Green Space Strategy
for Warwick District 2012 – 2026

Warwick District Council

December 2012

Contents

SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This is the first Green Space Strategy for Warwick district and has been prepared to help inform a series of recommendations and provide a strategic direction for the current and future provision of green space within Warwick district. The strategy is based on a comprehensive evidence base and considers not only the physical provision of the integrated elements of parks, natural areas, play spaces, green corridors and amenity areas but also a set of principles to meet future challenges and make things happen. The strategy focuses on the role of the principal provider and policy maker for green space within Warwick district – Warwick District Council. The strategy establishes an overall, vision and framework for achieving key recommendations between 2012 and 2026. The Green Space Strategy has been produced to align with the timescales and vision outlined within Warwick District Council's Fit for the Future/Sustainable Community Strategy.

1.2 The purpose of the Green Space Strategy

- This strategy is a key step towards protecting and improving Warwick district's accessible green space.
- It provides a vision, aims, a robust evidence base and a set of principles that, together, provide a strategic framework for the planning and management of accessible green space.
- The strategy aims to coordinate and improve decision-making in relation to the planning and management of green space. It will guide and amplify the Local Development Framework policy on green space.
- It provides a strategic framework to guide and inform investment and management of green space by the Council, and other green space stakeholders over the period until 2026.
- The strategy identifies ways in which green spaces can be improved. The strategy sets out to balance accessible green space provision with community needs and aspirations. Applying this strategy will allow us to coordinate our efforts and resources to improve the quantity, quality, use and appreciation of green spaces. Its implementation will help to secure attractive, safe, and easily accessible spaces for all to enjoy.
- The strategy will reinforce and promote the key role green space plays in supporting our health and well being, providing access to nature, responding to climate change, and providing an educational resource and place for community activity

1.3 Links to Local Planning Policy

The current Local Plan 1996-2011 Policies SC13 Open Space and Recreation Improvements, DAP3 Protecting Nature Conservation, Geology and Geomorphology and DAP11 Protecting Historic Parks and Gardens are the key planning policies to which this document relates.

This Green Space Strategy, together with its evidence base, will inform the identification of strategically and locally important accessible green spaces.

The Green Space Strategy will also inform the emerging new Local Plan relating to green space, and the associated Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) which will provide supporting evidence on the infrastructure requirements relevant to the plan. A key element of the IDP relates to 'Green Infrastructure' and details the ways in which green spaces, shelterbelts, canal, road and rail embankments and other areas of the natural environment relate to each other within the district and connect with neighbouring areas. The Green Space Strategy sits within this framework and specifically deals with how green spaces will be managed.

This Green Space Strategy will inform the requirement for the provision of new, or the enhancement of existing, green space and children's play space. It will inform the identification of shortfalls in provision and sets out the wider aims and objectives for green space and play space. The green space quantity standards set out in this strategy have been incorporated into the Open Space Supplementary Planning Document which is to be applied to new development in the Warwick district.

1.4 Value of green space

The green spaces in and around our towns and rural areas, improve the health, wellbeing and quality of life of individuals. Their place is at the heart of our communities, helping to make them stronger and safer and ensuring that the places in which we live and work are more sustainable and attractive. They inspire young and old alike, shaping our views on where we live and who we are, encouraging responsibility, self-worth, environmental stewardship and civic pride.

Green spaces are important to people and the environment for a host of reasons and provide places:

- Where people can become healthier;
- Where the natural and built environments can connect;
- Where people can meet, engage and integrate;
- That help us learn social skills with our peers;
- That stimulate minds, helping us explore and learn new skills;
- Which can help counteract the effects of climate change;
- That act as a focus for community events and activities;
- That host and preserve our shared cultural heritage;
- That contribute positively to the conservation of habitats and species;
- Which enhance the visual value of our landscape and townscape.

1.5 The scope of the Green Space Strategy

The focus of the strategy is unrestricted green space for which there is legitimate public access and which provides recreational benefit. Warwick District Council owns the majority of this accessible green space in the urban areas, while the remainder is owned and managed mainly by Town and Parish Councils. Therefore the Strategy considers six different types of green space – amenity green space, cemeteries and churchyards, children's/youth areas, green corridors, parks and gardens and semi- natural areas

The strategy does not consider green spaces that are not freely accessible to the public, including allotments and school grounds. It also excludes hard landscaped civic areas or town squares which are covered by other emerging complementary town centre plans. Even though allotments have been identified in quantity terms as part of the parks audit, it is felt appropriate to undertake a separate supply and demand assessment for this type of provision.

In addition, private sports facilities have not been specifically included, although it is recognised the use and importance of such facilities contribute to wider sport provision and where there is under provision of unrestricted green space, then plans may need to be formulated to work alongside private sports providers. A separate Playing Pitch Strategy is currently being prepared.

It is intended that the strategy will recognise the importance and value of existing green spaces within rural areas of the Warwick district, as there is a current absence of strategic links with complementary service providers such as Parish Councils.

Finally, Institutional land, agricultural land and highway verges have not been considered as part of this strategy.

The Council recognises the contribution of all these green spaces as part of the wider green infrastructure network of the district and the benefits they offer for wildlife, leisure, gardening and local food production. Whilst not included in this strategy, further studies will be undertaken to identify their future provision, e.g. sports pitch study, green infrastructure and allotment provision.
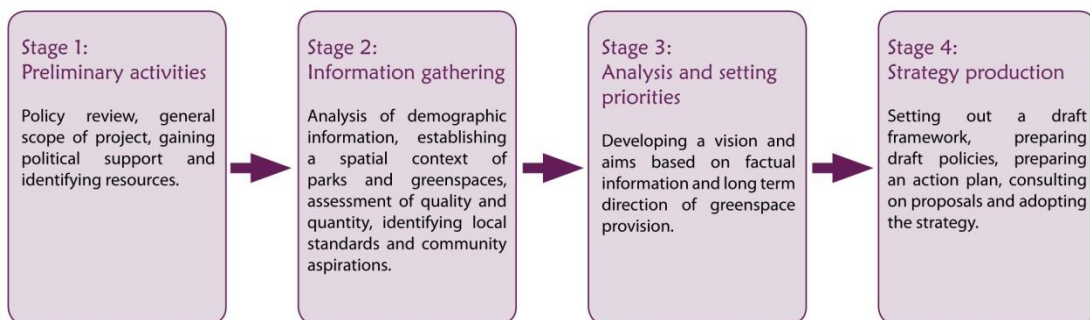
The Strategy does not present detailed proposals for individual green spaces at this stage. Instead it sets out a series of key principles. These will be used to implement the recommendations of the Strategy within a separate Green Space Action Plan, which will be updated every five years, and will provide an opportunity to monitor and review progress.

1.6 How we developed the strategy

This document represents the culmination of planning, research and evidence gathering over a period of time, to inform the first definitive Green Space Strategy for Warwick district. The strategy is a natural extension of detailed analysis conducted by Warwick District Council in 2008 as part of the Warwick District Parks and Open Space Audit, in fulfilment of the Council's obligation to provide a robust evidence base for Local Development Framework. The audit focused on understanding the quality, quantity and accessibility of green space within the Warwick District and was completed in accordance with Planning Policy Guidance No 17.

In addition, the Council's Neighbourhood Services Departments recognise that, as well as being able to address the recommendations made within the Parks and Open Spaces Audit, there are also a number of future challenges for the management of green space which need to be considered both from a local and national perspective. Within this context, WDC has taken a proactive stance to develop an integrated Green Space Strategy to assist in the evaluation and planning of green space policies for Warwick district.

The process of completing the strategy has been undertaken using the methodology outlined in figure 1.

Stage 1: Preliminary activities	Stage 2: Information gathering	Stage 3: Analysis and setting priorities	Stage 4: Strategy production
Policy review, general scope of project, gaining political support and identifying resources.	Analysis of demographic information, establishing a spatial context of parks and greenspaces, assessment of quality and quantity, identifying local standards and community aspirations.	Developing a vision and aims based on factual information and long term direction of greenspace provision.	Setting out a draft framework, preparing draft policies, preparing an action plan, consulting on proposals and adopting the strategy.

The format, style and narrative of the Warwick District Green Space Strategy is deliberately focussed, and is based upon best practice guidance outlined within CABE Space's 'Green space strategies: a good practice guide'.

Key points

- The scope of the Strategy considers publicly accessible green spaces, and the measures needed to ensure they meet future demand.
- Green spaces, whilst not a statutory service, have a valuable contribution to make to local priorities including health, well-being and environment
- The Strategy has been based on best practice and has been informed by the Parks and Open Spaces Audit.
- The Strategy will also inform the emerging new Local Plan relating to green space and green infrastructure more widely.

SECTION TWO: STRATEGIC CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

The Green Space Strategy for Warwick district needs to be considered in the context of the relevant local, regional and national policy. As part of the Parks and Open Spaces Audit an extensive policy review was carried out exploring all related policies and the impact they could have on green space in the Warwick district. Table 1 provides an updated summary overview of the policies and strategies which have had an impact on this document. Further information is provided within Appendix 3 of the Warwick Parks and Open Spaces Audit 2008.

National	Regional	Local
– Green Spaces Taskforce 'Green Spaces, Better Places'. Department of Transport, leisure and Regions (DTLR) 2003 – Living Places: Cleaner, Safer, Greener, Office of the deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) 2003 – Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation; – White Paper: Communities in Control; – The Six Acre Standard, National Playing Fields Association (2001); – Natural England's Access to Natural green space Targets (ANGST); – Green Flag Award – Natural England – Green Infrastructure Guidance – Natural Environment White Paper, 2011	– Warwickshire Climate Change Strategy – West Midlands Regional Climate Change Action Plan 2007. – Coventry, Solihull & Warwickshire Habitat Biodiversity Audit; – Warwickshire County Council Biodiversity Strategy; – Rights of Way and Recreational Highway Strategy 2011-2026	– Climate Change Adaptation Strategy February 2011 – Local Development Framework; – Open Spaces SPD 2009 – Sustainable Community Strategy 2008 - 2026; – Play Strategy 2007 – 2012; – An Arts Strategy for WDC 2009 – 2013; – Trees and Woodland Strategy; – Youth Facilities Study; – Parks and Open Spaces Audit March 2008. – Green Infrastructure Study – Green Infrastructure Delivery Assessment – Volunteering Policy (draft)

Table 1: Summary of policies and strategies

Since this policy review was undertaken the national, regional and local context has changed. The following is a brief summary of those changes and how they relate to green space.

2.2 National Guidance

2.2.1 PPG 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation

The Government's revised Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (2002) emphasises that open spaces underpin people's quality of life and are important in assisting urban renaissance, promoting social inclusion and contributing to health and

well-being. The Companion Guide to PPG17 entitled 'Assessing Needs and Opportunities' shows national policy objectives for open space including a requirement for planning authorities to undertake local assessments of need and audits of provision and to set local standards for Green Space provision. The Companion Guide sets out a potential route to achieve this goal.

2.2.2 Emerging National Planning Policy Framework

The emerging National Planning Policy Framework, which is expected to replace PPG17, also highlights the importance of planning for access to good quality open spaces and how opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. It recommends that planning policies should identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities in the local area. The information gained from this assessment of needs and opportunities should be used to set locally derived standards for the provision of open space, sports and recreational facilities.

2.2.3 The Climate Change Act 2008

This act requires local authorities to have regard to climate change mitigation and adaptation in carrying out all of their functions, and to deliver climate change adaptation measures.

2.2.4 The Public Health White Paper 2010

This act promotes the protection and community ownership of green spaces, and improved access to land so that people can grow their own food.

2.2.5 Flood and Water Management Act 2010

This act has been introduced in response to the floods of 2007. It includes measures to encourage the greater use of sustainable drainage systems by removing the automatic right to connect to sewers. This is likely to increase the importance of green spaces as assets that help us to manage surface drainage.

2.2.6 Localism Act 2011

This recently enacted piece of legislation's intention is to enable local communities to deliver the facilities they need, and enable more involvement in their local areas.

2.2.7 Natural Environment White Paper 2011

This should also provide strong policy support for effective and functional green infrastructure, as well as enhancing potential to secure funding for green Infrastructure through development. Green space can be seen as a category of green infrastructure.
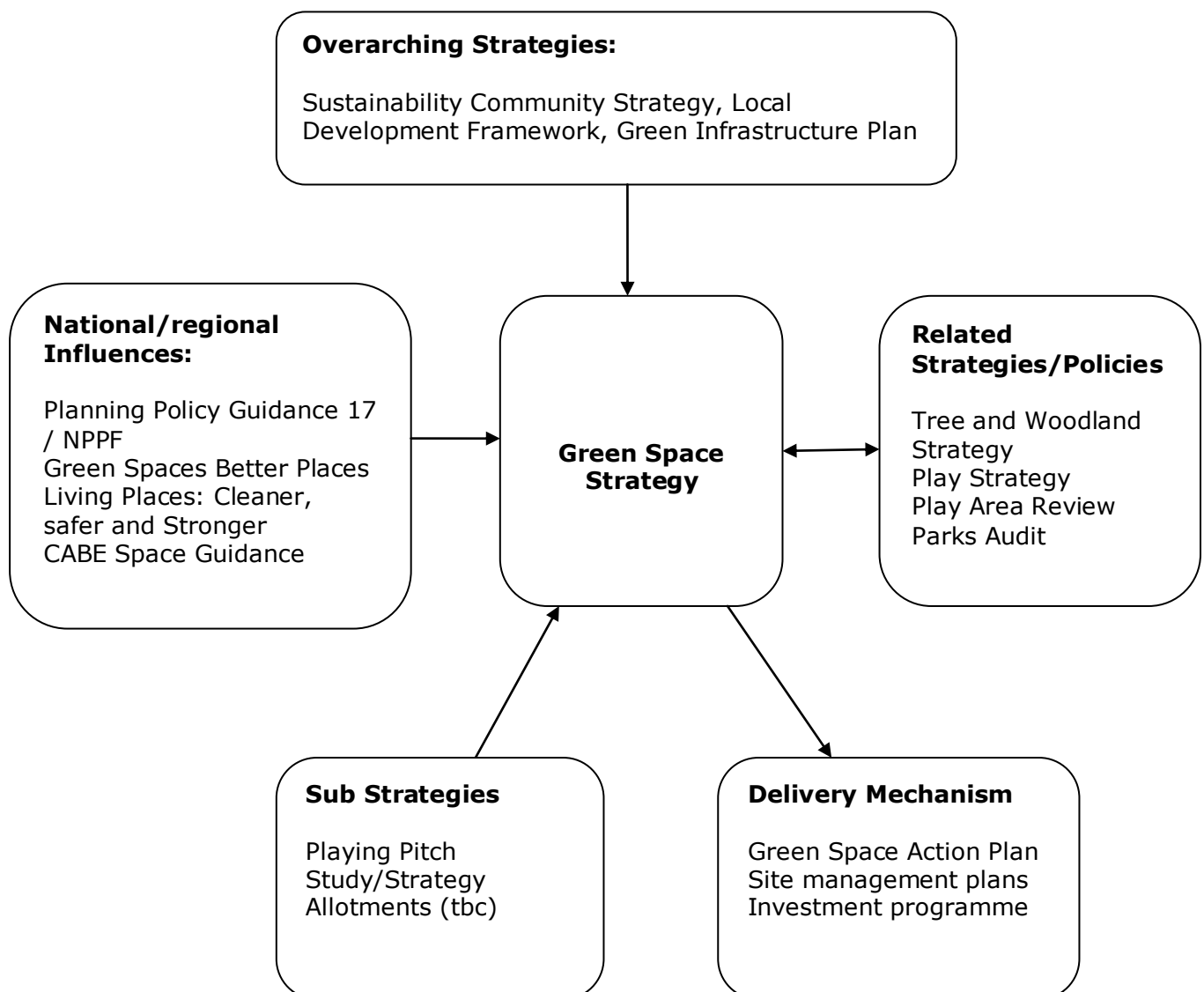
2.2.8 Natural England

Natural England promotes access to natural open space for biodiversity, recreation and well-being now and in the future. They have suggested a target of at least 2 hectares of accessible natural space within five minutes' walk of every home in England.

2.2.9 Sport England Active Design Guide

Sport England has promoted the importance of well-designed places to encourage participation in sport and active recreation in their Active Design Guide. The document has three main themes of improving access, enhancing amenity, and increasing awareness. These themes are in line with the principles of the Green Space Strategy.

There are many local strategies and policies which influence the Green Space Strategy. Some of them are detailed in diagram below**.**

2.3 Greenspace Strategy links to other strategies and policies

Overarching Strategies:

Sustainability Community Strategy, Local Development Framework, Green Infrastructure Plan

National/regional Influences:

Planning Policy Guidance 17 / NPPF
Green Spaces Better Places
Living Places: Cleaner, safer and Stronger
CABE Space Guidance

Green Space Strategy

Related Strategies/Policies

Tree and Woodland Strategy
Play Strategy
Play Area Review
Parks Audit

Sub Strategies

Playing Pitch Study/Strategy
Allotments (tbc)

Delivery Mechanism

Green Space Action Plan
Site management plans
Investment programme

Key points

- The government expects local authorities to prepare Green Space Strategies to ensure that future planning policy reflects local need for green space and recreation.

- National policy increasingly promotes the role of green spaces in addressing agendas such as health, children's development, community cohesion and environmental sustainability.

- National organizations place emphasis on the need to ensure people have access to green spaces and that sites are safe, attractive and welcoming.

- Green spaces contribute to towards the vision of making Warwick district a great place to live work and visit as set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy and Fit for the Future.

- The Local Development Framework is required to ensure future provision of green space and that meets local needs, and will translate recommended green space standards into planning policy.

- A number of other local plans and strategies include recommendations that will help to guide and support the implementation of the Green Space Strategy.

SECTION THREE: THE GREEN SPACE VISION FOR WARWICK DISTRICT

3.1 Green Space Vision

At the core of this Green Space Strategy for Warwick district is the creation of a vision. By putting forward this vision, the Council and its partners will provide a benchmark statement by which all green spaces, whatever their size or status will be judged. This vision is based on national and local priorities and seeks to enshrine principles to make things happen. The shared vision for green space in Warwick district is:

By 2026 there will be a well planned and managed network of integrated, accessible and diverse green spaces within Warwick district; creating a sustainable environment for the benefit of people, wildlife and our natural heritage.

The success of the Green Space Strategy will be measured in a number of quantative and qualitative ways. The outcomes from the Green Space Strategy will create a district where:

- Green spaces will be at least 'good' in quality, according to an adopted quality standard.
- Green spaces will be more welcoming, safer, cleaner and more sustainable.
- Green space will further contribute to economic and social wealth.
- Everyone will have sufficient access to unrestricted green space.
- Networks of habitats will improve species diversity.
- Children and young people can safely access and explore the local environment.
- Communities are actively included with managing their local green space.
- People are healthier and fitter through accessible, high quality green space.

Overall Warwick district will have a green space asset fit for the future, where the multifunctional role of green space is recognised and fostered and where the management of green space meets the highest levels of sustainability.

SECTION FOUR: WHERE ARE WE NOW?

4.1 Warwick district green space

4.1.1 Parks and Open Spaces Audit

Without an understanding of what we have, where it is and its quality and accessibility, it would be extremely difficult to plan how to provide, maintain and develop green spaces in the future. To complete this task a comprehensive audit across the district was undertaken of accessible green spaces to give baseline data for the Strategy. This methodology was based on guidance within 'Assessing Needs and Opportunities - PPG17 Companion Guide' (2002).

A total of 461 accessible green spaces were identified and mapped. By using Geographical Information Systems the sizes and accessibility of green spaces could be calculated quickly and reliably. Information was later used to assess each site's importance. Full details of the how the audit was carried out and what it found are given in a separate report, 'Warwick Parks and Open Spaces Audit (2008). A summary of the main findings is given in the following sections.

4.1.2 Green Space Classification

PPG17 proposes definitions for nine types of green spaces that can be used to categories audited sites.

Typology	Description of primary purpose
Parks and Gardens	Accessible, high quality opportunities for informal recreation and community events.
Natural Areas including Urban Woodland	Wildlife conservation, biodiversity and environmental education and awareness.
Green Corridors	Walking, cycling or horse riding, whether for leisure purposes or travel and opportunities for wildlife migration.
Outdoor Sports Facilities	Participation in outdoor sports, such as pitch sports, tennis, bowls, athletics or countryside and water sports.
Amenity green space	Opportunities for informal activities close to home or work or enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas.
Children's and Youth Areas	Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children and young people, such as equipped play areas, ball courts, skateboards areas and teenage shelters.

Typology	Description of primary purpose
Allotments, Community Gardens and Urban Farms	Opportunities for those people who wish to grow their own produce as part of the long term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion.
Burial Ground inc disused churchyard, closed cemetery	Quiet contemplation and burial of the dead, often linked to the promotion of wildlife conservation and biodiversity.
Civic Space	Civic or market square providing a setting for civic buildings, public demonstrations and community events.

Table 2: Level 1 Typology Primary Purpose

Assigning green spaces to these categories formed part of the site survey process. Some sites, particularly larger ones, can have a mix of different types of landscape and use within them. For example, a park might include outdoor sports and natural areas. The type simply indicates the dominant character of each site, and cannot be used on its own to reliably assess the overall supply of different types of accessible open space. Civic space was only addressed in the green space audit where it was green space, i.e. formal gardens. Civic space that was predominantly hard landscape was not addressed.

4.1.3 Accessibility and Hierarchy of green space

Two other methods were also used to classify green space and these were accessibility and hierarchy. Accessibility was used to identify those spaces which the public could freely access at all reasonable times without membership or specific consent of the owner. It was based on 3 levels as shown in Table 3 below.

Accessibility	Context and description
Unrestricted	Locations and venues where public access is freely available at the point of delivery. Typically, the premise is for uninterrupted public access -24hrs per day over 365 days per year. Within this framework, there may be minor partial physical or operational restrictions to prevent anti social behaviour.
Limited	Locations or venues that project an element of exclusion presented through physical, social, emotional or economic barriers. Typically this may be where sites are publicly or privately managed for a specific user group or purpose.
Not accessible	Sites which are not open or accessible to the general public.

Table 3: Accessibility Types

As detailed within the scope, sites with limited access and those that are not accessible, were removed from the analysis since these sites typically have less recreational value than sites which are freely available for public use. When all of the 461 green spaces were categorised according to accessibility 67% had unrestricted access as shown in Table 4 below.

Accessibility	Nº of Sites	%
Unrestricted	311	67%
Limited	142	31%
Not Accessible	8	2%
Total	**461**	**100 %**

Table 4: Accessibility of green space in Warwick district

Hierarchy was based on the significance of the space taken from a variety of factors including community consultation information and the auditor's knowledge of the site.

Hierarchy	**Context and description**
Destination	A site with a particularly strong sphere of influence within a sub regional context. Typically includes sites with a well established tourism base or associated with a particular or unique cultural, social or historical event.
District	Usually a site that has a sphere of influence at a district-wide level. Typically large to medium sized open spaces with a multifaceted range of features and activities, which attract a wide audience.
Neighbourhood	A site with sphere of influence across a specific audience or distinct geographical area. Function is likely to have a strong community identity and unlikely to attract people from the wider District.
Local	Areas with a very localised sphere of influence attributed to amenity open space. Typically likely to be only relevant to communities on a street by street basis.

Table 5: Hierarchy

An important characteristic of Neighbourhood and District green space is their wider catchment area than typical Local green spaces. Consultation has shown than local people will walk on average five minutes to reach a local site, but around ten minutes to visit a Neighbourhood site. These figures are similar to those identified from research elsewhere in Britain. However, district and destination sites will be more likely to attract people using cars and public transport from further away because of their special interest.

Once the green spaces had been mapped it was then considered how accessible they are to local people. The catchment areas were mapped for those green spaces with unrestricted access based on their hierarchy and the straight line walking distance. For unrestricted green space a walking distance of 400m was used. The catchment areas that were plotted were then reduced to take into account severance lines such as roads, railway lines, canals which would limit pedestrian accessibility. These catchments were further modified to allow for known access points such as bridges, underpasses, road crossings etc. Overall the accessibility mapping provides an indication of which areas of the district do not have access to unrestricted green space.

The amount of natural and semi natural green space within the district was compared against Natural England's Accessible Green Space Standard (ANGST). When considering Children's/Youth Areas, provision was measured against Warwick Districts catchment of 500m for local hierarchies, and a further comparison using the National Playing Fields Associations "Six Acre Standard" of a 240m buffer or catchment based on a five minute walking distance
Our findings from this exercise are that generally access at 400m to green space from residential areas is good with exceptions, even when considering severance lines.

As regards access to natural areas it is evident that there are gaps in provision across the district when the 'local' site standard is applied, see map titled 'Unrestricted Natural Green Space and Green Corridor greater than 2 Hectares'. There is better provision at 'town' site level, and gaps again at 'district' site level. Total coverage of the Local Nature Reserves (LNR) represents 0.73 hectares per 1000 population, which is 0.27 hectares below the ANGST model standard.

As regards play area provision the 500m coverage was reasonable with exceptions, but against the 240m buffers, there a number of deficits against the standard e.g. the northern section of Warwick bounded by the A46. A recent review of the Council's play areas was carried out in 2011, and has enabled the Council to develop a local Play Area Standard for the district. This has been applied to the Council's current play area provision and will also influence future play areas on new development sites. Part of the standard relates to accessibility, with a 480m distance threshold being set. For clarity 480m is the NPFA definition of a 10 minute walk, while many other leading authorities use the equivalent of 500m.

4.1.4 Quantity of green space

The detailed assessment work of the Parks and Open Spaces Audit has provided a clear picture on the current levels of supply of unrestricted green space, see map titled 'Unrestricted Green Space'. When the distribution of unrestricted access sites was analyzed by the type of space the key forms of provision were as follows.

Primary Typology	Nº of Sites	Area (Ha)	% of Total area (ha)
Allotment, Community Garden, Urban Farm	0	0	0.00%
Amenity green space	156	93.29	13.54%
Burial Ground inc. disused churchyards and closed cemeteries.	42	48.35	7.02%
Children's/Youth Areas	12	2.51	0.36%
Civic Space	5	1.06	0.15%
Green Corridor	22	20.55	2.98%
Institutional Land	0	0	0.00%
Natural Areas inc. Urban Woodland	32	241.77	35.10%
Outdoor Sports Facility	2	31.22	4.53%
Park or Garden	40	250.55	36.30%
Total	**311**	**688.81**	**100.00**%

Table 6: Unrestricted green space by typology

The above table shows that Parks or Gardens (36.3%) and Natural Areas including Urban Woodland (35.10%) make up almost two thirds of the unrestricted green space within the Warwick district.

Size Range	Nº of Sites	%
Over 20 hectares	14	3.08%
10 to 19.9 hectares	11	2.39%
5.0 to 9.9 hectares	26	5.64%
2.0 to 4.9 hectares	59	12.80%
1.0 to 1.9 hectares	62	13.45%
0.5 to 0.9 hectares	89	19.31%
Under 0.5 hectares	200	43.38%
Total	**461**	**100.00**%

Table 7: Size of green space in Warwick district

The table above shows that the distribution of sites by size essentially follows a pyramid pattern with a greater number of smaller sites and fewer larger sites. Half of the sites audited are between 0.5 and 9.9 hectares in size and 5.4% are over 10 hectares in size.

The 2001 Census recorded a resident population of 125,391 for Warwick district. This figure has been used to calculate the amount of accessible green space per 1000 population for Warwick district. This data has also been broken down by green space type as shown in Table 8 below.

Primary Typology	Amount of Unrestricted Green Space (Ha)	Amount of Unrestricted Green Space (Ha) per 1,000 population
Allotment, Community Garden, Urban Farm	0	0.00
Amenity Green space	93.29	0.74
Burial Ground inc disused churchyard, closed	48.35	0.38
Children's/Youth Area	2.51	0.02
Civic Space	1.06	0.01
Green Corridor	20.55	0.16
Institutional Land	0	0.00
Natural area inc Urban Woodland	241.77	1.92
Outdoor Sports Facility	31.22	0.25
Park or Garden	250.05	1.99
District Total	**688.81**	**5.47**

Table 8: Quantity of Unrestricted Green space per 1000 population

Table 8 illustrates that Warwick district has an average of 5.47 hectares of unrestricted green space per 1000 population. Parks or gardens have the best ratio of area to people with 1.99 hectares per 1000 population followed by natural areas including urban woodland 1.92 hectares per 1000 population

When all accessible green space is analyzed at a ward level then significant variation is found from areas such as Bishops Tachbrook and Leamington Clarendon having 31.99 and 29.13 Hectares per 1000 population respectively, down towards wards such as Leamington Manor and Lapworth both with less than 1 hectare per 1000 people. However ward level comparison can be misleading as a site just inside a ward boundary of a neighbouring ward will potentially provide for both wards.

Local Authority	Hectares of Unrestricted Green space
Canterbury City Council	27.95 hectares/1,000 population
Harrogate District Council	7.19 hectares/1,000 population (draft
Chelmsford Borough Council	6.83 hectares/1,000 population
Warwick District Council	5.47 hectares/1,000 population
North Hertfordshire District Council	4 hectares/1,000 population
Charnwood District Council	3.78 hectares/1,000 population

Chester City Council	3.6 hectares/1,000 population (draft
Macclesfield Borough Council	3.23 hectares/1,000 population
Cheltenham Borough Council	3.10 hectares/1,000 population
Colchester Borough Council	2.64 hectares/1,000 population
Mid Sussex District Council	1.81 hectares/1,000 population
Cherwell District Council	Rural: 0.59 hectares/1,000 population

Table 9: Quantity of Provision in Other Local Authority Areas

Table 9 compares the provision of unrestricted green space in the Warwick district with a selection of other similar local authorities. Overall Warwick district compares reasonable well and is ranked fourth out of the twelve local authorities within the comparison group. It is noticeable that Warwick district has more hectares per 1000 population of unrestricted green space than Chester City and Cheltenham Borough. Consultation with local people shows that most consider themselves lucky to have so much green space. Due to the overall amount of accessible green space available in the district, resources tend to be thinly spread. This can restrain efforts to provide the quality that local people would like to see. Whilst many green spaces play an important role in improving the quality of life for local people, others may be of limited value due to their size and location.

4.1.5 Quality

This section of the strategy sets out the findings of the qualitative audit of green space provision within Warwick district. All accessible sites were assessed representing a good geographical spread of different types of green space. This is the second quality audit undertaken and replaces the original quality audit reported in the Parks and Open Spaces Audit 2008. Due to the resources available only the Warwick District Council owned accessible green spaces were assessed for quality. See map titled 'WDC Owned Green Space with Quality Scores'

The results of this assessment are to be compared to the community's perceptions gained through the Household survey.

A total of 171 WDC owned sites were identified to be assessed, against the criteria derived from the national standard for green space quality, the Green Flag Award (see **www.greenflagaward.org.uk** for further information of the Award). The percentage scores were defined by the following Green Flag Scoring Line.

Very Poor	Poor	Below Average	Average	Good	Excellent
0%-15%	16%-30%	31%-45%	46%-60%	61%-75%	76%

Table 10: Green Flag Scoring Line

Before considering any action relating to the analysis undertaken, the limitations of the approach must be set out. Certain types of green spaces will score lowly in the quality audit because of their very nature i.e. amenity green spaces which often tend to be small. Green Flag self assessment is very much geared towards parks and gardens as part of the Green Flag Award rather than incidental small pieces of amenity green space, or natural green spaces. A second limitation is that the assessment is a 'snap shot' in time. The quality audit was mainly carried out in April 2010, when both grounds maintenance and usage of parks is fairly low when compared to the peak time of the summer school holidays. This seasonal variation may impact on the quality of sites judged. However, ideally the quality for the visitor to the sites should be the same all year round.

Taking these points into consideration, the main issues arising from the site assessments are that only sixteen sites were scored as good quality, these included Jephson Gardens, Oakley Wood Crematorium and School Lane, using the Green Flag Scoring Line. The remaining 155 sites were 'Average', 'Below Average' and 'Poor' in quality. There were no 'Very Poor' sites and no 'Excellent' sites.

There is an 'Average' quality score of 51.2% across the district, with a sizeable number of the assessed sites score below the average score for the district which results in an overall 'Average' quality score using the Green Flag scoring line, see Table 10 above. This 'Average' quality scoring may appear to be surprising, but is very comparable to much other Council green space quality audits. Dog fouling within the green spaces had the highest criteria scores on site, where as signage, provision of appropriate information and provision of appropriate educational interpretation/information score the lowest.

The Leamington locality areas are below the Warwick district averages, with Leamington Crown and Leamington Brunswick being the lowest quality wards. Conversely Warwick Rural and Kenilworth are the highest quality locality areas.

Combining Hierarchy and Typology Comparisons Neighbourhood Parks and Gardens score poorly when it comes to quality, whereas Destination scored best.

Respondents to the Household Survey scored consistently higher than the quality audit average scores. This is likely to be due to the fact that most people typically visit green spaces that they value and of reasonable quality, mainly the Destination green space, e.g. Jephson Gardens, St. Nicholas Park and Abbey Fields, whereas the quality audit assessed a larger number of sites of varying quality across the District.

4.1.6 Green space value

PPG17 recommends that each green space be assessed for its 'value' in terms of its importance to the local and wider community. Value is a broader concept than quality, encompassing many different considerations such as scarcity value, symbolic associations, biodiversity and historic associations. For example, a high quality site may be of low value to the community if it is located in an inaccessible location (for example, away from residential areas) or has other access restrictions. Conversely, a small green space of poor quality may be of

high value to the community if it is the only green space within the immediate neighbourhood, or if it has important historic associations.

While the value of any green space for biodiversity, heritage or local character can be objectively assessed (and has been in other documents such as the habitat audit), the social value of a green space for local residents can only be assessed by public consultation. It would therefore be inappropriate to assign a value to each green space in this Strategy. Any proposal for a change in the status of any green space will need to consider its value to the community as well as the standards and actions set out in the Green Space Strategy. An attempt to assign a value score to sites was carried out for the Parks Audit, but for the reasons mentioned above these scores will not be used for the Strategy.

4.1.7 Connecting green spaces

Improving green space provision is not just about individual sites. The value of green spaces can be greatly enhanced by linking them together into corridors and networks giving safe, attractive access for pedestrians and, in some cases, cyclists. In this way, the recreational opportunities offered by one site can be expanded to include those at other linked green spaces, as well as the enjoyment and health benefits of walking or cycling between them. An extensive network of such routes can also enable people living in urban areas to reach the countryside, offer increased opportunities for horse riding or provide a green alternative for journeys to work or school. By-laws prohibiting cycling and horse-riding in some green spaces may need to be reviewed to achieve this.

If properly designed and managed, green corridors can also greatly enhance local biodiversity, allowing wildlife to move safely between green spaces, and providing valuable habitats within the corridor itself. They can also help to improve the landscape quality of the district by softening the visual impact of the built environment, and creating a sense of place within local communities. This is one of the functions of green infrastructure, and is increasingly being promoted nationally as an element in creating sustainable communities.

The opportunity exists to identify sites within the Parks Audit that could be linked with each other and to accelerate the development of a green network for Warwick district. This could also include accessible land alongside watercourses and other linear features. A Warwick District Green Infrastructure Delivery Assessment is being developed at the same time as this Strategy, and will detail new opportunities for green infrastructure across the district beyond current provision.

Key Points

- Compared to some other councils Warwick district has a large amount of accessible green space per person.
- Some wards contain significantly more green space per person than others, and the proportions of different types of green space vary from one part of the district to the other.
- The value of green spaces can be enhanced by linking them together, although further work needs to be done to identify where this is feasible.

- By-laws prohibiting cycling and horse riding in some green spaces may need to be reviewed if such places are to support green travel choices fully.
- Separate studies highlight the biodiversity value of green spaces and landscape character, but further work is needed to assess wider environmental value.
- There are variations in the quality of green space, and a significant number of sites have been assessed as being poor or average in quality, highlighting the need for further site improvement.
- A set of quality standards need developing to allow quantifiable site improvement to be pursued and measured.
- A hierarchy of green spaces comprising 'Local', 'Neighbourhood' and 'District' and 'Destination' sites is proposed as a basis for accessibility standards.
- A quantity standard of 5.47 per 1000 of new green space has been approved for developments of new homes, with a minimum size of 0.1 hectares for any new green space.
- The new Local Plan will include plans for future housing, and the effect this will have on demand needs to be considered in planning future green space provision
- The Parks and Open Spaces Audit represents a snapshot in time and will therefore need to be regularly reviewed and revised to support future decisions.

4.2 Demands and usage on green space

Consultation with the local community has formed a key part in preparing the Parks and Open Spaces Audit for the Warwick District. The data collected has enabled qualitative judgements and assessments to be made about local demand and aspirations in relation to publicly accessible green space. In particular, evidence from the community consultation has been used to gain an understanding of existing use and to determine effective catchment areas. The household survey was conducted and complemented by other consultation work, including Citizen Panel questionnaires, consultation to support the development of the Warwick District Play Strategy and the Local Plan Consultation 2011.

4.2.1 Parks and Open Spaces Audit Household Survey

A questionnaire was sent out to 5,000 households across the district. In total 948 questionnaires were returned, which equates to a 19% response rate. Typically the evidence derived from all the consultation reflects many national trends and similar studies undertaken at Sandwell, Bristol and Cheltenham.

Key Points

- The majority of people have used green spaces in their local area in some form or another, with parks and gardens being the most popular type of venue.
- The main reasons for using green space are for walking and to relax.
- The most used sites in Warwick district are Jephson Gardens, Abbey Fields and St. Nicholas Park.
- Nearly 70% of respondents visit the green space they most use often at least once a week, and people tend to walk to their chosen venue.
- Major barriers to use include 'lack of time' and issues relating to not feeling safe.
- Personal safety is a reoccurring theme amongst adults, young people and children.
- In general terms local people feel that the existing provision of green spaces within the district is about right.
- The quality of open space within the District is perceived as being good but this reflects the Destination green spaces but not necessarily the smaller local green spaces.
- Over 80% of respondents believe the green space they visit most often could be improved, for example toilets, seating and litter bins.
- A desire for improved play spaces and further provision for young people is reflected in all consultation. In particular this is perceived by older people as being 'something for young people to do' and also meeting demand based on the needs of young people.
- Management issues relating to dog fouling, maintenance of infrastructure and responding to litter and vandalism need to be addressed to improve customer satisfaction levels.

- There was an underrepresentation of younger respondents
- More women than men responded

4.2.2 Other relevant consultations

The key findings from other consultations undertaken support many of the findings within the household survey. These include generally high usage of green spaces, fairly good satisfaction levels and with park users being prepared to walk 10 minutes to their most favoured green space. However more pressing issues included some safety concerns when using green space, the need for more and better facilities, improved facilities for young people and some issues over grounds maintenance.

More recent consultation included the Warwick District Council Local Plan Consultation 2011. Residents were asked to say what the most important things were making somewhere a good place to live in the district. The top six out of twenty things were the level of crime; education; health services; clean streets; affordable housing and parks and open spaces. Also compared with the 2008 Resident Survey, parks and open spaces have become a lot more important to residents. They were also asked to think about their local area and indicate things that most need improving. The second most important thing for improvement for residents was activities for teenagers.

4.3 Site management and resources

4.3.1 Site ownership

The majority of publicly accessible green space is owned by Warwick District Council, with Town Councils, Parish Council, and the church predominately owning the remainder. Warwick District Council have acquired this land over a number of decades and continue to do so through adopting new green space created with new housing developments.

4.3.2 Leased land and partnerships

The Council can lease land to commercial, community or other bodies which may be a more sustainable way of managing land. The leasing of Newbold Comyn golf course is the most recent example. Other councils have taken more radical approaches to leasing including the setting up of Community Trusts, but also other ways of transferring the management and maintenance.

The Council has a proven track record of working in partnerships, with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, managing the Council's Local Nature Reserves, being the most successful. Other partnerships include The Leamington 4X Cycling Club, catering companies and other recreational operators.

Both the leasing of land and partnership arrangements can bring benefits, but it also must be acknowledged that this may involve risk and liabilities for those parties involved.

4.3.3 Managing green space

This section focuses on the management of Warwick District Council owned land, since little is known about the management of other land. National guidance is in favour of a more integrated green space service for the development, management and maintenance of green spaces. In addition the production and use of management plans is also recommended to ensure continuity and adequate resourcing of site management and maintenance.
Green space management goes beyond grounds maintenance, and involves several principal departments including;

- Neighbourhood Services – parks development, operational management and grounds maintenance of all types of green space
- Cultural Services – park event management and leases
- Development Services – new green space on new developments and planning obligations
- Housing – provider and manager of green space
- Property (including Engineering) – maintenance of buildings and structures within green space
- Community Protection – crime and disorder reduction and prevention in green space.

In addition to the above, the Asset Management Steering Group has a strategic role in managing the Council's assets, including land and buildings, and any

decision with regard acquisition or disposals of assets, which may include green space.

A recent review of the Parks Service has resulted in the integration of the two parks teams into one department. At the time of writing this strategy, this new approach is still in its infancy, but having followed best practice, it is hoped that the service will be more efficient and effective in its delivery.

Dealing with vandalism, dog mess and safety concerns were some of the main concerns from the Parks and Open Spaces Audit Household Survey. The Council through new contract will have further resources to be more reactive to vandalism in parks. The recently introduced dog control orders will address some of the dog issue concerns. The multi agency approach on dealing with crime and disorder has proved successful in recent years, with some parks, such as St. Nicholas Park, reporting a reduced number of incidents.

4.3.4 Green space management standards

Not having a set of green space management standards has historically been one factor that has lead to variations in quality of management and maintenance of green space across the district. Having an agreed set of standards will help to address this. This is in addition to a more robust grounds maintenance specification which will be dealt with later.

The Green Flag Award criteria are increasingly being used as a national standard for green space management. Having a parks service that understands and shares the principles of Green Flag by setting quality standards, can only improve the quality of green space in a consistent way.

4.3.5 Green space development

Warwick District Council has a good track record of development of green space, though this has been limited to available resources. The recent quality audit has indentified the need to improve green space and proposals for prioritising investment will be dealt with later.

Developing green space must involve local people and park users. Recent improvements in parks have included the need to work with Friends groups and other community groups to develop improvement plans and draw in external funding. Having a shared vision for the future development of green spaces will help to prioritise these improvements but also minimize conflict. It is recognised this approach has huge value, and so there is greater need to support and develop new Friends groups or other community groups.

Finally the Parks Team and individuals must have the necessary skills to develop green space, including community engagement skills, developing costed improvements plans, bidding and applying for funds and project management and delivery of any improvements.

4.3.6 Grounds maintenance

Grounds maintenance is essential to the management of green spaces of the district. High maintenance standards must be achieved to create green spaces that are welcoming, clean and safe that the community can use and enjoy.

The Household Survey and the quality parks audit have raised concerns over a number of issues including litter, dog fouling, vandalism and lack of staff presence. At the time of writing this strategy the Contract Re-let Project is aiming to address these issues, by revisiting the grounds maintenance specification, realigning resources and changes in the way the grounds maintenance contract is managed by the Council. The grounds maintenance contract is to be re-let in April 2013.

Providing more site based staff will be addressed by having dedicated reactive teams who will be visible within the parks and can deal quickly with some of the issues raised, but also act as a presence within green space.

The management and development of green space is about both the long term and day to day management of green space with the overall aim of improving standards. Where there are new skills required to achieve this aim, then the ongoing training of staff will be essential to meet the future challenges.

4.3.7 Resources - Revenue budgets

The level of revenue funding is an important factor affecting the standards of green space provision. The Council spends a considerable part of its budgets on providing and maintaining green spaces. The table below provides a breakdown across the service areas and by expenditure headings. As can be seen the total net revenue cost of the parks service is £2.16million. The investment to improve green spaces will be subject to annual budget approval process.

Budget 2010-2011

Expenditure	Green space Development	Green space Contract Management	Total
Employees	151200	98000	249200
Premises	248800	12700	261500
Transport	7900	8000	15900
Supplies and Services	165900	92000	257900
Third Party Payments	63100	1104400	1167500
Support Services	239600	121100	360700
Capital Financing	397200	0	397200
Total Expenditure	1273700	1436200	2709900
Total Income	-435100	-117800	(552900)
Net cost of Service	**838600**	**1318400**	**2157000**

Table 11: Net cost of service

4.3.8 External funding

Until recently it has been nationally recognised that green spaces have been in gradual decline due to lack of investment. Whilst some revenue budgets have helped with some routine and repairs and maintenance, there has been little provision for green space development. To address the quality issues raised in the audit, the need to obtain external funding has become even more essential.

Recent improvement in green spaces have become reliant on this external funding and include Heritage Lottery Funding, funding of Jephson and Mill Gardens, Playbuilder and Big Lottery funding for play areas, and Warwickshire Environmental Trust for Eagle Recreation Ground, amongst many others. In some cases the funding can only be applied for by community groups supported by the Council, for example Community Spaces funding for improvements to The Dell.

4.3.9 Council capital funding

The Council has provided capital funding to make improvements within green spaces, but this is often been moderate, mainly due to the Council's other priorities which it has to meet. Some has been made available as match funding, as was the case for the recent and ongoing improvements at Christchurch Gardens.

One possible funding option to consider is the disposal of green space and the generation of capital receipts from the sale of land. Warwick District has a large quantity of green space when compared regionally and nationally, though it is acknowledged there is variance across the district. If this approach is to be taken then the Council would need to identify those sites that are of low value and do not contribute positively to a neighbourhood.

4.3.10 Section 106 agreements and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

Another potentially valuable source of resources for new or improved green spaces is through the planning system. Currently, developers can be required to provide new green spaces or funds to pay for site enhancement through Section 106 agreements which become a requirement of planning permission. They can also include commuted sums that cover the extra cost of maintaining new green spaces over an agreed period.

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a new levy that local authorities in England and Wales 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 need, for example, schools, new or safer road schemes, park improvements or a new health centre. It applies to most new buildings and charges are based on the size and type of the new development. The CIL will be prepared by the Council and commence to coincide with the adoption of the Local Plan. Through the preparation of the CIL, the appropriate levels to set charges at will be determined, which, along with the level of development, will ultimately have implications for the amount of funding available for different needs.

Through the Council Open Space Supplementary Planning Document more substantial contributions to finance site improvements across the District have been made available.

4.3.11 Partnership working

Green space development benefits from working with other partners, as had been experienced with many recent examples. Not only can these partners provide resources to consult with local people but also seek external funding. Eagle Recreation Ground benefited from the partnering between the Council and Groundworks as well as more recently at the Pump Room Gardens.

Also community groups, such as Friends Groups, are able to access funding that would not otherwise be available to support green space improvement schemes. This reinforces the value and importance of involving such groups fully in the planning and implementation of such projects. Exploration of possible future partnerships needs to continue to maximize opportunities to improve green spaces within Warwick district.

4.3.12 Prioritising Investment

One of the key outcomes of the green space strategy is the need to improve green space. Through the quality audit there are large variations in the quality of green space across the district, with many sites being measured as average quality, or even poor quality, highlighting the need for further investment. The audit identified that neighbourhood parks and gardens have the lowest range of quality scores when compared to other hierarchy and types combined. The household survey and other consultations have also raised specific issues on quality.

In must be acknowledged that it would not be realistic to raise the quality of all the green spaces across the district in the short or medium term, but should be strived for in the life time of the strategy. Therefore, to achieve the greatest impact the following is proposed as the preferred methodology for prioritising improvements and any subsequent action plans to be implemented.

- Sites which have been judged to be valuable to local communities, but for which are currently poor or average quality.
- Neighbourhood parks and gardens which have the lowest range of quality scores.
- Sites where local community groups have developed improvement plans, in consultation with the Council, which can be used to attract external funding, e.g. Friends of The Dell and Community Spaces funding.
- Availability of external funding targeting certain projects, e.g. Playbuilder funding to improve play areas.
- Projects that need to address issues in relation to emergencies, such as community protection, e.g. flood alleviation, security in parks.

The above criteria are in no particular order of preference and will need to be review on a regular basis.

4.3.13 The cost of improving quality

Calculating the investment needed to improve the quality of green space is a subsequent piece of work following the approval of the strategy. To give a flavour of the costs involved to improve quality, the following is a list of green spaces that have been improved within the last ten years, combined with more recent costed plans that are yet to be implemented, and others for which were unsuccessful in their bidding for funding.

Considering that there are currently 171 Warwick District Council owned green spaces of varying quality this may give some indication of the scale of the investment requirements. That said, it can be assumed that some green spaces, especially those local amenity green spaces, may require for example, small changes in maintenance regimes to improve biodiversity and therefore the overall quality of the site, rather than large capital investment. Even so it is anticipated that the overall district wide cost to improve the current 'Average' quality to 'Good' would be significant.

Green space name	Green space type	Capital costed plans	Status
Jephson Gardens	Destination	£4.2m	Implemented
St. Nicholas Park	Destination	£2.5m	Unsuccessful HLF bid
Christchurch Gardens	Neighbourhood	£100,000	Partially complete and bidding for funds
Eagle Recreation Ground	Neighbourhood	£140,000	Implemented
Millbank open space	Neighbourhood	£105,000	Bidding for funds

Table 12: Examples of improving quality

Key points

- There are a range of organizations charged with responsibility for the ownership, management and maintenance of accessible green spaces around the district, but with no strategic link.
- In some cases, Council owned green spaces could be managed more effectively and sustainably by a transferring the management and maintenance.
- Achievement of many of the aims of this Strategy requires a more co-ordinated and collaborative approach by different green space providers and internal Council departments.
- Green Flag criteria and the use of site management plans are amongst possible ways of achieving higher and more consistent standards.
- Safety and security are amongst people's top priorities, and can be addressed through multi-agency working, staff presence on site, and new control orders, and careful site design.

- The Council has a successful track history of gaining external funding for green space improvement, and has provided match funding where necessary.
- Parks income can make an important contribution to revenue budgets and thereby help to sustain higher quality standards.
- The level of financial contribution secured from developers through planning agreements should continue, whether it's through the current s106 or through the emerging CIL.
- Opportunities to access external funding can be enhanced through partnership working and community involvement.
- Securing capital receipts from the disposal of green space is another source of funding.
- A set of criteria are required when it comes to prioritising investment in green space.

SECTION FIVE: WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO?

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section is to help evaluate and capture the current position and provides the rationale for green space recommendations from service delivery and asset management perspectives. There are many ways to approach this. Best practice seeks to establish central themes or principles linked to wider strategic plans such as the Council's Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Plan. For example this might relate to improving the economy, health or environmental sustainability.

In essence there is no one true method for establishing principles for specific recommendations. Over the course of developing the strategy a range of potential methods for presenting this element of the strategy have concluded that in order to reflect the social, economic and environmental contribution played by green space, 'where do we want to go' will focus on the following seven principles.

- **Provide** – We will seek to provide sufficient accessible green space to meet current and future demand.

- **Improve** – we will seek to maintain and raise the quality of all green spaces.

- **Connect** – we will work in partnership to develop and manage a continuous network for people and wildlife.

- **Involve** – we will work in partnership with the community, governing bodies and stakeholders to develop, manage and promote green spaces.

- **Resource** – we will seek to ensure sufficient resources are available to develop, manage and maintain green spaces.

- **Sustain** – we will work to ensure that the management of all green spaces have a positive impact on people, the local economy and the environment.

- **Conserve** – we will ensure that green space biodiversity, landscape and natural heritage is protected and conserved.

5.2 Principles and Recommendations

A) Provide – We will seek to provide sufficient accessible green space to meet current and future demand.

Rationale

The provision of green space is one of the key considerations of local planning policy and is crucial in considering land use planning within the District. PPG17 sets out to establish a minimum standard of green space provision for the district. The audit undertaken by Warwick District Council in 2008 is compliant with PPG17 guidance and establishes a minimum standard of 5.47 hectares of green space per 1000 people. There is a specific need to determine minimum acceptable standards for green space provision as part of the planning policy and development management decision making process and this standard should be used as the benchmark throughout the district. This standard should not just be seen as the minimum compliance level but the starting point for all strategic decisions about the planning, management and delivery of green space.

There is also economic justification for the provision of green space. Recent studies can demonstrate that the true value of green spaces have a wide ranging impact on attracting visitors to an area, the enhanced worth of adjacent property value and the effect on staff recruitment and retention for local businesses. If the presence, quality and value of green spaces are eroded in any way, there is potential for tourism levels, across the district to change and the area to become less attractive to businesses, tourists and people choosing to live in a high quality environment. In the current economic down turn, the importance of retail/commercial activity and the housing marketing are at the forefront of the Government's and individual agendas alike. Policies to provide green space will be needed in the future to ensure that the economic impact is retained and enhanced.

Overall policies in relation to protecting green space should focus on locations and/or specific typologies where there is a current shortfall of provision within the district and also those ones of high value. Conversely there may be surpluses of green space which have low value to the community, so the change of use or disposal of green space should be considered.

Recommendations

A1: Ensure the district standard of 5.47 hectares of unrestricted green per 1000 population is maintained through effective management.

A2: In the parts of the district where there is deficiency in the district quantity standard, to increase the levels of unrestricted green space in specific geographical areas through acquisition or change of type/use of green space.

A3: In the parts of the district where there is a surplus to the district quantity standard, provide a robust review and evaluation framework for potential change of use or disposal.

B)   Improve – we will seek to maintain and raise the quality of all green spaces

Rationale

Raising the quality and standard of green space has been identified as primary concern by the Parks and Open Spaces audit. Although it can be demonstrated that overall satisfaction levels remain relatively high and consistent over previous years, user expectations are high and will no doubt continue to increase in the future. Satisfaction levels from sources such as citizens panels and the household survey point towards a dissatisfaction with feeling safe, opportunities for young people, especially children's play and the promotion and celebration of local and neighbourhood green space. Future policies therefore need to consider addressing these issues in order to improve perception of quality.

The quality audit revealed an interesting range of trends across the 171 green spaces surveyed. A district average quality rating of 51.2% was identified, , with a sizeable number of the assessed sites score below the average score for the District which results in an overall 'Average' quality score. The Leamington locality areas are below the Warwick District averages, with Leamington Crown and Leamington Brunswick being the lowest quality wards. Conversely Warwick Rural and Kenilworth are the highest quality locality areas. Combining Hierarchy and Typology Comparisons Neighbourhood Parks and Gardens score poorly when it comes to quality, whereas Destination scored best. Future policies need to focus on increasing the average quality score, particularly in reference to key geographical areas and typologies through long term management and resource planning.

Recommendations

B1:   Develop a quality standard for management and maintenance based on green flag criteria.

B2:   Adopt the approach presented in the strategy to prioritising investment within green space.

B3:   Ensure that green space is actively managed through appropriate long term management planning.

B4:   Develop specific facilities, opportunities and challenging green spaces for young people.

B5:   Increase the play value of green spaces for children and young people.

B6:   Measure success through national quality benchmarks such as the Green Flag Award.

C) **Connect – we will work in partnership to develop and manage a continuous network for people and wildlife.**

Rationale

Access to green space is an important issue for people living and working in Warwick district. The segregation of green space be it semi natural areas or sports pitches has a cumulative effect on the overall value of green space and severance and loss of connectivity has an impact on people's and wildlife's ability to move freely between areas.

Severance and segregation can be caused by the presence of roadways or indeed poorly designed developments, which effectively isolate an area and create a green space oasis. Nearly a third of households surveyed as part of the Parks and Open Spaces Audit indicated that they travelled to green space within Warwick District by car. This has an impact on the volume of traffic and in turn atmospheric pollution, accidents and healthy living. Policies to enhance physical access and connectivity need to be realised to increase value and encourage people to use their neighbourhood green space.

Connectivity is essentially the way in which green spaces can bring the physical space, biodiversity and people together. By focusing policies on planning and linking the existing network through new green spaces, walkways, waterways, green corridors and public rights of way, social cohesion, health promotion and sustainable transport naturally follow.

The recent work undertaken by certain national organizations and planning policy have focused on increasing the connective fabric of green spaces to realise a larger ambition. Policies will need to address the emerging green infrastructure philosophy at a local and sub regional level.

Recommendations

C1: Develop and approve a Green Infrastructure (GI) Plan to inform housing growth and future local development framework requirements.

C2: Work with partners, stakeholders and developers to protect and enhance connectivity between green spaces throughout the district.

C3: Work with partners, stakeholders and developers to increase connectivity between green spaces throughout the district.

C4: Review green space by-laws in respect of cycling and horse-riding

D)   Involve – we will work in partnership with the community, governing bodies and stakeholders to develop, manage and promote green spaces.

Rationale

The government is firmly advocating that local authorities share services to deliver efficiencies and to empower communities to lead on service delivery. The green space sector is a relevant sector that will deliver on these agendas.

Communities play a key role in creating better environments. Some of the better quality green spaces within the district are those ones where people are actively involved in their management, for example The Dell, Abbey Fields, various Local Nature Reserves and play areas. Improvements to green spaces are best determined by involving people, by asking what they like or dislike about their green space and asking what they like to see improved. However managing expectations is crucial to this involvement, as there are often constraints to how a green space is to be developed, managed and maintained.

Therefore community groups, including Friends Groups, should be supported in their development and take a more direct role in their development and management of green space, with the aim of having better quality green space and encouraging greater use.

Recommendations

D1:   Work with communities to make green spaces better for everyone.

D2:   Actively promote volunteering and participation in management of green spaces.

D3:   Explore the transfer of ownership, management and maintenance of green space.

E)   Resource – we will seek to ensure sufficient resources are available to develop, manage and maintain green spaces.

Rationale

The provision and prioritization of adequate resources will be required to deliver policies and actions outlined within the green space strategy. This will not only involve financial and human resources but the formulation of new performance monitoring regimes, partnerships and projects, which contribute to wider agendas such as regeneration, health and tourism.

The closer working relationship between parks team members and other departmental sections is the key to effective and efficient management of green space. Likewise a fully skilled workforce is also required as the parks team meets new challenges. The Green Flag standards are the national benchmark for quality. These should be applied to all management and maintenance of the district green space to meet consistent quality across the district.

The discretionary nature of elements of green space services and the current pressure on Council budgets will require new and innovative methods of achieving policies and strategic ambitions. Best practice and the Council's own achievements demonstrate that by forming new partnerships and joint initiatives, services to the public can be delivered in new ways to achieve the same outcomes. For example, the partnership with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust has worked well over recent years and this could be extended to other areas with ecological value which are currently managed by Warwick District Council. Future policies will need to focus on building links with new partners and seeking external funding for projects such as Higher Entry Level Stewardship, Community Spaces and even private sponsorship.

The challenge to deliver on this strategy is to ensure the long term sustainability of funding and management for all the districts green space. Within the context of limited Council budgets, there is need to explore wider and more radical approaches to funding, including the use of capital receipts from disposal of green space.

Recommendations

E1:   Develop a rolling investment programme for green space improvements.

E2:   Ensure annual revenue is sufficient to meet demand.

E3:   Seek to secure external revenue and capital finance through new partnerships and funding opportunities.

E4:   Maximize developer contributions through the robust Open Space Supplementary Planning document, by either s106 agreements or the emerging Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

F)   **Sustain – we will work to ensure that the management of all green spaces have a positive impact on people, the local economy and the environment.**

Rationale

Sustainability in the context of green space, potentially one of the most critical strategic themes which need to be considered. Green spaces, by their very definition, are areas which can positively contribute directly to issues such as biodiversity loss, climate change, noise and flooding.

As both a provider and consumer, green spaces will have a positive and negative impact on climate change and policies will need to be considered for these pressing issues. For example, the potential scarcity of water and increased seasonal flooding will mean that the design and management of green space will need to consider, on the one hand, the impact of any increased flooding and on the other, the use of water for irrigation.

The Warwick District Green Infrastructure identified a number of functions that well planned green spaces can perform in adapting to and mitigating the impacts

of climate change. These include the reduction of the urban heat island effect; providing outdoor shady space; ability to soak up carbon dioxide and other gases that have an impact on air quality and attenuate flooding as described above.

Recommendations

F1: Adopt and promote maintenance and management practices that contribute to the sustainable management of green spaces.

F2: Adapt to and mitigate the impact of climate change

G) **Conserve – we will ensure that green space biodiversity, landscape and natural heritage is protected and conserved**

Rationale

Biodiversity and the protection, conservation and enhancement of species and habitats are already enshrined within the Wildlife and Countryside Act, the Countryside and Rights of Way Act and regional biodiversity action plans. All green spaces have the potential to act as an important wildlife refuges and to provide the local community with the opportunity for contact with nature. Green space management needs to ensure that due consideration is given to proactive and appropriate management of habitats and species. The Lawton Report, and subsequent Making Space for Nature White paper emphasised the importance of thriving ecological network to the economic and social well being of society and that action is needed to reverse decline.

Likewise, the protection and conservation of cultural and landscape heritage are important considerations in protecting the true intrinsic value of the designed landscape. Sites with historical and heritage value will need to be managed in a sensitive manner and the appropriate balance between recreation demand and conservation will need to be established through clear strategies and policies.

In some cases, there will be statutory obligation to conserve green space for specific reasons. This can relate to Scheduled Ancient Monuments, areas of geomorphologic diversity and listed structures and buildings. Knowledge and understanding of these features will be required and again, appropriate management regimes instigated to conserve these valuable assets for the future.

Recommendations

G1: Maintain and enhance habitats and species within the framework of local Biodiversity Action Plan, including sites identified through the Habitat Biodiversity Audit.

G2: Conserve and restore green spaces with high historical and archaeological significance.

G3: Consider opportunities for increasing habitat biodiversity in all planning, designing and management of all green spaces to help halt biodiversity loss.