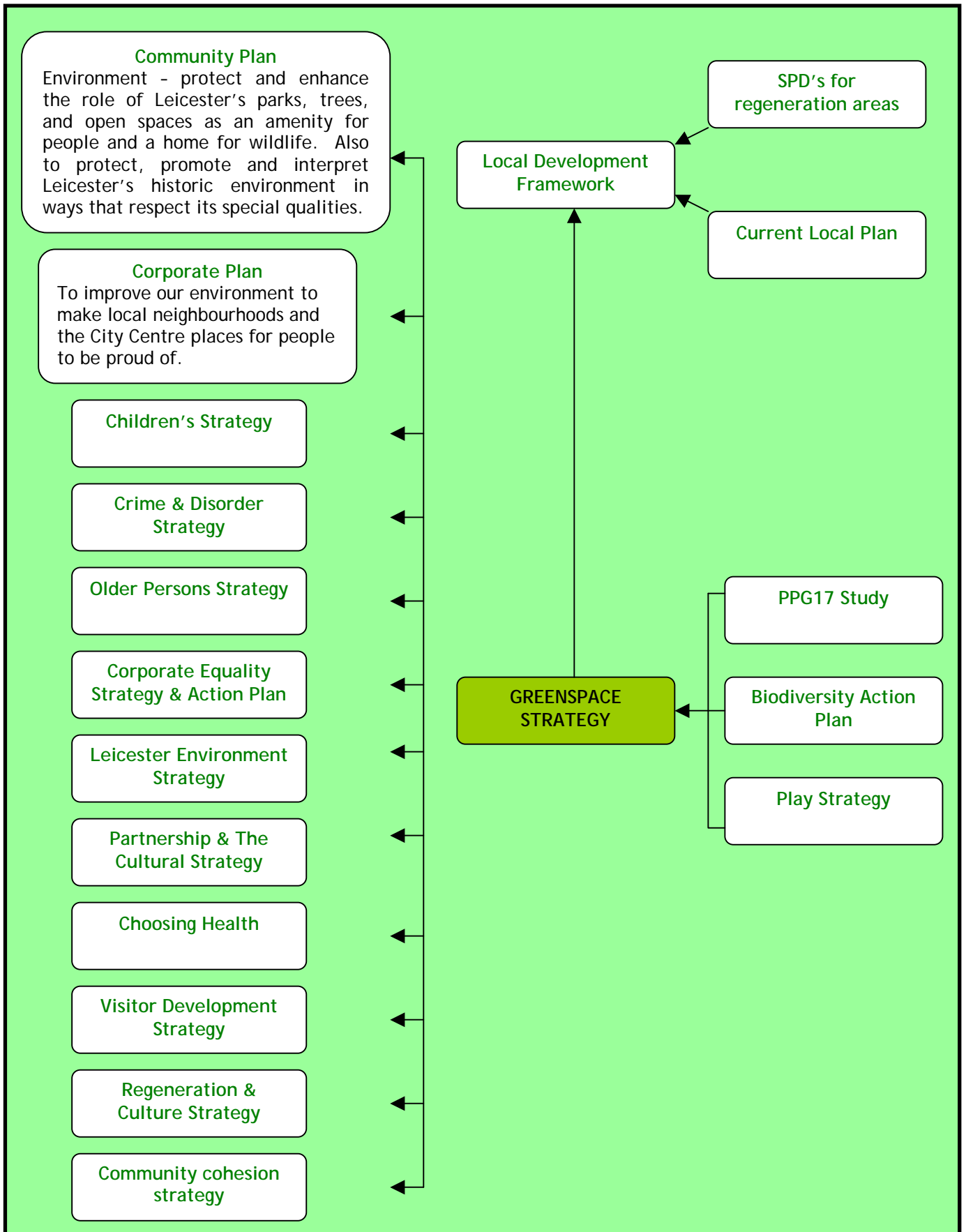
3.2.3 Leicester Biodiversity Action Plan

A working group of representatives from 19 organisations, lead by Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust, have developed a regional biodiversity action plan, “Biodiversity Challenge: An Action Plan for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland”, which was produced in 1998. The plan identifies local and national priority habitats and species, and sets targets for their conservation and outlines mechanisms for achieving these. There are 18 Habitat Action Plans and 14 Species Action Plans. Leicester City has a number of specific action plan objectives, including:

- Improve the value of wildlife corridors and the biodiversity network throughout Leicester
- Improve access to existing information on Leicester’s biodiversity
- Encourage the monitoring and recording of wildlife within Leicester
- Draw attention to the need to make greenspace and natural areas accessible to the citizens of Leicester
- Develop Leicester existing network of nature reserves

3.3 Local context

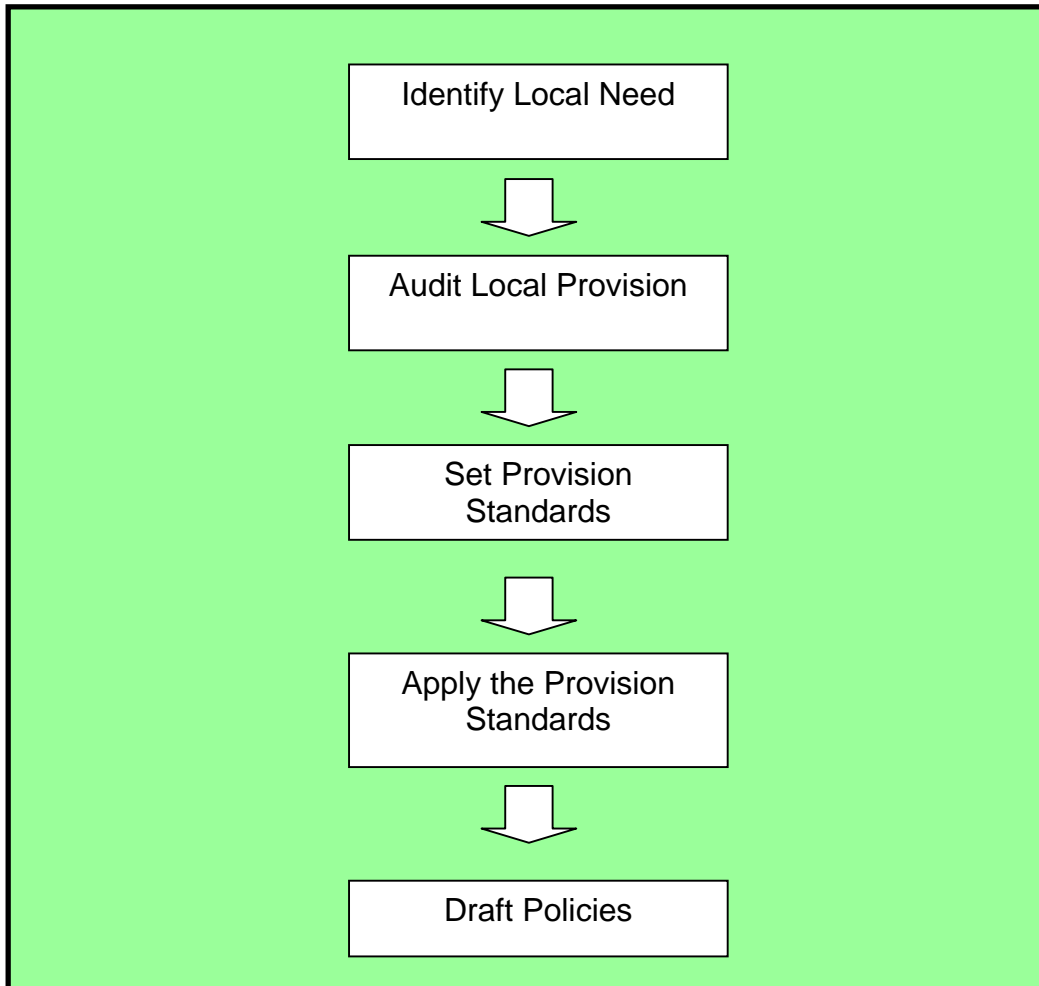
The Greenspace Strategy has links with many other strategies, it is informed by these strategies and in turn influences them. A summary of the main links is shown below:



4.0 SUPPLY & DEMAND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

Leicester has developed an open spaces, sports and recreation facilities needs assessment, in line with Planning Policy Guidance 17 (PPG17). This study includes the following stages:



The PPG17 study is integral to the Greenspace Strategy, particularly in terms of the future provision of open space across the City. It is not the intention of the Greenspace Strategy to present all the detail of the PPG17 study, but it will highlight key issues and links, and demonstrate how the Greenspace Strategy and the PPG17 study together combine to inform Leicester's Local Development Framework. This is outlined in the supporting background paper 'Planning Standards'.

4.2 Identifying Local Need

The PPG17 study involved extensive consultation with stakeholders in Leicester, through household surveys, focus groups, questionnaires to schools and sports clubs, and play and youth groups. The consultation highlighted a very wide range of interesting points and issues of value to both the PPG 17 study and Greenspace Strategy. The following general points are felt to be important:

- The local importance attached to the provision of a variety of open spaces and facilities.
- The value attached to informal and natural green space. – is this the same as above?
- The relative popularity (usage) of many local informal spaces in comparison with formal sports facilities. The latter tend to be used by a smaller percentage of the population on a regular basis.
- An appreciation of the value of good levels of maintenance for open spaces, particularly in relation to cleanliness, graffiti and dog fouling.
- The importance placed by local people on measures to improve safety and security in both accessing and using facilities.
- The need when planning for all types of recreation opportunity to take into account people's preparedness to travel, and requirement for different types of space. For children and young people this means easy access by foot/cycle, although this should be a universal aspiration in planning and locating all local community open spaces and recreation opportunities.
- The need for improved provision for children and young people, in particular for the older age range.
- The importance of a good network of footpaths and cycleways.
- Whilst the flagships parks in the City are appreciated, there is concern over the quality and maintenance of many other spaces.
- The continued strong demands placed on the City's outdoor sports and built facilities.

4.3 Provision and application of standards

The PPG17 study looked at the quantity, quality and access to the following types of publicly accessible open space in the City:

- Public Parks and Gardens;
- Accessible Natural Green Space;
- Green corridors/recreation routes;
- Playing fields and Recreation grounds;
- Informal/Amenity Green Space;
- Equipped play provision for children and young people;
- Allotments and community gardens (not considered in the Greenspace Strategy).

These generally reflect the typology of open spaces identified in PPG17 and its companion guide. Although the above are varied in their nature they all share a trait of being open to community use, either freely (as in the case of Parks), or on a managed basis (such as some kinds of outdoor sports facility.)

4.4 Quality of open space

The quality of open space across the City is considered in a background paper that accompanies the Greenspace Strategy, this focuses on the quality of different types of open space across the City, drawing on a proposed 'hierarchy of parks', and outlining priorities for investment. However, the following section summarises the methodology used in the assessments, and provides an overview of the audit results.

4.4.1 Methodology

As part of the PPG17 audit all open space within the City was assessed for quality. The quality audit criteria has built on guidance provided in the 'PPG 17 companion guide', and criteria used as part of *Green Flag, 'Raising the standard'*. Sites were given a generic assessment against the following criteria (each made up of several sub-criteria):

- Access;
- Management and maintenance;
- Conservation & Heritage;
- Design;
- Safety;
- Community Involvement;
- Marketing;
- Sustainability;
- Value

For all of the categories, scores were given from 0-5 as follows:

0	Not Applicable
1	Very Poor
2	Poor
3	Moderate
4	Good
5	Very Good

Each category was also given a 'potential to improve score' using the same scoring system. The resulting figures give a total score and a total potential to improve score, which in turn identifies a 'gap' between existing quality and potential quality.

These scores are also represented as percentages. The percentage figures represent the difference between the quality of existing provision and the maximum potential of that site – giving a % gap score which represents the potential that site has to improve. The following scores indicate the potential to improve:

Percentage	Potential to improve
0 - 29%	Very little potential. Low priority for investment.
30 - 50%	Sites with some potential for improvement. Sites above 30% should be focused on for investment.
51 - 100%	Sites with significant potential for improvement. Could include sites where there are some 'quick wins'.

4.4.2 Quality of open space in the City

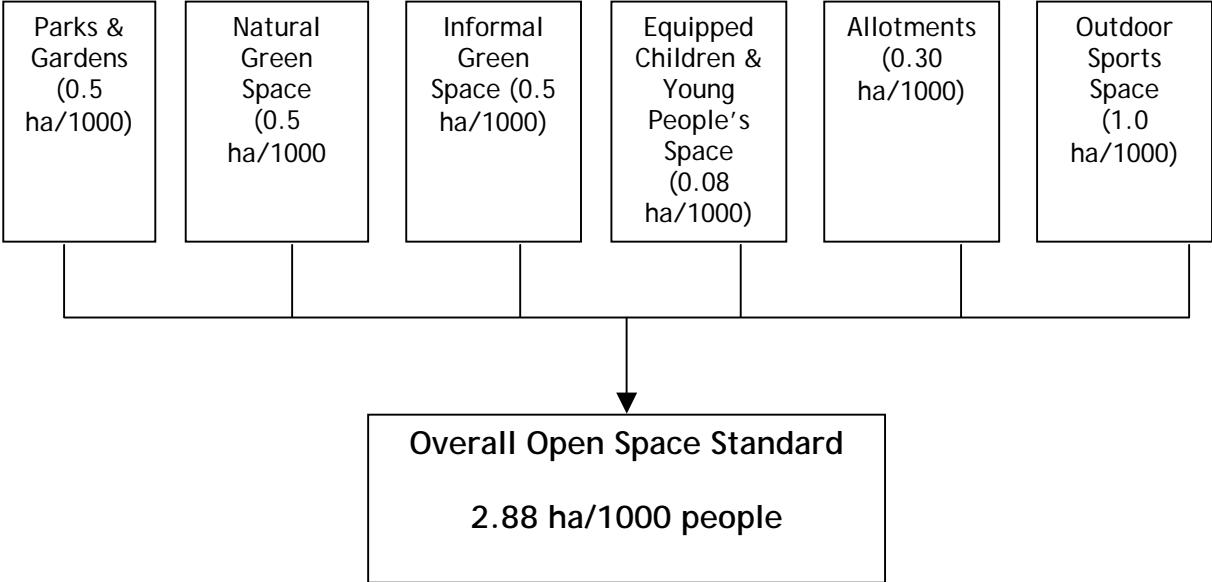
The quality data for open space across the City is held on a database and allows detailed analysis of quality by site, by typology and by theme. Appendix I provides a table, which summarises the quality of each typology for each ward.

The quality of open space, particularly in relation to a 'hierarchy of open space' and access to open space is further explored in the Greenspace Strategy background paper 'Quality of Open Space in Leicester' (see appendix I).

4.5 Quantity of open space

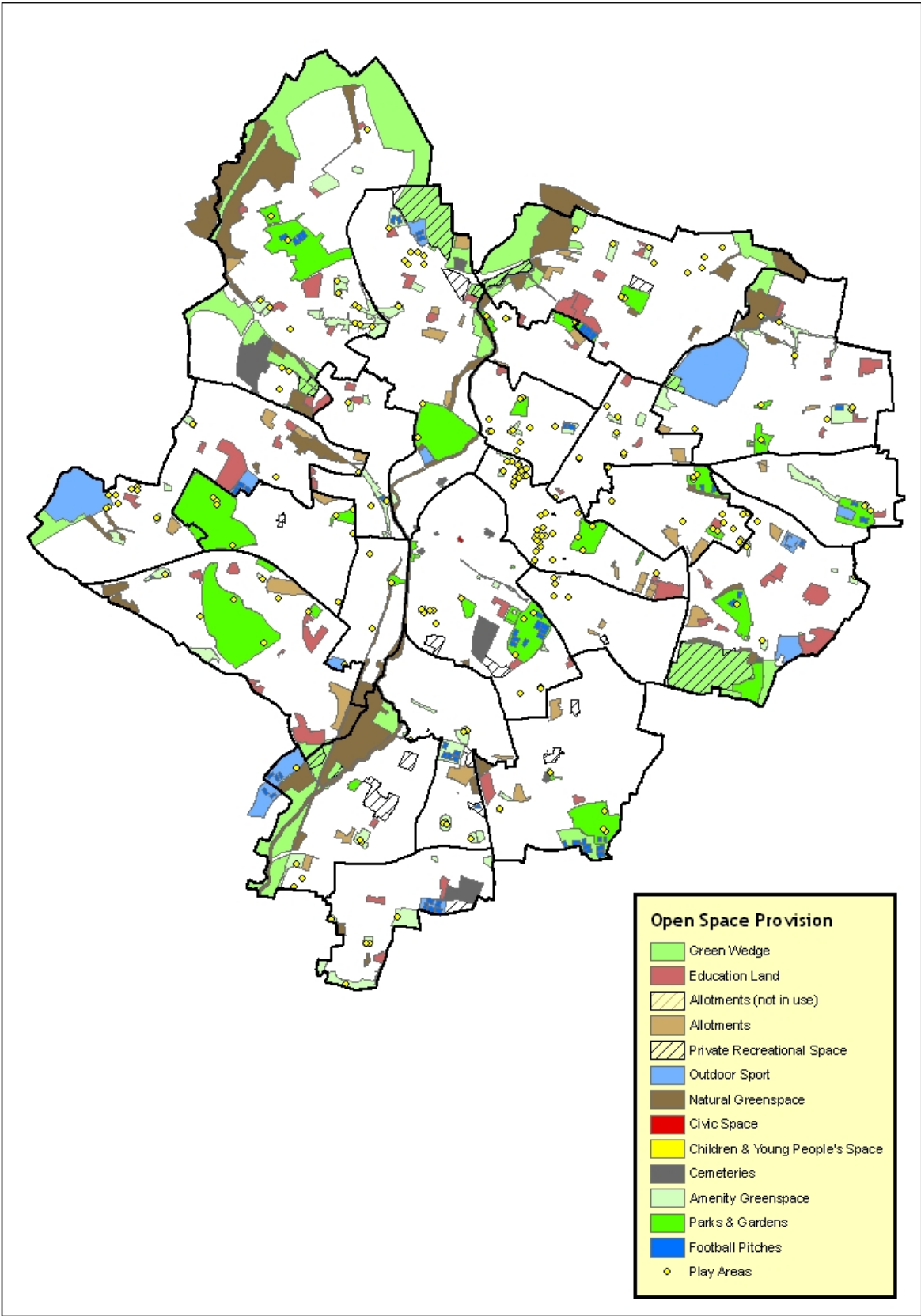
4.5.1 Standards of provision

As part of the PPG17 study, a quantitative analysis of the open space provision across the City was made. This was considered across the City and by ward, using quantitative standards developed for provision by typology, as shown below:



4.5.2 Distribution of open space

The following map summarises the provision of open space across the City (more detailed maps of provision by ward are shown in appendix 2).



4.5.3 Provision of open space against the Leicester standard

Within each ward (see maps in appendix 2), the existing quantity of open space was calculated for each typology. This was then compared against the required provision for the population of the ward, which is calculated as follows:

$$\text{Required quantity of open space} = \frac{\text{Population (of the ward)} \times \text{Open space standard}}{\text{Divided by 1000}}$$

This figure is then used to calculate the overall supply (surplus/deficiency) of each type of open space against the existing quantity of publicly accessible open space (existing quantity of open space – required quantity of open space).

A table showing quantity provision against the Leicester standard for each typology by ward is shown in the table in appendix I. A summary of this is shown in figure 1:

Figure 1: Provision of open space against Leicester standard (hectares)

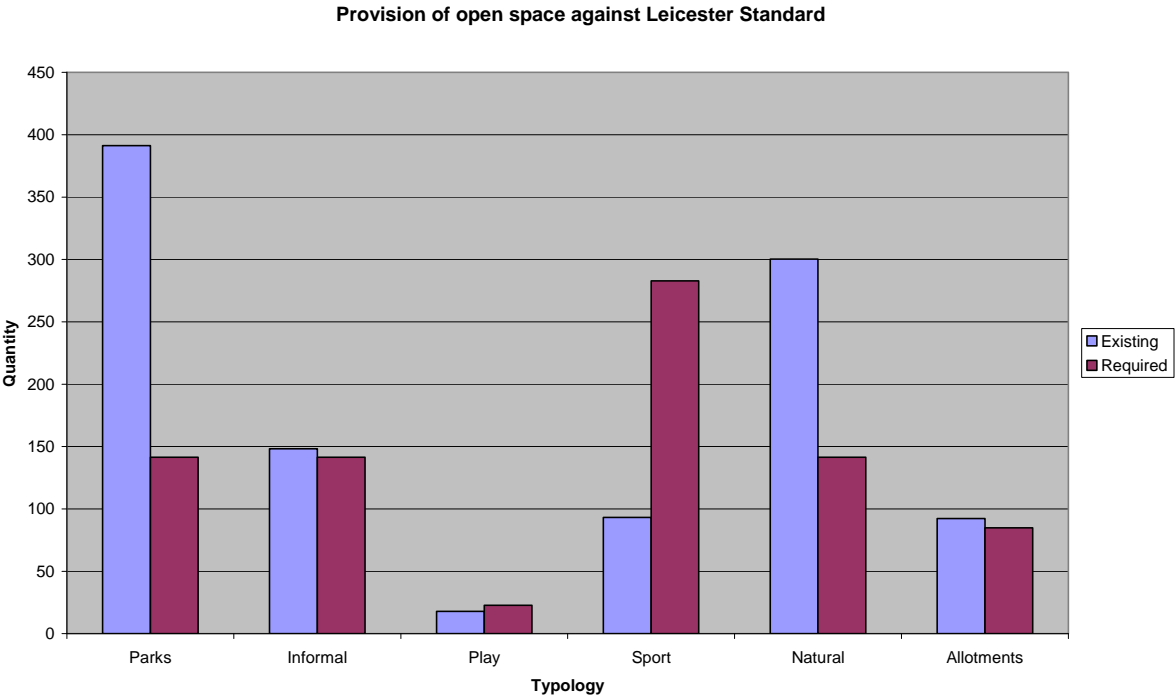
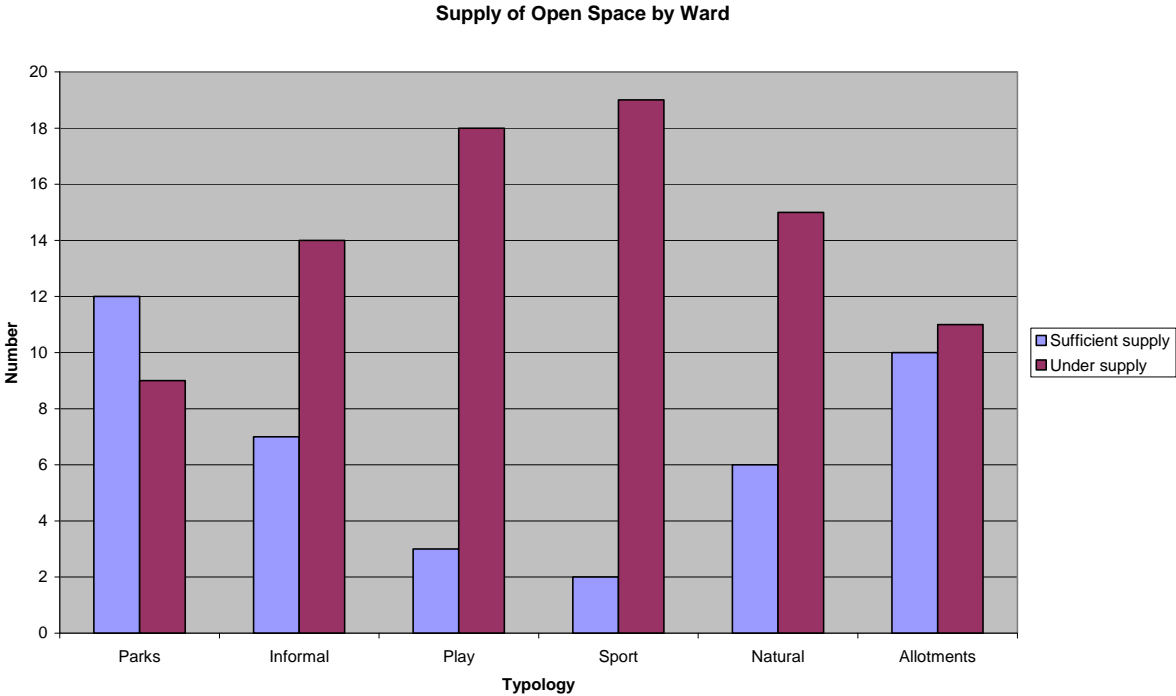


Figure 1 shows the total quantity (hectares) of open space across the City (existing) for each typology, this is compared to the required quantity of open space (required). This allows the difference between the existing quantity and required quantity to be illustrated.

Considering the figure above, overall, there is a sufficient supply of parks, informal open space, natural greenspace and allotments, whilst there is an under supply of outdoor sports space and equipped play facilities across the City.

This is explored further in figure 2, which shows the number of wards with sufficient supply or under supply for each typology:

Figure 2 Supply of open space by ward (hectares)



Considering the above figure, the overall provision across the City by ward shows some interesting correlations, as follows:

- Parks & Gardens**
 Across the City, overall, there is a sufficient supply (about 35% above the required standard), and just under 60% of wards have sufficient supply.
- Informal open space**
 Across the City there is just enough informal open space against the standard, however, only 30% of wards have an over supply.
- Equipped play space**
 Overall there is an under supply (-5.04 ha or about 10%), however, only 3 wards exceed the standard for provision.
- Outdoor sport**
 There is an under supply across the City (66 ha or about 18%), only 2 wards exceed the standard for provision.
- Natural greenspace**
 Across the City, overall, there is a sufficient supply of natural greenspace (just over 20% above the required standard), however, in contrast to the statistics for Parks, only 6

wards (28%) have sufficient supply. This indicates that provision of natural greenspace is unevenly distributed across the City, with a few large areas making up the contribution.

There is a further consideration in relation to natural greenspace, in that many of the parks and open spaces have tracts of natural greenspace within them. So whilst their 'primary purpose' may be Informal Open Space or Park and Garden, they may also have areas of natural greenspace, which may not be accounted for in the overall quantity assessment.

4.6 Access to open space

4.6.1 Access standards

Within the PPG 17 study, considerable research was carried out in relation to distances people were willing to travel to different types of open space within the City. In general, people wanted play areas and informal open space near to where they live (5 – 10 minutes walk), whilst they were willing to travel further distances for larger parks and natural greenspace (10 – 15 minutes), and even further for outdoor sports space (more than twenty minutes). This research was used to develop access standards for open space, these are summarised below:

Parks & Gardens	Natural Green Space	Informal Green Space	Equipped Children & Young People's Space	Allotments	Outdoor Sports Space
District/ local Parks: 1000m	300m	100m	Pre-teen: 300m	1000m	3000m
Pocket parks: 300m			Teen: 1000m		

4.6.2 Application of access standards

Appendix 3 shows maps that have applied these access standards at a city-wide level, for each of the types of open space included within the typology. This is further analysed in the table in appendix I, which shows access for each typology within each ward. This is explored further in the Greenspace Strategy background paper 'Quality'. However, the following general observations are made for access to each typology:

Typology	Access against standard
Parks and Gardens	There is generally good access to parks across the City, however, notable gaps exist in the following areas and wards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East: Humberstone & Hamilton; • South: Eyres Monsell and Aylestone; • North-East: Rushey Mead and Belgrave; • Central: Castle and Westcotes; • West: Beaumont Leys (southern part of ward).
Informal open space	There is a reasonable average distribution of informal open space across the City. Whilst there are gaps in access in all wards, when informal space is considered along with parks the majority of wards have an open space near to their home. The following observations can be made: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are a number of informal open spaces in the east and south of the City which have the potential to be upgraded to 'parks' and fill some of the gaps identified in access to parks; • There is a considerable concentration and overlap in access of informal open space in the Beaumont Leys area;
Outdoor sports facilities	The access standard set for outdoor sports facilities means the standard is met across the City.

Typology	Access against standard
Children and Young People's provision	<p>The following observations are made in relation to the provision of equipped play areas in the City:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All wards within the City have play areas; • There is an uneven distribution of play areas, for example there is a high concentration and overlap of facilities in the Spinney Hills/Latimer wards, in contrast there is only one facility in Thurncourt ward; • Access to play areas cannot be considered in isolation, for example whilst there are several play areas in the Spinney Hills area that overlap in access, the majority are small play areas with 2 or 3 items of equipment, and as such there is still a very small under supply of quantity for the ward; • Access to play also needs to be considered with the quality of the play provision, so one large good quality play area may better meet the needs of the community than several small poor quality areas; • The provision for play is focused on equipped provision, but many other open spaces offer opportunity for informal play, such as kickabout areas.
Accessible Natural greenspace	<p>The following observations are made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are gaps in access to natural greenspace across the City; • There is an important green corridor focused around the river, running roughly north to south within the City; • Access to natural greenspace tends to be to larger areas of space, most of which are located on the fringe of the City (e.g. Watermead Country Park and Castle Hill Country Park);
Allotments	There is generally good access to allotments across the City. This is further explored in the allotment strategy.

4.6.3 Barriers to access

The observations above consider access across the City as a whole, but it must be acknowledged that there are other 'barriers to access'. These can be social, physical, and intellectual barriers.

The social barriers to access can relate to a fear of crime, cultural and social barriers. These types of barriers are complicated, and understanding these must be considered strategically (e.g. Crime Reduction Strategy) and at a local level (e.g. through park management plans), detailed analysis of this is outside of the scope of this Strategy.

The physical barriers to access can include major roads, railways and even steep hills. A map showing these major barriers to access is shown in appendix 3. This needs to be considered when planning the provision of open space, for example, a play area may be located very close to a major road, which may deter some people (particularly young children), from being able to access the facility.

The intellectual barriers to access can include the absence of, or worse the wrong, information. This can be through a number of mediums such as, on site signage, leaflets, the internet, radio and newspapers.

The impact of this is that, social, physical, and intellectual barriers have the potential to flag up more access restrictions than outlined in the table above. Whilst every situation cannot be addressed, the above table should be used as a guide, and these barriers should be taken into account at a local level.

4.7 Policies

The following policies and recommendations are presented in the PPG study:

Policy Principle	Description
R1. Proper planning for and realization of OSS&R helps to create <i>Diversity</i> of positive leisure opportunity. It also helps provide a varied and attractive City in the physical sense.	Proceed with development of the proposed Greenspace Strategy
THE OSS&R should be in full	Consider the adoption of the standards suggested in this report through the Local Development Framework.
	Consider the need to develop a Supplementary Planning Document to aid with the interpretation and application of the standards.
R2. Well conceived and managed OSS&R opportunities can help impact positively on issues of <i>Community Safety</i> .	The proposed Greenspace Strategy should embrace the need to provide opportunities for young people within its remit.
	The proposed Greenspace Strategy should articulate and promote the relationship between the provision of equipped provision for young people, and service provision (such as linking youth provision with youth 'outreach' and sports development work.)
	The proposed Greenspace Strategy should recognise and address the comments highlighted in the consultation underpinning this document about concerns in relation to vandalism, graffiti, and concerns about safety in respect of the use of open space.
R3. OSS&R can assist in the <i>Education</i> of young people in a very general sense through teaching them about the value of healthy active lifestyles, and other life skills.	The proposed Greenspace Strategy should encourage a coordinated approach between the promotion and provision of open space and green corridors. In particular links should be fostered with schools and to integrate green routes into local transport plans aimed at schools.
	The proposed Greenspace Strategy should seek to promote more imaginative use and management of school grounds, both as a learning resource, but also to contribute to local biodiversity.
R4. OSS&R plays a (literally) vital role in the lives of people. There can be overall benefits in terms of reduced spending on <i>Health and Social Care</i> .	See R5.1 (below)
	See R5.3 (below)
R5. Well conceived open spaces and recreation corridors within the City also benefit the natural <i>Environment</i> to the advantage of both wildlife and	Future reviews of the Local Development Framework and (possible) Supplementary Planning Documentation should consider the possibilities for creating both utility and recreation routes for use by foot and bike in both urban

Policy Principle	Description
people. Open space of all kinds can serve equally as a context for and relief from “buildings”.	and rural areas. Creative application of the Informal Green Space and Accessible Natural Green Space components of the proposed overall standard in respect of new development will be possible.
	The proposed Greenspace Strategy should consider the possibility of changing the management regime of some existing spaces (especially in urban areas) that lack access to natural greens space within easy walking distance.
	The proposed Greenspace Strategy and future reviews of the Development Framework must recognise the need when planning for all types of recreation opportunity to take into account people’s preparedness to travel, and requirements for different types of space. For children and young people this means easy access by foot/cycle.
R6. Attractive OSS&R opportunities can help promote the City to potential inward investors to the benefit of both <i>Jobs and Regeneration</i> .	Ensure that the interpretation and application of adopted new standards embrace the importance of open space being of high quality.
	Work with developers and local business interests to maximize the support for the proposed new standards by the local development industry, in particular.
	In conjunction with the proposed Greenspace Strategy consideration should be given to developing a business plan to assist in the long term maintenance of open space.

5.0 ANALYSIS OF ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES AND PRIORITIES

5.1 Introduction

This section is informed by the previous sections in this report, and specifically draws on the following information:

- Research and evidence from the PPG17 study;
- Extensive research carried out by Leicester City Council related to open space;
- Analysis of existing strategies and plans (section 3.3);
- Workshops, meetings and interviews with staff, community groups and other key stakeholders.

The issues, opportunities and priorities are explored in two ways, firstly by type of open space, and secondly by 'strategic themes'. Inevitably there is cross over between the two and this is brought together in the final action plan.

5.2 Types of open space

This section considers issues, opportunities and priorities for each of the key typologies of open space considered in the strategy.

5.2.1 Parks & Gardens

5.2.1.1 Issue 1: Quality

Issues

Leicester has several good quality urban parks located across the City, including a number of parks that, in 2007, have been awarded a Green Flag award for good practice (Abbey Park, Aylestone Hall Gardens, Evington Park, Knighton Park, Watermead Park, Welford Road Cemetery).

It does however, as with most other cities have a number of poor parks, where the quality, management and use by the community is well below standard.

Research (from LCC and the PPG 17 study), has identified that people are generally satisfied with the quality of the larger urban parks in the City, however, there is less satisfaction when it comes to smaller local or pocket parks – those that tend to be on people's doorsteps.

This is a major challenge facing the City Council – how does it maintain, and increase the number of Green Flag parks, without diverting resources from the smaller parks, which are of equal importance to local people?

With the limited resources of the Parks and Green Spaces service, not all open space can be of the highest quality, therefore, priorities and difficult choices have to be made.

Opportunities

Clearly, the most obvious opportunity for improving quality of parks across the City is to spend more money on them. However, the likelihood of additional resources from existing budgets is extremely unlikely.

Therefore, if the City Council is to increase investment in parks, 'new money' will have to be found. The Council has already had significant success in achieving this, through accessing funds from grants, regeneration initiatives and re-directing of internal resources, and this should continue as a priority.

There is however, a significant opportunity to secure capital from receipts from the sale of land and from Section 106 contributions (see section on budgets, funding and income generation).

Priorities

1. Maintain and increase the number of parks with a Green Flag Award, it is suggested that the following parks are considered for Green Flag:
 - Existing sites with Green Flag awards (Abbey Park, Aylestone Hall Gardens, Evington Park, Knighton Park, Watermead Park, Welford Road Cemetery);
 - Potential sites (Western Park, Braunstone Park, Victoria Park, Spinney Hill Park, Humberstone Park).
2. Develop a ten-year investment programme for local parks, so that everyone in Leicester has access to a good quality local park. This can only be achieved by securing additional money (see section 5.3.5).

5.2.1.2 Issue 2: Access

Issues

As part of this Strategy, a 'hierarchy' of parks has been developed, which aims to provide a good distribution and access to both District Parks and Local Parks across the City (see the background paper Quality of Open Space in Leicester).

The analysis has shown that there are gaps in key areas of the City, as follows:

- Central (Westcotes, Castle).
- Central/North (Belgrave, Rushey Mead, Charnwood);
- Central/South (Aylestone, Freeman);
- East (Thurncourt);
- North East (Humberstone & Hamilton);
- South (Eyres Monsell);

Opportunities

A number of existing open spaces have the potential to fill the gaps in the provision of District Parks, these are:

- Aylestone Meadows and Aylestone Hall Gardens;
- Sturdee Road Recreation Ground, linked with Featherstone Drive;
- Hamilton Park;
- Rushey Fields Recreation Ground and Cossington Street Recreation Ground;
- The Rally Park.
- Willowbrook Park, Monks Rest Gardens and Ocean Road Open Space;

Priorities

The priority is to develop improvement plans for each of the potential new District Parks, the implementation of these plans should take account of the recommendations and funding options outlined in the background paper on quality.

5.2.1.3 Issue 3: Staff in parks

Issues

Local and national research has identified that people want to see staff in parks, be this a park keeper, gardener, or park ranger, staff presence comes up time and again as a top priority to encourage people to use parks, and make them feel safer.

Leicester already has grounds maintenance operatives and Parks Officers, but neither of these fully meet the expectation of park users, who want to see a presence in the park on a daily basis. This role used to be fulfilled by the traditional park keeper, and whilst this role in its former guise is no longer affordable or necessarily appropriate, there is certainly a role for the 'modern park keeper'.

The new role is of someone who is based in a park, and has responsibility for overseeing all aspects of its management from ensuring maintenance is effective, to organising community events and providing a face to the service.

Opportunities

Leicester has had considerable success in meeting the community's needs to see staff in parks, and in fact won the CABI Space 'Parkforce' Award in 2006. There is a real opportunity to build on this by maximising staff interface with the public, be this through those carrying out grounds maintenance or Parks Officers.

There is also an opportunity to link this to the emerging hierarchy of parks, for example with all District Parks and clusters of Local Parks having a site presence.

Priorities

1. Enable grounds maintenance staff to 'have more time' to interface with the public;
2. Develop a new role for site based staff with a responsibility for all aspects of the parks management;
3. Provide resources to have a staff presence in all District Parks and all key Local Parks across the City.

5.2.2 Informal open space

Issues

Leicester has large amounts of informal open space across the City, this is in the form of large highway verges, which act as visual buffers, to informal space in housing areas, which also provide visual amenity, but may also be used for informal play or 'kickabouts'.

Whilst these areas can provide visual and recreational value, their management and maintenance can be resource heavy. Furthermore, the quantitative assessment of informal open space shows that there are 7 wards (out of 22), which have an over supply of informal open space against the Leicester standard. These areas, may offer opportunity for alternative uses.

Opportunities

There is an opportunity to look to use informal open space for alternative uses, this may include changing their typology e.g. for providing new play areas where there are gaps in provision, or indeed where there is significant over supply (e.g. Beaumont Leys, Eyres Monsell), to dispose of land for development. Clearly this offers a significant opportunity for securing capital receipts to re-invest in open space and help to meet the investment aspirations of the Greenspace Strategy.

Priorities

1. Carry out a pilot project in one of the wards with a significant over supply of informal open space, to dispose of the land for housing, and securing the capital to improve the quality of other open space in the ward;
2. Map the informal open spaces that have the potential to be 'surplus to requirement', and calculate the land value of this space and what improvements to other space could be achieved.

5.2.3 Outdoor sports facilities

Issues

The quality audit carried out as part of the PPG17 study identified a range of issues related to the quality of outdoor sports provision across the City. Each site has specific needs in terms of improvements, however, key general findings found that the quality of built facilities.

Such as changing rooms was in need of improvement, pitches needed improved drainage and there was a lack of training facilities (e.g. floodlights).

Opportunities

Leicester City Council are currently in negotiation with the Football Foundation to develop a major capital programme to improve outdoor sports facilities within the City. The project, estimated at £12 million, seeks to create 8 hub sites across the City, providing facilities for football and other outdoor sports. The 8 sites are:

- Aylestone Playing Fields
- Aylestone Recreation Ground
- Beaumont Park
- Hamilton Park
- Knighton Park / Welford Road
- New College
- Rushey Fields
- Samworth Academy

Clearly the benefits of this to the City are significant, and would largely resolve the issues around the quality of provision for outdoor sport in the City. If this project is successful, it would offer other opportunities related to green space provision in the City. For example, if a new hub site is created in an area, this may make other spaces currently used for outdoor sport in the area 'surplus to requirement'. This could provide a number of options, including using these spaces for alternative uses (e.g. creating more natural greenspace) or releasing some of the land for development.

Priorities

1. Support the progress of the Football Foundation project to develop hub sites within the City;
2. Following the development of the proposed hub sites across the City carry out a local needs analysis to revisit the findings of Figure 1, considering a wide range of sporting opportunities. Dependant on the results, invest further to raise the quality of the existing under provision.

5.2.4 Natural greenspace

Issues

Across the City, overall, there is a sufficient supply of natural greenspace (just over 20% above the required standard), however, only 6 wards (28%) have sufficient supply. This indicates that provision of natural greenspace is unevenly distributed across the City, with a few large areas making up the contribution.

The main issue related to natural greenspace in the City relates to the management and maintenance of habitats, of particular concern being the need for improved woodland management.

There is also a lack of co-ordination between organisations involved with nature conservation in the City, although the establishment of Groundwork Leicester and Leicestershire and its partnership arrangement with the City Council has started to resolve this.

Opportunities

Developing the partnership with Groundwork Leicester and Leicestershire offers one of the best opportunities for improving the provision and management of natural greenspace in the City. This could be further supported by the establishment of a 'biodiversity forum', which brings together key organisations in the City to co-ordinate an approach to nature conservation and delivery of the Leicester Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).

There are also opportunities to create natural greenspace habitats in existing open spaces, particularly in wards where there is currently an under supply of natural greenspace.

The improvement of existing Local Nature Reserves and the establishment of new reserves offers a significant opportunity to improve the provision of natural greenspace in the City.

Priorities

1. Work with Groundwork Leicester and Leicestershire to develop a programme for improved management and maintenance of natural greenspace in the City, with a particular priority to manage and improve woodlands and shelter belts;
2. The opportunity to create high quality habitats in a number of the larger parks in Leicester (e.g. Western Park, Aylestone Meadows). It is recommended that 'an action plan for nature' project is developed, within its remit would be:
 - secure funds for a pilot project in Western Park to create habitats with good access, interpretation and management;
 - provide environmental education training to staff and develop an outreach programme with local schools and community groups;
3. Establish a nature conservation forum / Steering group for the City;
4. Work with The Groundwork Leicester and Leicestershire to deliver the designation of new LNR's;

5.2.5 Children & Young People's space

5.2.5.1 Introduction

Leicester City Council has already developed a Play Strategy, and this should provide the strategic direction for the provision of play in the City. However, the Greenspace Strategy has an important role in the delivery of facilities and services for play.

Play comes in many guises, from supervised play in an indoor setting such as a toddler group, or outdoors at adventure playgrounds, to outdoor exploration in a number of settings, with parks playing a crucial role in the urban environment for this opportunity.

The Greenspace Strategy focuses on the provision of a range of spaces and facilities aimed specifically at children and young people:

- children's play spaces
- wheels parks
- games areas
- teen areas

5.2.5.2 Issue 1: Spaces for Children

Issues

Traditionally children's play in parks has been based on the provision of equipment in designated play spaces. While Leicester has some wonderful play spaces such as Knighton Park, it also suffers from many small, poor quality, and poorly located equipped playgrounds.

Historically the development of children's play spaces across the City has been determined by localised funding rather than strategic decisions, often linked to housing development and associated planning obligations sometimes duplicating existing facilities close by.

Research has suggested that children and young people want activities that present challenge and risk, and this needs to be reflected in the development and design of new play facilities.

Opportunities

The PPG17 study, Play Strategy and the Greenspace Strategy offer significant opportunity to develop and improve the provision of equipped play spaces in the City. Key opportunities include the removal of smaller areas of play equipment, with a focus on improving fewer larger play areas.

There is also now significant evidence (based on the PPG17 study), to support the need for investing in existing play space and creating larger areas through developer contributions, rather than providing new, small areas.

There is also the opportunity to involve children and young people in the design and development of play spaces, particularly in relation to creating 'risky play'.

Priorities

1. Some of the smaller play spaces that currently exist offer limited play value having only one or two pieces of play equipment. It is therefore recommended that these facilities are removed, the aim will be to take these out and invest in larger playgrounds offering a wider range of play opportunities, experiences and challenges for children of different ages, recognising the fact the children of the same age develop skills and abilities at different rates and often require different levels of risk and challenge in their play.
2. Develop the concept of creating natural play spaces, which can offer plenty of opportunities for imaginative play and bring children back into contact with the natural environment.

3. Allocate resources to involve children and young people in the design process of new play areas, which requires the input of play officers and youth workers where appropriate.

5.2.5.3 Issue 2: Spaces for young people

Issues

In the past, more attention has been given to the provision of spaces for children under the age of 13. At times this has led to conflicts with local residents when young people hang out near their homes or within younger children's play areas, often inadvertently preventing access to that play equipment by the children that it is intended for. It has also left young people feeling that there is nothing for them to do.

Challenging equipment and games areas provide avenues for exercise and gaining physical fitness, while seating and shelters provide places for hanging out and meeting friends.

Opportunities

Leicester City Council have already been pro-active in providing facilities for young people, with a number of facilities including wheels parks, teen shelters and ball courts located across the City. The Greenspace Strategy provides the opportunity to build on this and ensure provision for young people remains on the agenda and a priority for investment.

Wheels parks are extremely popular as interest in bikes and skateboards continues to increase. Research shows that young people will travel to get to good wheels park facilities. They can also attract a significant number of spectators, the proposal for a 'Street Sports' facility at Braunstone Park, in partnership with the Braunstone Community Association, will help to meet this demand.

The games areas that exist in the City are well used. They can vary from being a single basketball post to a full multi-use games area. The amount of equipment provided will depend on location, other nearby facilities and the views of potential users and local residents.

Research shows that teenagers want a place to sit and chat to friends but that while traditional teen shelters can meet this requirement more could be done to provide something that young people feel they can own and therefore respect. More involvement by young people in the choice and location of shelter or seating is required.

Specific teenage areas are welcomed by other park users particularly those whose children use playgrounds. The aim will be to provide a teen focus point on the same site as a children's playground although sited apart from it.

Priorities

- I. Provide diverse, exciting and challenging spaces for young people, including equipment, wheels parks and shelters, including:

- a good quality wheels park should be provided within 2km of all homes;
- a multi-use games within 1km of all homes;
- provide teenage areas, where possible, on sites where children's playgrounds are located including seating areas and a range of challenging equipment

5.3 Key themes

This section looks at key themes and recommendations that have emerged from the document and from consultation.

5.3.1 Getting more people into parks and green spaces

Issues

National and local research has shown that people feel safer in open spaces that are well used, which encourages them to use them more frequently and more often. In contrast, parks which are under-used tend to spiral into decline, less use encourages more anti-social behaviour and in turn use continues to decline.

The condition, management and maintenance of open space is crucial in getting people into parks, however, there are many social factors which influence peoples' willingness to use green space, from the fear of crime, to cultural barriers.

Therefore, in addition to good quality well maintained open spaces, there is a need to maximise opportunities for encouraging people to use green space more often.

Opportunities

Understanding what customer needs are in relation to open space is a good starting point for developing opportunities to encourage more people to use green spaces. Leicester City Council already has a significant amount of customer research and information (see greenspace background paper 'Partnerships, volunteers and wider community participation').

Events can provide excellent opportunities to encourage people to use green spaces, particularly those people who may not usually visit them. Leicester City Council has a good track record of both supporting others to put on events, and delivering events themselves.

Priorities

1. Work more closely with the events team to deliver events targeted at groups who may currently feel unsafe using green space, and in green spaces which are currently under used;
2. Use customer feedback to develop and improve the parks events programme. The focus being on fewer, quality events with high impact, encouraging people who may not normally visit parks.
3. Continue to produce an annual marketing plan for the parks service, identifying customer research priorities and promotional opportunities for the service;
4. Employ a Marketing Officer for the service, who sits on the management team and is responsible for linking customer needs with service priorities and promotion;

5.3.2 Safer Parks

A background paper has been produced as part of the Greenspace Strategy which considers crime and safety in parks. The key findings and recommendations of the report include:

- Continue with the involvement in the crime and disorder reduction partnership (CDRP) as follows:
 - Representation at the anti-social behaviour (ASB) delivery group;
 - Representation at the violent crime delivery group;
- Development work with the Partnership development officer at CDRP;
- Work with the ASB delivery group to influence priorities;
- Undertake a review of data collection within the department;
- Identify processes to improve monitoring of statistics relating to crime, vandalism, anti-social behaviour and criminal damage;
- Look at ways of developing the evidence based system and working with the police to ensure when the new police non emergency number goes live parks are acknowledged on the collecting system and accurate data can be collected and used to influence priorities;
- Use the tool of visual audits on a regular basis to ensure a localised multi agency approach to problem solving. Develop to ensure they become more community led;
- Make crime reduction and community safety an inherent message in press and marketing materials and releases.

It should be noted that the Parks Service have made considerable progress in this area already, for example, the Service is a key partner on the inter-agency Community Safety Bureau Joint Management Group.

5.3.3 Better quality and range of facilities

Issues

The provision of better quality and a better range of facilities is really the driving force of the whole Greenspace Strategy. Leicester's previous Greenspace Strategy (which expired in 2006) identified the need to develop management plans for all key green spaces in the City, as a driver for improving facilities and management.

The service has been very successful in writing management plans, with plans in place for the majority of green spaces in the City.

However, this strategy needs to focus on delivering the management plans, and linking in individual site requirements with strategic needs of green space across the City.

The strategic considerations have been outlined in this plan, but this should also consider service delivery through the Parks and Green Spaces Service Improvement Plan.

There is also a need to better understand how front line services are delivered, particularly in terms of grounds maintenance. For example, at present, Parks put considerable resources into grounds maintenance of highway land and housing land. Whilst this is a valuable and essential service, the resource provided by the Parks Service far outweighs the income received from those departments responsible for the land holdings.

Opportunities

Whilst Leicester has achieved much in terms of delivering management plans for all of the major open spaces in the City, there is a real opportunity to make these plans more user friendly and hopefully more deliverable.

Key to the successful implementation of management plans is securing the necessary funding to deliver capital improvements, but also ensuring core services such as grounds maintenance are delivered effectively to improve the quality of open spaces.

Priorities

1. Develop a new format for parks management plans, making use of maps, drawings, photos, illustrations and art to show the priorities for the park. It is recommended that a 'pilot park management plan' is developed along these lines with a view to rolling this out across the City. There has already been a move towards this, with Green Flag Parks having their management plans re-written for the 2007 application round;
2. Develop pilot project for interactive management plan using GIS;

5.3.4 Working with the community

Issues

Leicester works with a number of parks 'Friends Groups' from across the City, they are all different ranging from small informal groups to larger long established groups who are active in fund raising and community activities (e.g. Knighton Park).

Clearly, such groups can bring considerable benefit to improving open spaces, but to be effective they can require considerable support from Officers, and in some cases can be non-representative of wider community views and aspirations for green spaces.

Opportunities

Working with the community to jointly improve green space can result in long-term benefits for both the Council and the community. Clearly, the Council can benefit from understanding community needs and thus deliver services more effectively to meet those needs, they may also benefit financially as many groups have been successful in securing resources for green spaces.

The community can also benefit, those who are directly involved in Friends Groups, may well benefit from engagement in community activity, which can provide both social and educational benefits. Furthermore, members of the community not directly involved with the group may benefit from improved facilities and from events that take place on green spaces.

Therefore, the Council should maximise the opportunity to work with community groups, but acknowledge that to achieve this successfully, considerable staff resources should be allocated to develop the capacity of such groups to work effectively.

Priorities

1. Allocate additional resources to develop new Friends Groups in wards where there is currently no or little participation from community groups;
2. Improve links to existing Friends Groups, and consider establishing a 'Parks Forum', which enables groups from around the City to get together to share ideas and networking;
3. Carry out a pilot project to work with one of the established parks Friends Group who would be willing to develop the capacity to self manage a park. This will need significant time investment of staff time, and the necessary skills for capacity building and training of the community group. The pilot project should seek to develop a group, which is representative of the community that use the park, including BME and young people. Such a project could take a number of years to reach fruition, and a long-term commitment to such an initiative is required.

5.3.5 Resources (Budgets, income generation & funding)

5.3.5.1 Introduction

The aspirations and priorities outlined in the Greenspace Strategy require considerable resources to be delivered successfully. The resources required to deliver the strategy include considerable capital investment to deliver quality improvements, additional revenue to improve management and maintenance of green space, and additional staff resources to deliver the Strategy.

If the Greenspace Strategy is to have any credibility, whilst it must be aspirational, it must also be deliverable, and the key to deliverability is resources.

This section will explore the options available to the Council to secure such resources, but for this to be effective, there will need to be considerable buy in from Senior Officers and Politicians within the organisation.

This section will consider the following funding options:

- Section 106 money;
- External funding;
- Capital receipts from land sale;
- Revenue funding.

5.3.5.2 Section 106 money

Section 106 contributions offer a significant opportunity to secure funds from new development for open space. It is recommended that Leicester City Council have a clear section 106 policy related to contributions for green space that helps to deliver the objectives of the Greenspace Strategy. Further information on this is provided in the Greenspace Strategy background paper 'Planning and Open Space'. These funds should be directed at improving the quality of existing facilities in wards where the PPG17 study has identified a sufficient quantity of green space. New green space should only be created in those wards where there is an under supply of open space or where the open space needs of a new development would change the ward from having sufficient quantity of open space to an under supply.

In addition to the above process, the planning system does allow other mechanisms for securing funds for green space, for example:

- Annual open spaces maintenance charge, levied on residents (e.g. Hamilton area, each property contributes an average of £150 p.a. which is put into a trust fund to maintain open space);
- Growth points – currently available for green infrastructure to facilitate development (e.g. riverside regeneration area, Abbey Meadows regeneration area).

5.3.5.3 External funding

Leicester City Council has been very successful in attracting funding from external grants, including the Lottery, Neighbourhood Renewal and European funding. However, the availability of external funding changes on a regular basis, often driven by government initiatives and priorities. Undoubtedly, the availability of external funding will continue to change throughout the lifetime of this strategy, but it is an important source of funding, and should be reviewed on an ongoing basis to identify where external grants could help deliver the strategy.

At present, some of the key sources of external funding include:

- Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). Schemes such as 'Parks for People', offer opportunity for restoration of parks with historic value. Funding of up to 75% can be realised, for projects up to £5M.
- 'Your Heritage', another HLF scheme for projects up to £100K (max £50K grant), particularly relevant for open space with historic aspects, education, community involvement and interpretation.
- BIG Lottery funding. Has an 'environment' strand, which is likely to include grants for environmental improvements, including public open space.
- Local Groundwork Trusts, Wildlife Trusts, Sports Trusts, Community Groups etc. are able to access a range of funds which are not available to Local Authorities. Leicester City Council should formally engage with these organisations to seek joint funding opportunities. An example would include the

'Barclays Spaces for Sport', which is administered nationally by The Groundwork Trust.

- Football Foundation provides grants for Capital and Revenue projects, which support football development. Liaison with the Football Association is also recommended who also provide smaller grants and advice.
- Natural England (formerly Countryside Agency, English Nature), have various grants and advise available and discussions with the local office should take place.

5.3.5.4 Capital receipts from land sales

Significant funding is required to deliver the improvements related to the hierarchy of parks, let alone the funding required to improve the Greenspace Strategy overall. This will not be achieved through existing resources, section 106 and grant funding alone, and as such consideration must be given to releasing land for development, and using the capital receipts to deliver the aspirations of the Greenspace Strategy. For this to be successful, it would need to become an adopted Council policy.

Clearly there are many issues related to this, including where land could be released for sale, how this is received by local people and the considerable organisational and political risks that will arise from such a move.

In terms of delivering the aspirations related to the hierarchy of parks, there are some key opportunities and considerations related to the sites having the potential to become a new District Park.

There are some basic principles to be followed in considering this approach, which are:

- Land should only be disposed of in wards where the PPG 17 study has identified an over supply of a type of open space;
- If an over supply of a type of green space is identified in a ward, consideration should first be given to identifying any under supply of other typologies in that area, and assessing if the site proposed for disposal has the potential for a change of type to meet any shortfalls;
- If any green space is to be considered for disposal, it should fall into the category of 'low quality – low value', and have little potential for improvement;
- Consideration should be given to disposing of 'parts' of green space, for example an inaccessible end;
- Close communication and liaison with the local community is essential, it is recommended that any plans or proposals clearly demonstrate the resulting benefits of any land disposal.

5.3.5.5 Revenue funding

Leicester City Council already struggles to meet its commitments to funding the management and maintenance of open space across the City. Recent work by the Parks and Green Spaces service has demonstrated how the service is subsidising work for internal clients, particularly with regard to highway and housing land. This Strategy recommends considerable re-investment in green space, which is largely capital driven. However, any capital improvements will have an implication on revenue funding.

Re-investment in facilities does not necessarily mean lower maintenance costs, in fact quite the reverse occurs with new facilities requiring new and additional maintenance with additional costs.

This is particularly relevant to any projects where external funding is applied for, e.g. HLF, who want to see a management plan demonstrating an enhanced maintenance regime for any capital investment. In some projects, this additional funding could be as much as 10% of the total grant, which the Council would have to fund from its own resources.

Therefore, Leicester City Council needs a solution to improving the revenue available for maintenance. The Council does receive contributions through commuted sums for new areas of open space. There are also opportunities through roof tax endowments and annual maintenance charges levied from new development. However, there are no other obvious sources of boosting the revenue budget.

For Leicester City Council to demonstrate commitment to delivering this strategy, and demonstrate significant benefits in terms of securing external funds and spending S106 money effectively, there needs to be a commitment from the administration to direct its resources to fund the revenue implications.

Consideration could also be given to using funds from the sale of land (see above), to establish endowment funds, or its own internal commuted sum to fund revenue costs.

Finally, Leicester City Council could consider improving the income generated from green space. At present, income from concessions, kiosks, and sports lettings does come back to the service. However, there are always opportunities to increase this, particularly if there are incentives. For example, if a Parks Officer is successful in securing additional income, they should have a direct say in deciding how that money is spent.

5.3.6 Staff development

Issues

The importance of securing the appropriate level of funding to deliver the strategy has already been acknowledged, but as important is having the right staff to take forward the strategy. All staff within the service have a role to play in delivering the strategy.

Priorities

- I. Staff development – development of an in house staff development programme, providing the correct skill mix to deliver the wide range of services parks offer.

Potential to carry out an audit of the skills required to deliver the Greenspace Strategy and the service, then look at where there are skills gaps in the workforce, and how best those gaps can be filled. Options include in house training, shadowing, training and accreditation through both academic and practical courses. Opportunities to form links with existing education providers e.g. LANTRA exist and are currently being better developed.

2. Allocate resources to develop the parks apprenticeship scheme. Adopt a pro-active approach to engage BME and women to encourage participation. This will require outreach work, and potential partnerships with BME / women’s groups within Leicester;
3. Carry out benchmarking with similar schemes where BME groups have been encouraged to participate in horticultural training;
4. Establish links with BME groups and women’s groups to encourage greater participation in the staff work force. There is potential to link this in with the work needed to encourage greater participation within the parks apprenticeship scheme, and develop partnerships with other groups / agencies to develop this.

5.3.7 Partnerships

Issues

To successfully deliver the Greenspace Strategy Leicester Parks and Green Spaces Service needs to work in partnership with other services from within the Council, and with other organisations in the City.

Opportunities

The following table outlines some of the key partnerships that need to be considered:

Communities of Interest	Suppliers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park users and interest (Friends) groups • Disability representative groups • Black Development Agency • Young People and city play organisations • Allotment holders and Associations • Sports people and clubs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grounds maintenance machinery, equipment etc • Materials, play equipment • Concessionaires (e.g. caterers)
Service Delivery	Funding and Influencing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust • British Trust for Conservation Volunteers • Neighbourhood Renewal partnerships • Event organisers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CABE Space • The Groundwork Trust • GreenSpace • Heritage Lottery Fund • Natural England (formerly the Countryside Agency and English Nature) • English Heritage • Environment Agency

Priorities

1. Develop the partnership with Groundwork Leicester and Leicestershire as a key partner in delivering nature conservation in the City;
2. Developing a pilot project with Groundwork Trust Leicester and Leicestershire to explore opportunities for them to manage a park in the City, working in partnership with the Council and the local community.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION PLAN

This section draws on all the issues and priorities highlighted in the previous sections of the Greenspace Strategy. It is presented as an action plan with estimated resource requirements. Each action is grouped in relation to the main strategic objective of the strategy to which it best fits (2.2.5). Each action will be subject to further detailed assessment through relevant service plans and project briefs as required.

Objective 1: To develop a hierarchy of parks and green spaces, with a framework for prioritisation and resource allocation for management and improvement

Key action	Staff resources	Core skills required	Revenue implications	Capital implications
Develop and implement improvement plans for six new District Parks in the City	Staff time to develop plans. Potential for dedicated Officer.	Project Management Financial Management	Staff time Additional costs for maintaining parks	Significant investment required estimated £6-10M
Pursue the development of the 8 hub sites for the provision of outdoor sport across the City, and seek alternative uses for existing outdoor sports spaces that become 'surplus to requirement'	Cross department working with Parks and Sports. Project will require dedicated Project Manager	Project Management Business Planning Sports Development	Additional staff time Additional costs for maintenance	Significant investment required, estimated £12M (potential 50% funding from Football Foundation)
Develop GIS linked interactive management plans for open spaces in the City	Staff time for writing management plans and developing GIS system	IT skills (GIS) Management Planning	Staff time	Additional IT equipment (est. £10K)
Secure funding to match fund external grants, and ensure the strategy maximises the opportunity to maximise external grants.	Required as core role of Parks Officers	Fundraising	Staff time	'Ring fenced' capital funding to match fund

Objective 2: To understand and meet the needs of community attitudes and expectations in providing green space in the City

Key action	Staff resources	Core skills required	Revenue implications	Capital implications
Develop a pilot project to explore community management of a park, lead by Groundwork Leicester and Leicestershire	Lead Officer required, estimated 15% of work time	Community Participation Project Management	Funds required to support project (est. £20K p.a)	May be required to bring park up to 'standard', cost to be confirmed
Adopt a pro-active approach to encourage greater representation from women and BME groups within the parks service	Lead Officer required, estimated 10% of work time	Community Participation Equalities	Advertising costs (£2K p.a)	None
Develop a parks forum for community groups with an interest in open spaces	Lead Officer required (20% work time), plus support from Parks Officers and administration	Community Participation	Officer and administrative time	None
Develop a role for the 'modern park keeper' to deliver front line services in key parks in the City	Lead Officer required (30% of work time), additional training of staff	Community Participation Horticulture	Employment of additional staff (estimated 6 no @ £25K p.a)	None
Work with the events team to deliver events in open spaces where there is currently little community use and engagement	Core role for Parks Officers. Joint working with events team	Event management Understanding customer needs	Budget for additional community events (£10K p.a)	None
Employ a Marketing Officer to lead research, understanding of customer needs and drive service priorities	Employment of dedicated Officer, or more time from 'shared' Officer	Marketing	Additional staff costs (est. £30K p.a)	None

Objective 3: To provide standards of green space provision which are adopted within the Local Development Framework

Key action	Staff resources	Core skills required	Revenue implications	Capital implications
Develop and adopt a section 106 policy for open space, which will help to deliver the objectives of the Greenspaces Strategy.	Lead Officer required (est 15% work time), joint project with planning required	Planning Project Management Financial Management	Staff time	None

Objective 4: To ensure Leicester builds on its strengths in green space management, and builds on its status of delivering good practice in green space provision

Key action	Staff resources	Core skills required	Revenue implications	Capital implications
Deliver a pilot project in Beaumont Leys and/or Eyres Monsell to dispose of an area of amenity open space for housing, with a view to using the capital to improve other open space in the area	Lead Officer required (40% of work time)	Community Participation Project Management Financial Management Political Management	Staff time	Potential to raise capital - needs further assessment
Develop the partnership with Groundwork Leicester and Leicestershire to improve the management of natural greenspace in the City	Lead Officer required (20% of work time)	Partnership working Project Management Nature Conservation	Staff time Additional resources for management (est £15K p.a.)	Potential capital required for works (est. £100k)
Develop a staff development programme to ensure all staff have the right skills set to deliver the priorities in the Greenspace Strategy	Core role of each section manager (5% of time)	Staff Development Communication	Allocated budget for staff development- est. £50K p.a.	None
Allocate additional resources to develop and improve the parks apprenticeship scheme	Lead Officer Required (10% of work time). Time for current employees to act as effective mentors	Mentoring Communication	Additional staff to cover for additional time spent mentoring (2 f.t.e); Additional resources for apprentices	None
Keep existing Green Flag awards and identify a further 5 sites with potential, to achieve a Green Flag within the life time of the strategy	Lead Officer required (15% work time)	Management Planning Financial Management	Significant increased management costs (est. £50K per site p.a.)	Some sites will require capital investment - est. £1-2M

Objective 5: To improve the accessibility of Leicester's parks and green spaces

Key action	Staff resources	Core skills required	Revenue implications	Capital implications
Allocate resources to establish 8 new Local Nature Reserves within the City	Lead Officer required (20% work time)	Nature Conservation Project Management	Increased management costs (est. £80K p.a)	Capital investment to improve standard (est. £100K)
Dispose of play areas which only have 2 or 3 items of equipment and target future funds to creating fewer, larger high quality play facilities	Lead Officer required (30% of work time)	Project Management Financial Management	Potential decrease in revenue, although likely to balance additional spend on new sites	Funds required for new sites, (est. £4M programme)
Provide diverse, exciting and challenging spaces for young people, including equipment, wheels parks and shelters, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a good quality wheels park should be provided within 2km of all homes; - a multi-use games within 1km of all homes; - provide teenage areas, where possible, on sites where children's playgrounds are located including seating areas and a range of challenging equipment 	Lead Office required (10% of work time)	Project Management Financial Management	Increased management costs	As above
Seek to create natural play areas as any new park improvement projects or play area improvements	Lead Office required (5% of work time)	Project Management Financial Management	Increased management costs	As above

7.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

The following section outlines the key risks associated with the Parks and Greenspace Strategy. For each risk, an assessment of its probability and impact is made (scored High, Medium, Low), and a recommendation for mitigation made. The assessment has focused on significant risks (i.e. medium/High probability and medium/high impact).

Risk	Probability	Impact	Mitigation
<i>Political</i>			
Currently there is good political support for parks across the City, a change in administration could reduce this support.	Med	High	Senior Officers to continue gaining political support for parks. Involve members in projects. Ongoing promotion in press.
Failure to adopt the policies within the strategy, particularly more challenging policies such as disposal of land. This will mean the strategy will be difficult to deliver, and risks 'sitting on the shelf'.	High	High	This requires considerable political lobbying and support from Senior Officers to Senior Politicians.
Change in policy from central government in relation to allocation of section 106 money, where money will be paid direct to central government and distributed from there.	High	High	Difficult to mitigate this change in policy, however, unlikely to be adopted for 2-3 years, therefore, quick adoption of a new section 106 Policy for open space would secure significant funds before the new policy is considered.
<i>Economic</i>			
Failure to secure money through section 106 funds will impact the deliverability of the strategy.	Med	High	Section 106 Policy needs to be written, adopted and implemented. Senior Officers need to ensure this is completed as a priority.
Lack of sufficient funds provided for maintenance of housing and highways land, means resources diverted away from parks.	Med	High	The reporting of the financial implications of this need to be understood at a Senior level and resources allocated from the relevant departments to deliver the service required.
Failure to secure money through disposal of land.	High	High	Requires significant political support, and support from asset management department.
<i>Social</i>			
Failure to meet customer needs, and deliver services people want.	Med	Med	Carry on with customer research programme, ensure results are used to drive service improvement and change.
Unequal access to parks and open spaces across the City.	Med	Med	Implement the recommendations in the strategy for improving District Parks, and providing quality open spaces across the City.

<i>Environmental</i>			
Failure to effectively manage natural greenspace in the City, especially the extensive tree stock. Resulting in a reduction in biodiversity, and a significant management problem in the long-term future.	High	Med	Deliver recommendations in the strategy related to nature conservation, particularly the development of the partnership with Groundwork, and the establishment of a biodiversity forum.
Pressure for development (housing, retail, industrial), put added pressure on open spaces, including loss of open space and potential over use.	Med	High	Adopt the policies outlined in the PPG17 study to ensure the proposed minimum standards of open space are adopted. These standards need to be adopted as Council policy.