



people spaces places

Walsall Green Space Strategy

2012 - 2017

DRAFT

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Summary

To be added later

Inc Foreword - Portfolio Holder / Head of Service / Friends Group (Jackie C)

To be added by client (GPS / GIS / GH to write)

1 Introduction

This Walsall Green Space Strategy is the second such strategy for Walsall Borough replacing and updating the earlier strategy developed in 2006. The Walsall Green Space Strategy is a forward looking document covering the five years to 2017 that sets out a vision and ambition for green space that is at the heart of the Council's priorities to improve and support the Borough's diverse neighbourhoods and communities; the economy; and health and well-being. The Strategy will contribute to the vision of Walsall as a clean, green and safe borough.

The strategy sets out a vision that good quality accessible green space is a necessity, not a luxury, which contributes to the unique character of Walsall Borough improving the quality of people's live, bringing economic benefits and contributing to physical and mental health and well-being. The strategy recognises that the current economic climate is the most severe in living memory and that resources are limited which reinforces the need to ensure that public monies and other funding is used efficiently and the benefits can be clearly demonstrated. In order to achieve this the Green Space Strategy suggests that there needs to be a refocusing of priorities and resources and the strategy suggests how this should be achieved through a focus on Strategic Green Spaces. Consideration is also given to opportunities for developing stronger partnership with a range of key organisations, the third sector and commercial organisations so that collectively the vision for green spaces can be realised.

1.1 Structure of document

The Green Space Strategy is based upon extensive research and seeks to bring together these findings with those from public consultation and discussions with a range of organisations in the Borough. The Green Space Strategy is the over-arching document that presents this evidence and set

out a vision and ways forward. It is intended to be read as a stand alone document and has been written as a semi-technical document for use by the Council and current and future partners in guiding the delivery of green space management, maintenance and development and planning policy. However, the Strategy has also been produced for an external audience including the Borough's residents, businesses and third sector organisations. It may also be of interest to other organisations such as funding bodies and national award schemes.

This strategy document is structured around some seven sections which include the scope and justification for the strategy; the local context including demographics and the fit with national and local policies and strategies; the current provision of green space (distribution, characteristics and quality); consultation and community needs based on recent surveys and other evidence; findings, analysis and an action plan.

More detailed findings which together with the strategy document form the evidence base for the Green Space Strategy can be found in the supporting volumes:

- National and Local Policy Review (November 2011)
- Review of Previous Consultation (November 2011)
- Household Questionnaire Survey Report (December 2011)
- Children & Young People's Survey Report (March 2012)
- Friends Group Survey Report (February 2012)
- Consultation Workshops Report (March 2012)
- Quantity and Accessibility Report (March 2012)
- Quality Assessment Report (January 2012)
- Value Assessment Report (March 2012)
- Alternative Models of Service Delivery Discussion Paper (January 2012).

1.2 Developing the Strategy

The Walsall Green Space Strategy has been developed with input from a range of organisations and stakeholders both within the Council and externally over a period of 12 months to July 2012.

A significant contribution was made by residents including children and young people who took the time to complete the questionnaire surveys that have highlighted key issues and informed the development of the strategy. Local third sector organisations, particularly the many "Friends of" groups who work with the Council to improve green spaces participated in the development of the strategy. A range of stakeholders from partners organisations such as West Midlands Police and the Primary Care Trust have been involved through stakeholder workshops. Council staff including frontline staff have been involved throughout the process.

A key process has also been the thorough and comprehensive work carried out by the Green Spaces Working Group as part of the Council's scrutiny process. The Green Spaces Working Group included local Councillors and co opted members from the Friends Group Network. The working group heard evidence from those Council service areas involved in managing, maintaining and developing Walsall's green spaces and from other areas including planning policy, neighbourhood management and sports development. Other participants were drawn from Walsall PCT and a range of community based organisations involved in improving their local green spaces. The Green Space Working Group considered existing service provision and good practice at a national level. The working group set out a draft vision, key priorities and a series of recommendations. These have been reviewed alongside all other evidence during the development of the strategy and have been integrated within the analysis and recommendations of the Walsall Green Space Strategy.

1.3 Our Vision

The vision for green space in Walsall, as recommended by the Green Space Working Group is:

"We want Walsall's green spaces to be public assets that everyone has pride in and that help secure the sustainable future of the borough for the benefit of the health and wellbeing of the whole community" .

1.4 Timescale

The Walsall Green Space Strategy sets out how the Vision will be achieved over the next five years up to 2017/18.

2 Why a Greenspace Strategy?

2.1 The Benefits of Green Space

High quality parks and public spaces create economic, social and environmental value. They are also highly valued by local people. Research carried out by CABE Space suggests that 85% of people surveyed felt that the quality of public space and the built environment has a direct impact on their lives and the way they feel.¹

In terms of economic benefits, there is evidence that high quality green spaces have positive impacts upon property prices, are good for business and being close to public space adds economic value².

Safe, clean spaces encourage people to walk more and therefore offer significant health benefits. Parks and green spaces offer places for sport, recreation and relaxation, benefiting physical health and mental wellbeing. There is even evidence that access to good quality local spaces can help people live longer and green spaces can provide solutions to redress worsening public health.³

Green spaces can also bring significant community benefits as places to play, encouraging neighbourliness and social inclusion and as a venue for events that bring people together.⁴

¹ CABE (2002) - Streets of Shame. Summary of findings from 'Public Attitudes to Architecture and the Built Environment'.

² CABE Space (2005) - Does money grow on trees?

³ Sustainable Development Commission (2008) - Health, Place and Nature: How Outdoor Environments Influence Health and Well-Being - A Knowledge Base

⁴ GreenSpace (2004) - Your Parks, The Benefits of Parks and Green Space

Networks of linked green spaces and green corridors can encourage cycling and lower dependency on the car, reducing levels of traffic. Walsall is particularly well served by green corridors with Walsall Arboretum extending from Walsall Town Centre to wider countryside and the canal network providing important routes for people and wildlife. The network of Public Rights of Way: bridleways and public footpaths provide important links between green spaces and residential areas and allow access across the wider countryside. The role of Public Rights of Way are recognised by this Green Space Strategy but are not explicitly covered by the analysis.

The environmental and economic benefits of green spaces are well understood: open spaces improve air quality, provide sustainable urban drainage solutions and can help mitigate against climate change, whilst trees cool air and provide shade⁵. Green spaces are also important areas for wildlife and biodiversity and provide opportunities for local people to experience nature first hand.

Parks and green spaces are the most accessible and well used leisure and recreational facilities across the country and in Walsall. The Black Country Core Strategy recognises the value of green spaces in contributing to the image and environmental quality of the Black Country and enhancing people's mental and physical well-being.

2.2 The Need for a Green Space Strategy

Since this strategy updates and replaces the earlier strategy developed in 2006 the initial starting point was to review the previous document and

5 Trust for Public Land (2008) - How Much Value Does The City Of Philadelphia Receive From Its Park And Recreation System?

identify the impact of this strategy. The previous strategy was found to be successful in providing an overall framework for green space supported by a series of recommendations and an action plan.

The Council reviewed and updated its Green Space strategy in order to:

- Set out a new shared Vision for green spaces in Walsall Borough
- Contribute to the wider objectives of the Council as set out in the Corporate Plan and Sustainable Community Strategy
- Establish an accurate picture of the quality of green spaces
- Meet government guidance, inform the Local Development Framework and planning policy process and to help develop local standards
- Establish if there is enough green space in the borough to meet the needs of local people
- Provide a framework for improved service delivery linked to the Council's corporate objectives
- Provide a framework for identifying priorities for future investment and improvement
- Provide a framework for community and voluntary groups to participate in green space provision and management
- Guide the allocation of reduced resources during the 5 year period to meet community and strategic aims.

2.3 The Scope of the Strategy

2.3.1 Definition of Green Space

Green space is the collective term used to describe all parks, public gardens, playing fields, children's play areas, woodlands, nature reserves, allotment gardens, linear and other open space. It excludes public space that is primarily built development, agricultural land and private (residential) gardens. Green Belt land is included where it meets the definition of green space, but the two terms are not synonymous.

The green space strategy has considered the all land greater than 0.4 hectares that is used formally or informally for recreation or is managed for nature conservation or visual amenity. Land owned and managed by the council and in other ownership has been considered as part of the strategy.

2.4 Recent Achievements

The first Walsall Green Space Strategy was produced in 2006. A total of 57 strategic objectives were established and along with a series of performance measures and indicator. During the life time of the plan these objectives have been used to monitor the implementation of the strategy. The Strategy has been scrutinised by the Community Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel and Green Spaces Working Group which found that the majority of the Strategy's 57 objectives had been achieved (GPS - 42 out of the 57 strategic outcomes achieved, 5 not achieved and 10 continuing to be delivered post end of 1st GSS period).

Since its adoption the Greenspace Strategy and Greenspaces Service has received both local and national recognition as a case study example of best practice. This has lead to Greenspaces Officers being invited to give presentations at regional and national conferences organised by leading representative groups.

Key achievements are summarised below:

- Green Flag Awards achieved and retained at Willenhall Park (2008), Palfrey Park (2007), Merrion's Wood (2009).
- Management and Maintenance Plans have been produced for several key premier green spaces including Willenhall Park, Palfrey Park, Moorcroft Wood, Arboretum, Merrion's Wood and are under development for KGV, Kings Hill Park, Blackwood Park, and Holland Park. 10 5 year Site Improvement Master Plans have been produced for key strategic green space sites to target capital investment and the programme is ongoing.

- Infrastructure maintenance and grounds maintenance standards defined as part of the establishment of individual site management / development plans.
- Service restructuring - Countryside Services have increasing front line visibility, patrolling, maintenance standards and habitat creation; Parks Ranger restructure has established a concept of area management and accountability, increasing on site patrolling, more effective use of resources and addressing anti-social behaviour; creation of Urban Forestry Unit providing a systematic tree management system, substantially improving tree maintenance and reducing the Councils liabilities; more integrated services across all service areas.
- Key wildlife sites have received greater protection through the national and local designation process: 10 green spaces are designated as Local Nature Reserves; 36 green spaces are designated as SINCs and 64 as SLINCs; 6 green spaces are designated as SSSIs; 3 SSSIs achieved 100% against the PSA target regarding their overall condition.
- Overall quality improvements - Ongoing quality assessments have been undertaken across the premier green spaces during the course of the strategy and have seen a positive improvement over the last 5 years. The 25 "Premier Green Spaces" as defined in the 2006 Strategy increased from an average of 42 to 45.
- Wider engagement with Walsall's diverse communities has taken place including Over 50's forum, Youth Opinions Unite, Walsall Multi Faith, Union of Muslim Organisations, BME Alliance, Walsall Disability Forum and Women's Forum.
- Greater partnership working has included a new partnership with the Wildlife Trust to deliver Walsall's element of the Black Country Living Landscape Scheme at Moorcroft Wood and along with site management work, environment and education visits and community involvement, accredited training.
- Customer feedback processes adopted including GreenSTAT annual online customer satisfaction to provide user information, assess service improvements and delivery and inform future investment as well as nearly 6000 responding to local surveys and consultation events as part of the production of site improvement masterplans and management plans.

- Improved performance data systems have been established and maintained on a monthly basis (covering ASB levels, illegal horse grazing and park visitor attendance levels).
- The first Play Strategy for Walsall was adopted in September 2007 and this led to the award of £1.3 million from the DCSF Playbuilder programme and provided the funding for 11 new play areas in areas of deficiency. Following this success a revised Play Strategy is being developed.
- Derelict allotment plots have been brought back in to cultivation, reducing voids and implementing measures to reduce waiting lists. An Allotment Strategy and strategic approaches have been developed to address the quantity and quality of allotment and community garden provision across the Borough along with the appointment of a Allotments and Community Gardens Officer.
- A new bespoke real-time electronic playground inspection system was introduced in 2011, and has now been expanded to include all green space infrastructure and condition inspections.
- External funding - Heritage Lottery Funding secured for Walsall Arboretum (£5.0 million); Seven sites now under Countryside / Environmental Stewardship schemes.
- A total of 75 medium to large projects have being delivered in Walsall's parks and green spaces at a total cost of £ 4,200,000.00 between the period 2008 / 09 - 2011/12 and a further 35 projects were funded through S106 agreements totalling £531,500.
- Training and skills development - Four apprenticeship posts established in the Urban Forestry Unit and Countryside Service and yearly university placements are offered within the Green Space Improvement Service.
- Installation of electronic visitor counters at Palfrey Park and Walsall Arboretum recording annual visits of over 1.1 million people per year - yearly increase identified on each site. A further 500,000 annual person visits recorded to Willenhall Memorial Park.
- Development and ongoing support to 16 Parks and Green Spaces Friends Group and the umbrella Walsall Parks and Green Spaces Network - Big Society in action since 1994.
- Walsall Green Space Strategy and Green Space Services recognised by the Government Department CABE Space as an example of best

practice in the production of the plan, community involvement and its delivery

- Development of the Greenspace Service Urban Forestry Unit which has achieved Government Recognition and achievement of 2nd place in the Excellence in Forestry Award in 2010
- Introduction of enforcement powers for the park ranger service
- Ongoing links with Birmingham University in which the Green Space Improvement Service deliver a core part of year 1 and 2 Geography and Town Planning Degree students curriculum studies and assessment
- Achievement of 42 out of the 57 strategic actions delivered during the lifetime of the first strategy
- Customer satisfaction with Walsall parks and green spaces has increased since the beginning of 2006

3 Context

3.1 About Walsall

3.1.1 Demographics

Walsall is one of seven Metropolitan boroughs located in the West Midlands. Walsall lies some 12 miles north of Birmingham and 6 miles east of Wolverhampton. The borough of Walsall contains a mixture of urban and rural land uses with the Town Centre of Walsall being the key focus of activity, but one of only six district centres.

Walsall has a population of just over 254,500 (ONS, 2006) and following a period of decline, the population has increased gradually since 2001. Walsall borough has a diverse population with 13.6% of its population belong to an ethnic community, a figure higher than the England and Wales average. Projections carried out by consultants working on the Black Country Study have demonstrated that the proportion of BME groups within the population will continue to increase. With respect to children and young people the population of 5-15 year olds is increasing in Walsall, whereas nationally, the proportion of young people in this age group is declining. Overall, the borough's population is expected to decline by 1100 people in the period to 2015.

The number of elderly people (over 65) in Walsall is projected to increase by 3.2% by 2026. The rate of increase will be greatest in the over 75s.

3.1.2 Indices of Deprivation 2011

Walsall is ranked as the 51st most deprived out of 351 Local Authority areas in the country and is one of the 15% most deprived Local Authorities in England. In relation to deprivation however there is a large east-west divide in the Borough, with particularly high levels of deprivation adjacent to the M6 corridor. Reflecting this, wards within the 25% most

deprived in the country include Bentley and Darlaston North, Birchills Leamore, Blakenall, Bloxwich East, Bloxwich West, Palfrey, Pleck, St. Matthews and Willenhall South.

3.1.3 Big issues

Of all local authorities in England, Walsall ranks in the top 50 for the three main IMD measures. However, Walsall is a borough of contrasts with high levels of deprivation, including unemployment and poor health, to the west of borough, and parts of the east being extremely affluent.

Average incomes in the Borough are also significantly lower than the regional and national figures. The proportion of the working age population in employment in Walsall is 67.4% totalling 104,000 people. This is much lower than the West Midlands (72.7%) and Great Britain (74.2%). However, there has been a steady improvement in the local economy with worklessness currently standing at 3.9% (July 2007 claimant count) compared to 5.8% a decade ago. However the gap between Walsall and England and Wales has widened.

Education attainment in Walsall over the past few years has gradually improved. An ambitious improvement programme has been put in place and the results are beginning to be seen. This year attainment has not only improved but has also narrowed the gap with national attainment levels. Education is seen as a priority by Walsall residents so it is important that this focus is continued in order to improve further.

The percentage of 16-18 year olds NEET in Walsall fell from 12.4% in 2004 to 9.5% in 2007 and exceeded the Local Area Agreement stretch target of 9.7% for that year. In England the percentage of NEETs remained at 8.6% in both 2004 and 2006. However, although the gap has closed, 16 to 18 year olds in Walsall are more likely to be NEET than in England. Current figures show Walsall has a high proportion of adults (47%) that have received no adult learning. This compares with 33.3% in the West Midlands and 28.6% nationally.

Whilst male and female life expectancy has increased in Walsall over the last decade, life expectancies for both sexes remain lower than national averages. Overall, in comparison to national averages, health in Walsall is relatively poor. Although largely consistent with Black Country averages, the mortality rate from cancer, heart disease and strokes is significantly higher in Walsall than regional national averages, and this gap is widening. Alongside, infant deaths and diabetes levels are considerably higher than national averages.

Rates of obesity in Walsall are significantly higher than the rates for England and Wales. Data from a Walsall PCT pilot study in 2006, looking at childhood obesity, suggested that overall 20% of children measured in the pilot were obese (21% in children in Reception and Year 6), and 30% were overweight and obese. In England 14% of children aged 2-10 were obese in 2004. However, the findings from this Walsall pilot are comparable to data from other local studies.

The UK has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in the whole of Europe. Over the past decade, Walsall's under 18 pregnancy rate has consistently been around 40% higher than the national rate, and is generally higher than other comparable nearby authorities. However, the rate has, fallen in recent years.

Anti Social Behaviour is a recurring cause of public concern in local consultations. The most recent Local Government User Satisfaction Survey shows that parents not taking responsibility for the behaviour of their children and teenagers loitering on the streets are perceived as a fairly big problem in Walsall (68% and 64% respectively). Around 55% think that people not treating other people with respect and consideration is also a cause for concern. Just under half of all respondents think that people using or dealing in drugs is a problem and 40% think that vandalism,

graffiti and other deliberate damage to property is problematic in their local area.⁶

The housing stock of Walsall consists of approximately 107,600 dwellings: 65% are owner occupied, 27% are socially rented and 8% rented from a private landlord or living rent free. In general terms, in relation to housing quality and demand there is a large divide between western and eastern parts of Walsall.

Poor quality housing has been linked to poor health, underachievement, and higher unemployment. A recent stock condition survey in the Walsall's Private Sector housing showed that 24.3% of stock failed the Decent Homes Standard.

The Black Country Core Strategy Document (November 2009) incorporates a target of 63,000 dwellings for the Black Country as a whole over the 2006-26 period. This target is broken down to the district level, allocating 11,973 net dwellings (i.e. before adding replacement dwellings to compensate for demolitions) to be provided in Walsall between 2006-26.⁷

Overall, the western part of the Borough suffers from low housing demand and contains a high level of empty properties. There are a number of areas characterised by poor quality housing with defects including poorly fitting windows, lack of inadequate heating and other basic standards. The impact of the M6 and its connector roads in the western part of the Borough on noise pollution, visual intrusion and air quality also contributes to a poor quality built environment, affecting the setting of local housing. In contrast, the east side of Walsall has a more desirable housing stock,

⁶ Walsall Local Area Agreement 2008-2011

⁷ Walsall Council (November 2009 (Amended March 2010)) - Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

reflecting its greater affluence, and the area's proximity to greenspace and open countryside. As a result, property prices in the east of Walsall are 69% higher than in the west.

Due to the intensive road network and certain heavy industrial operations Walsall has relatively challenging issues in relation to air quality. The council is working closely with its partners to identify and address areas of poor air quality and has recently declared the entire borough an Air Quality Management Area due to levels of nitrogen dioxide.

Two thirds of residents are satisfied with their local area as a place to live, 10% are very satisfied. Satisfaction levels are highest amongst respondents living in Aldridge South and Streetly and lowest amongst those living in Blakenall and Bloxwich.

High quality, accessible and welcoming green spaces have the potential to contribute significantly in addressing or mitigating against these key issues not least those relating to physical and mental health and well-being.

3.2 Policy Context

3.2.1 National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (2012) - The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was adopted in March 2012 and replaces over 1000 pages of national guidance with a much smaller document of around 50 pages. With the planning system regulating the use and development of land and property, the NPPF intends to deliver a system that is positive, proactive, simple and free from bureaucratic barriers. The key changes contained within the NPPF are outlined as follows:

- A presumption in favour of sustainable development - making the default answer 'yes'
- Changes to the plan making system - giving an increased role to local stakeholders

- A commitment to increased housing delivery - with a requirement to identify more land;
- A more flexible approach to the Green Belt, renewables and the historic environment.

The National Planning Policy Framework replaces and revokes former Planning Policy Guidance and Planning Policy Statements including the following key PPGs / PPSs which impacted on green spaces:

- PPS 1 Delivering Sustainable Development & Supplement to PPS 1: Planning and Climate Change
- PPG 2 Green Belts
- PPS 3 Housing
- PPS 9 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation
- PPS 12 Local Spatial Planning
- PPS 25 Development and Flood Risk

and

- PPG 17 Open Space, Sport and Recreation which provides detailed guidance on the consideration of open space, sport and recreation matters in relation to the land use planning system. This Green Space Strategy builds upon the findings of the Green Space Audit carried out in 2006 and more recently that of 2010 which were based on the guidance contained in PPG17 and the companion guide - Assessing Needs and Opportunities.

Localism Bill (2011) - The introduction of the Localism Bill signals a commitment by the current Coalition government to shift power to local people. With reductions to public spending in order to address the current deficit, the Localism Bill and one of its central pillars, the "Big Society" is intended to help create stronger communities that can do more to help themselves without first turning to the state for help.

The Natural Choice: Securing the Value of Nature (2011) - The Natural Environment White Paper highlights the enormous economic value of ecosystem services, warning that economic growth cannot be sustainable unless there is effective stewardship of the environment. This philosophy is central to

the beliefs set out in the paper, arguing that it should be placed at the heart of decision making. The White Paper offers a framework of initiatives to resource the protection of the natural environment:

- Local Natural Partnerships - bringing together a range of organisations to create a vision for the natural environment to ensure it is taken into account in decision-making processes;
- Nature Improvement Areas - large areas where nature restoration would have greater priority, intended to maximise opportunities to restore and connect nature on a significant scale.

The Black Country is one of twelve national Nature Improvement Areas announced in April 2012 and will benefit from a share of £7.5 million funding over three years.

Green Infrastructure Guidance published by Natural England how green infrastructure contributes to spatial planning and sustainability objectives fulfils a range of cross cutting government policy priorities including economic growth and employment and healthy communities. Significantly Walsall and the Black Country have not specifically developed Green Infrastructure strategies like some other areas of the country although the Black Country Core Strategy offers a sub-regional approach to planning policy.

Accessible Natural Greenspace in Towns and Cities (Natural England) - The ANGSt model set the following standards which are pertinent to the Green Space Strategy;

- "No person should live more than 300m from their nearest area of natural green space of at least 2 ha in size
- Provision of at least 1 ha of local nature reserve per 1000 population
- There should be at least one accessible 20 ha site within 2 km
- There should be one accessible 100 ha site within 5 km
- There should be one accessible 500 ha site within 10 km".

Blue Sky, Green Space: Understanding the Contribution Parks and Green Spaces can make to Improving People's Lives (2011) which outlines the many benefits that a diverse range of quality green spaces bring, covering health, communities, economic and environmental value. The report highlights that parks and green spaces in and around our urban areas, improve the health, wellbeing and quality of life of individuals. It is argued that 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.

Healthy Lives, Healthy People (2011) - This public health White Paper highlights the vital role of green space in addressing health inequalities between rich and poor communities. The document sets out an approach that seeks to specifically involve local people and protect funding for public health to tackle the preventable causes of ill-health. Such approaches to addressing public health are particularly pertinent to Walsall.

3.2.2 Local Policy

Walsall Sustainable Community Strategy - developed by the Walsall Partnership - the overarching partnership of key agencies working to develop a vision for Walsall for the period to 2010. The Sustainable Community Strategy was published in 2008.

The Vision for Walsall for 2021 is "Walsall will be a great place to live work and invest, where:

- people get on well with one another;
- people can get around easily and safely;
- people support and look after one another;
- there are more and better jobs for local people;
- people can live an independent and healthy life;
- people consider the impact of what we do now on future generations;

- there exist high-quality and distinctive designs of buildings and spaces;
- growing up is as good as it can be and young people fulfil their potential;
- people are our strength and have the skills and attitude required by employers;
- everyone has the chance to live in a home fit for their purpose and fit for the future;
- people feel proud to live”.

Actions within the Sustainable Community Strategy are set out under three key themes - People, Places and Prosperity. Green Spaces clearly make a direct contribution to all three themes and the Sustainable Community Strategy recognises the earlier Green Space Strategy as one of 18 core Council policies and strategies.

Walsall Council Corporate Plan (2011/12 - 2014/15) - “Building Pride in Walsall” - sets out priorities for the authority around three priority areas: neighbourhoods and communities; the economy; and health and well-being.

Under neighbourhoods and communities the Plan states that “Our green spaces will be well maintained and accessible so that people want to use them and value the time they spend there”. In achieving this emphasis is placed upon local communities “taking control”, where more residents are involved in volunteering and young people are engaged in positive activities. There is an aspiration that Walsall is a place where localism thrives.

Under the theme of the economy the Plan states that: “Walsall will be an attractive place to live, work and socialise, where the public and private sectors continue to work closely together to ensure the economic vitality of the borough”. Green spaces can contribute to vibrant town and district centres.

Under the theme of health and well-being there is an emphasis on healthier lifestyles with more people taking part in physical activity. A key aim is

to reduce health inequality and gaps in life expectancy across the Borough. All the images shown in this section show the value of green space in contributing to this aim.

The Black Country Core Strategy (Adopted 2011) - The Black Country Core Strategy is a sub-regional strategic planning document covering the local authority areas of Walsall, Sandwell, Dudley and Wolverhampton and was adopted in February 2011. The Core Strategy forms part of the Walsall Local Development Framework along with saved policies from the earlier Walsall Unitary Development Plan (2005) and other key documents.

The Black Country Core Strategy recognises that having high quality green space is key to high quality employment areas.

Walsall Local Development Framework - the development plan for Walsall comprises:

- Black Country Core Strategy (BCCS) 2011
- Walsall Unitary Development Plan (UDP) 2005 - 'saved' policies
- UDP Proposals Map and Town and District Centre Inset Maps

These documents are part of the Walsall Local Development Framework (LDF). Additional planning policy documents are prepared by the Council to offer further guidance to the policies of the 'development plan', and these also make up part of the Local Development Framework. Walsall Council is preparing a Supplementary Planning Document for Open Space which will be informed by this Green Space Strategy. This will update the document published in 2006.

Walsall's Site Allocation Document (SAD) will identify sites for housing, employment and other land uses to ensure that the needs of current and future residents and businesses are met. The SAD will form part of the statutory Development Plan and will be used as the basis for determining planning applications as well as encouraging new development to take place in the right places. As part of this process some green space sites are likely to be identified as potential development sites.

Walsall Open Space, Sport & Recreational Facilities PPG17 Audit & Assessment (2011) - sets out a series of recommendations about local standards for open space based on an assessment carried out in 2010. The data on which the conclusions are based has been reviewed and updated and used to inform the development of the Green Space Strategy.

Walsall Play Strategy (2012 - 2017) - The second Walsall Play Strategy was published in draft format in 2011 by the Walsall Greenspace Service and represents the first revision to the earlier Play Strategy first published in 2007. The Strategy sets out why play is important for every child's healthy development and then outlines the current position of play in Walsall Borough.

The vision within the Strategy is that "Walsall will be a place where children, young people and the community are able to engage in high quality, safe, challenging and accessible play that meets their range of physical and health needs through planning for sustainable play events and facilities in partnership with Council and other agencies". The play strategy sets out recommended accessibility standards for children's play and for youth and adult provision and a focus of where resources and investment should be prioritised over the 5 year lifetime of the plan to achieve these fair borough wide standards. The strategy also proposes rationalisation of the current provision of play sites across the borough to address over supply of facilities in particular areas and under provision in other parts of the borough. The Play Strategy will be adopted by Cabinet at year end 2012/13.

Walsall Allotments Strategy (2007-2012) - Walsall Council provides 36 allotments sites comprising a total of 1,434 plots across the Borough. The Strategy sets an accessibility standard whereby residents can expect an allotment site within 2 Km of where they live. In terms of the quantity of provision the Strategy sets out the need to protect and where possible increase the level of provision to achieve a target of 6.3 hectares per 1000 population. Where deficiencies exist consideration should be given to other open space changing use to address these deficiencies. A new Community Garden and Allotment Strategy is due to commence production in 2013/13 which will include a focus on the future management of Walsall's

allotments and new opportunities to create Allotments and or community gardens in areas of present deficiency and high waiting lists.

Playing Pitch Strategy (2009) - provides an assessment of supply and demand for key pitch sports across the Borough, specifically: football, cricket, rugby union and hockey. It takes account of the quantity, quality and access of facilities, using an eight stage assessment method developed by Sport England and Central Council for Physical Recreation and supersedes earlier Playing Pitch Strategies.

The PPS found that there were 98 sites across the Borough providing 245 pitches, of which 82% of pitches have secured community use. Nearly a quarter of all pitch sites identified are in council ownership and located on parks, playing fields and other green spaces and over half of all pitch sites are on education sites. The remaining pitches are privately owned.

Key findings included:

- A surplus of senior football provision, but a deficiency in mini and junior football. The surplus in senior provision is sufficient to address the deficiencies in mini and junior football.
- There is sufficient provision of pitches for cricket (small surplus), rugby and hockey however there is limited access to such provision in some parts of the borough.
- There are issues associated with the quality of pitches and ancillary facilities.

Walsall Council Urban Forest Procedure (2007) - The purpose of the Urban Forest Procedure is to provide *"A plan for the overall, long-term management of all trees and woodland in Walsall. It provides detailed policies for the direct management of trees which are the Council's responsibility and for the use of statutory powers and guidance to encourage the appropriate management of trees outside the Council's ownership"*. Since trees form such an important visual and ecological

Black Country Geodiversity Action Plan (2006) - produced by the Black Country Geodiversity Partnership, this plan identifies seven priority work areas for the conservation of geology in the area and sets actions to safeguard and enhance this for future generation. Walsall has some key sites such as Walsall Arboretum, Parks Lime Pits, Cuckoo's Nook & The Dingle and Barr Beacon Quarry which are important for their geological heritage.

4 Current Greenspace Provision

This sections sets out the current supply of green space across the borough and sets out various forms of classification.

4.1 Approach & Methodology

Existing mapping data held by Walsall Council from the previous Green Space Strategy and subsequent PPG17 audit has been collated using a Geographical Information System (GIS). Previous data was fully reviewed by the authority's Green Space Service and Planning Policy team to ensure that all green spaces over 0.4 hectares were mapped. Agricultural land has again been excluded from the study since it does not fall within the definition of green space. Similarly Green Belt land has been reviewed to identify potential green spaces, but Green Belt is a planning designation and is not synonymous with green space. Private gardens of residential properties are also excluded from the strategy.

Some green spaces smaller than 0.4 hectares have been included in the analysis where they are specialist provision (such as provision for children and young people) or where these green spaces are significant within their locality. However, new sites have typically not been mapped if they cover an area of less than 0.4 hectares.

4.1.1 Green Space Typology

Following national guidance published in PPG17 and its companion guide and CABE Space Guidance on producing open space strategies all sites have been classified according to their type, based on the primary purpose of the space. Whilst green spaces are multi-functional, where for example parks and gardens can provide a place for sport and recreation and children's play each green space has been classified by its primary purpose using the green space typology shown in Table 1.

Greenspace Typology	Primary Purpose
Allotments	Opportunities for those people who wish to do so to grow their own produce as part of the long term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion
Amenity Green Space	Opportunities for informal activities close to home or work or enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas
Churchyard & Cemetery	Quieter contemplation and burial of the dead; often linked to the promotion of wildlife conservation and biodiversity. Also includes closed burial grounds which may be used for informal recreation.
Green Corridor & Accessible Countryside	Walking, cycling or horse riding, whether for leisure purposes or travel, and opportunities for wildlife migration. The multi-user trail network within the District has typically been classified as "Green Corridors" .
Natural and Semi-natural Green Spaces	Wildlife conservation, bio-diversity and environmental education and awareness.
Outdoor Sports Facilities	Participation in outdoor sports, such as pitch sports, tennis, bowls, athletics or countryside and water sports
Parks and (Public) Gardens	Accessible, high quality opportunities for informal recreation and community events
Provision For Children And Young People	Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children and young people, such as equipped play areas, ball courts, skateboard areas and teenage shelters.

Table 1 Level 1 Typology based on PPG17 Typology

The mapping exercise has also recorded the secondary and other uses for green spaces and this has been used to inform the analysis.

4.2 Quantity

Walsall has 535 green spaces covering over 2,160 hectares of green space which makes up nearly 25% of the total area of the Borough. This is a similar level of provision compared to neighbouring Boroughs of Sandwell and Dudley. Sandwell has 2,042 hectares of green space, totalling 23.9% of

the Borough area and Dudley has 2,087 hectares of green spaces making up 21.4% of the Borough area.

Much of Walsall's green space is natural and semi-natural green space which accounts for 45% of all green space by area, although only a quarter of the total number of spaces. Outdoor sports facilities (including golf courses) cover nearly 370 hectares making up 17% of the total area of green space. Parks and Gardens cover over 200 hectares, nearly 13% of all green space by area. There are a large number of amenity green spaces, offering opportunities for informal recreation and providing visual amenity and this type of green space is the most common in terms of the total number of spaces totalling 157. However, these spaces tend to be smaller and comprise just 9% of the total area of green space across the Borough. Allotments and community gardens number 39 sites and make up around 44 hectares.

Just 10 sites were recorded as Provision for Children and Young People based on their primary purpose. Other green spaces such as parks and green and outdoor sports facilities have formal play provision as part of a wider range of facilities and other green spaces including natural and semi-natural green space include opportunities for informal play. There are a total of 65 equipped play areas across the Borough with unrestricted access along with additional youth and adult facilities (including tennis courts, basketball half courts, multi-use games areas, skate parks and BMX tracks).

Greenspace Type	No. of sites	Amount of Land (Ha)	Proportion of Green Space (by Area)
Natural & Semi-natural Greenspace	132	980.57	45.4%
Outdoor Sports Facilities	51	367.99	17.0%
Parks & Gardens	37	269.67	12.5%
Amenity Greenspace	157	201.10	9.3%
Institutional Land	68	185.24	8.6%
Cemeteries & Churchyards	24	63.33	2.9%

Allotments	39	44.12	2.0%
Green Corridor	17	42.73	2.0%
PCYP	10	7.34	0.3%
Total	535	2,162.09	100.0%

Table 2 All Green Space in Walsall Borough by Type

4.2.1 Accessibility

However, not all green spaces within the borough are freely accessible, many have some form of access restriction.

Accessibility Level	Description
Free	Sites have unrestricted public access, without prior arrangement, although some sites may have access restrictions between dusk and dawn.
Limited	Sites may be publicly or privately owned but access is limited in some way, for example through membership of an organisation or payment of an admission fee, or requiring prior arrangement.
None	Sites are not accessible to the general public.

Table 3 Accessibility Levels

Figure 1 shows the accessibility of the green spaces in Walsall Borough. Of the total of 535 green spaces, 315 (58.9%) have unrestricted access, 46 (8.6%) limited access and 174 (32.5%) are not accessible

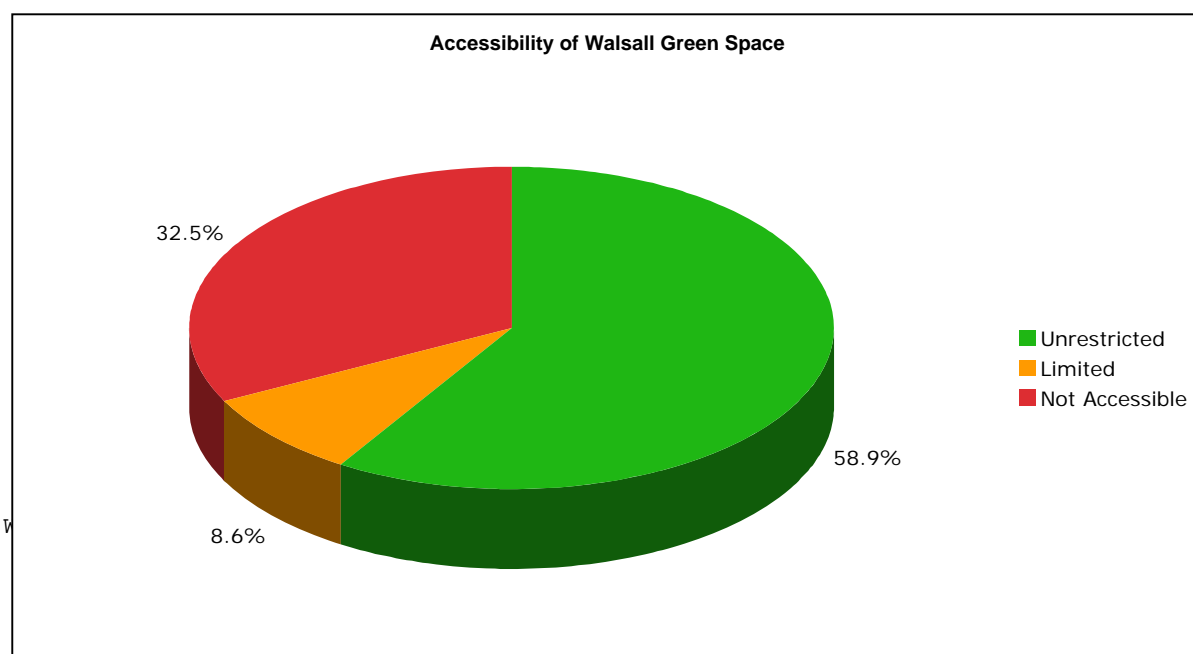


Figure 1 Accessibility of Green Space

Figure 2 shows the distribution of all green spaces across Walsall Borough. Sites are colour coded by green space type and the level of public access.

Insert figure 2 here

Table 4 shows the number and area of green spaces with unrestricted access broken down by green space type.

Greenspace Type	No. of sites	Amount of Land (Ha)	Proportion of Green Space (by Area)
Natural & semi-natural	77	672.89	53.5%
Parks & Gardens	37	269.67	21.4%
Amenity green space	149	192.36	15.3%
Cemeteries & churchyards	20	60.31	4.8%
Green Corridor	14	30.58	2.4%
Outdoor Sports	9	28.89	2.3%
PCYP	9	2.87	0.2%
Allotments	0	0.00	0.0%
Institutional Land	0	0.00	0.0%
Total	315	1,257.57	100.0%

Table 4 Green Space with Unrestricted Access by Type

Natural and semi-natural green spaces remain the most significant green space type making up nearly 54% of all green spaces with unrestricted access. Parks and Gardens make up over 21% of all unrestricted green space and amenity green space a further 15%. Outdoor Sports Facilities typically have some form of access restriction and with golf courses and other sites discounted based on accessibility comprise just 2.3% of unrestricted green space.

A standardised measure of the quantity of green space which allows comparison across different geographical areas is based on the amount of unrestricted green space per 1,000 population. Against this measure, Walsall has nearly 5 hectares per 1,000 population based on a resident

population of 253,499 recorded through the 2001 Census. Table 5 shows the amount of green space per 1,000 population by green space type.

Typology	Amount of Unrestricted Green Space (Ha)	Amount of Unrestricted Green Space (Ha) per 1000 population
Amenity Greenspace	192.36	0.76
Churchyards & Cemeteries	60.31	0.24
Green Corridor	30.58	0.12
Natural & Semi-natural Greenspace	672.89	2.65
Outdoor Sports Facilities	28.89	0.11
Parks & Gardens	269.67	1.06
Provision for Children & Young People	2.87	0.01
Total	1,257.57	4.96

Table 5 Quantity of Accessible Green Space per 1,000 Population by Type

Compared against the other Black Country Boroughs Walsall has marginally more unrestricted green space than Sandwell, Wolverhampton and Dudley with 4.92, 4.72 and 4.51 hectares per 1,000 respectively.

Distribution of green space across Walsall Borough is uneven, with central and northern areas of the Borough having more accessible green space, particularly compared to the more high density urban geography in the west of the Borough. Table 6 shows the amount of unrestricted green space by Area Partnership.

Area Code	Area Partnership	Amount of Unrestricted Green Space (Ha)	Population of Area Partnership	Amount of Unrestricted Green Space (Ha) per 1000 population
1	Brownhills/Pelsall/Rushall/Shelfield	310.50	35,939	8.64
3	Bloxwich/Blakenall/Birchills/Leamore	265.58	51,506	5.16
Borough Total		1,257.60	253,499	4.96
6	Willenhall/Short Heath	170.44	38,438	4.43
5	Darlaston/Bentley	111.07	25,555	4.35
2	Aldridge/Streetly/Pheasey/Walsall Wood	206.72	49,579	4.17
4	St Matthew's/Paddock/Palfrey/Pleck	193.26	53,456	3.62

Table 6 Quantity of Unrestricted Green space per 1000 Population by Area Partnership

Brownhills/Pelsall/Rushall/Shelfield and Bloxwich/Blakenall/Birchills/Leamore Area Partnership have more unrestricted green space than both the Borough average and the other 4 partnership areas. However, this Area Partnership analysis masks more local variations in the amount of green space. Whilst Brownhills/Pelsall/Rushall/Shelfield Area Partnership has the greatest amount of unrestricted and over 74% more green space than the Borough average the wards of Rushall Shelfield and Pelsall have much less accessible green space than the Borough average. Similarly, within the Bloxwich/Blakenall/Birchills/Leamore Area Partnership the wards of Bloxwich East and Birchills Leamore have less unrestricted green space than the Borough average.

All the Wards in the west of the Borough have less unrestricted green space than the average level of provision in the Borough.

Ward	Amount of Unrestricted Green Space (Ha)	Population of Ward	Amount of Unrestricted Green Space (Ha) per 1000 population
Brownhills	166.35	12,641	13.16
Blakenall	96.99	11,942	8.12
Short Heath	88.38	11,438	7.73
Rushall Shelfield	95.21	13,449	7.08
Aldridge Central and South	79.36	12,267	6.47
Pelsall	89.04	14,339	6.21
Bloxwich West	89.40	14,808	6.04
Paddock	76.47	13,065	5.85
Pheasey	52.14	8,939	5.83
Borough Total / Average	1,257.60	253,499	4.96
Darlaston South	56.26	12,252	4.59
Birchills Leamore	57.22	13,659	4.19
Bentley and Darlaston North	52.24	13,679	3.82
Willenhall South	51.83	13,797	3.76
Aldridge North and Walsall Wood	44.90	12,881	3.49
Pleck	32.33	10,649	3.04
Willenhall North	32.80	12,535	2.62
Bloxwich East	24.63	11,070	2.22
Palfrey	29.45	14,599	2.02
Streetly	25.32	13,248	1.91
St Matthew's	17.25	12,205	1.41

Table 7 Unrestricted Green Space by Ward

National Playing Fields Association - Six Acre Standard

The National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) standard (2001) is a quantitative standard which sets out minimum standards for Outdoor Playing Space. The Standard is 2.4 hectares (6 acres) per 1000 population and includes an element of 1.6 hectares for Outdoor Sport and 0.8 hectares for Children’s Playing Space.

Within the Standard for Outdoor Sport there is a specific allocation of 1.2 hectares per 1000 population for formal pitch sports. Walsall’s PPG17 Audit (2010) found that there was 157.43 hectares of formal sports provision (excluding golf courses) equivalent to 0.62 hectares per 1000 population. An additional 256.33 hectares of Outdoor Sports Facilities would be required to achieve this part of the NPFA Standard (based on a target of 405.6 hectares).

The Children’s Playing Space element of this standard is discussed below at section 4.3.2.

4.3 Accessibility

Table 4 below sets out the hierarchy levels that were used to classify the importance or significance of Borough’s green spaces.

Category	Description	Indicative Walking Distance (metres)
Borough	Green spaces typically over 2 hectares which offer a range of facilities for different visitors and are likely to attract visitors from across the entire Borough.	1200m
Neighbourhood	Green spaces typically over 1 hectare, which perform an important function for their local community. Sites may include some recreational or play facilities.	600m
Local	Green spaces typically 0.4 hectares or greater, which serve only the immediate locality. Spaces typically have a limited range of recreation facilities or infrastructure.	400m

Table 8 Hierarchy Level

Each site that was mapped on the GIS was assigned a hierarchy level which was then checked by Walsall's Green Space Service and Planning Policy teams. Accessibility mapping was then carried out based on the indicative walking distances.

Figure 4 shows the accessibility of local level sites buffered at 400m, neighbourhood level sites buffered at 600m and borough sites at 1200m. Figure 5 shows green space deficiency based on no access to any of the three levels of green spaces within their respective catchments. Whilst most urban areas are generally well serviced by some form of green space there are significant gaps in provision in Pleck, Willenhall South, Blakenall, north eastern Brownhills, parts of south Walsall (Paddock ward), Streetly and north-west Aldridge.

Figure 11 here

Figure 12 here

4.3.1 Accessible Natural Green Space Standard

The provision of Natural and Semi-natural Green Space has been compared against the Natural England Accessible Natural Green Space (ANGSt) Standard. All green space or component parts of sites (within other green space types) that characterise semi-natural green space have been considered against this model.

The ANGSt model includes the following standards against which an assessment has been made;

- No person should live more than 300m from their nearest area of natural green space of at least 2 ha in size;
- There should be at least one accessible 20 ha site within 2 km from home.

Figure 4 below shows the accessibility of Borough residents to natural and semi-natural green space over 2 hectares based on a 300 metre buffer. It can be seen that Walsall Borough does not achieve this part of the ANGSt Standard since there are large areas of the Borough with no access to Natural and Semi-natural Green Space.

Figure 5 illustrates the proximity to Natural and Semi-natural Green Spaces over 20 hectares in size. The sites are buffered at 2 Km and there are large areas of the Borough that do not have access to these sites, particularly the south of the Borough. Consequently Walsall does not meet this element of the ANGSt Standard although the deficiency using this measure is less than that based on 300m proximity to sites over 2 hectares.

The quantitative component of the ANGSt standard requires that there is at least 1.0 hectare of designated Local Nature Reserve per 1,000 population. Within Walsall this part of the standard is exceeded. There are 11 Local Nature Reserves covering 78.02 hectares which equates to 1.10 hectares per 1000 population, 0.10 hectares above the minimum standard.

Figure 4 here

Figure 5 here

4.3.2 Play Provision

Determining the quantity of play provision and considering standards based only on the area of play space is problematic since green space other than provision for children and young people can accommodate children's play and with a shift towards more natural play, fenced areas exclusively for play area now only part of the wider provision for children and young people.

National guidance in PGG17 and its the companion guide and CABE Space guidance on Open Space Strategies recommends that distribution and travel distance to play spaces is more important. This approach is also endorsed by the NPFA in the Six Acre Standard which suggests a 240 metre walking distance as an approximation of 5 minutes walking time is the most appropriate measure. This has been reviewed as part of the development of the Green Space Strategy and through the development of the draft Walsall Play Strategy (2012 to 2017). The Walsall Play Strategy recommends that play spaces should typically serve a wider area than that suggested by the NPFA and should be based around a 600 metre catchment. Youth and Adult Play Provision (including multi-use games areas, tennis, BMX and basketball courts) should have a catchment of 800m and at the top level of the hierarchy proposed play hubs, located at strategic points across the Borough should have a catchment of 1000 metres.

Centre based provision is supplemented by new mobile youth and play provision e.g. hopper bus, cyber bus, MOVE lorry and REACH UP climbing tower gives Walsall Council and its partners the opportunity to respond more flexibly to need (sometimes in response to anti-social behaviour) and to engage with young people around specific projects. Access, parking and circulation for such vehicles therefore needs to be considered as part of improvements to parks' infrastructure generally.

Figure 6

Figures 6 to 7 show the distribution and accessibility of this play hierarchy.

Figure 7

4.3.3 Allotments & Community Gardens

There are currently 39 allotment sites in the Borough which provide opportunities for local food production. However the condition of sites varies significantly with 2 sites presently derelict although one is proposed to be brought back into use as a community garden. There is also 1 private allotment in Willenhall and another allotment in Clayhanger which is leased to the Clayhanger Allotment Association council's property services. This latter site is due to be transferred to the Council's Greenspace Improvement Service alongside the other Council's allotments along with adjoining grazing land as an extension to the allotment to meet local waiting lists and deficiencies in this area. The distribution of these spaces varies significantly with 13 allotment sites in St Matthew's/Paddock/Palfrey/Pleck partnership area and just 2 in Aldridge/Streetly/Pheasey/Walsall Wood. There are currently waiting lists of over 65 people for these 2 sites that can only accommodate 25 plots.

Current projects that are underway include:

- the establishment and running of a community garden in Caldmore as a community partnership including the Green Space Improvement Service
- a community garden steering group centering around creating a community garden hub in Victoria Road Allotments in Darlaston
- a steering group is being established at Herberts Park Road former allotments which was declared surplus to requirements in 2004 which will now be developed as a community garden.

The draft Allotment Strategy suggests a catchment of 2 Kilometres for allotment provision with a standard of all residents having access within this distance (as shown on Figure 8). Generally, the current level of provision is adequate against this standard with the exception of parts of Aldridge Central and South, eastern Streetly and parts of Brownhills. The allotments strategy recommends that consideration is given to creating new

allotment and community gardening provision in areas of deficiency. The strategy will be developed and adopted during 2013/14.

Allotment figure 8 here

4.4 Quality

As part of the development of the original green space strategy in 2005 a comprehensive audit of 151 accessible green spaces was carried out using the Green Flag Award⁸ criteria. This process has been repeated in the review and updating of this strategy based on a sample of 53 green spaces which included all 25 'premier' green spaces as classified in the previous strategy along with 28 other green spaces and 14 allotment sites. The sites that were included in the 2011 sample were the main parks and green spaces in the Borough along with those that had received significant investment. Other sites were also selected for assessment including low quality, low value and under performing spaces that were options for change of use or those due for investment where a bench mark assessment was required.

The methodology used was the same in 2005 and 2011 based on the key criteria for the Green Flag Award which are shown below;

- A Welcoming Place
- Healthy, Safe and Secure
- Clean and Well Maintained
- Sustainability
- Conservation and Heritage
- Community Involvement
- Marketing
- Management

⁸ Green Flag is the national quality award for parks and green spaces and applicants are subject to an annual assessment process for each green space entered into the Award.

Under these key criteria are a total of 27 criteria of which 19 were used since they could be judged "on the ground" without any prior knowledge of the site or without reference to management plans and policies. Each of the criteria was scored on a scale of 0 to 10 using the Green Flag scoring line.

Score	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Quality	Very Poor		Poor			Fair		Good	Very Good	Excellent	Exceptional

Table 9 Green Flag Scoring Line

The maximum score available is 100. Under the national Green Flag Award scheme green spaces that achieve the award must score 66 or higher based on a desk assessment (management plan) and a field assessment.

The quality audit found that overall the site scores ranged from 11 to 72, with an average quality score of 39 out of 100. The highest quality spaces within the sample are Parks and Gardens. Natural and semi-natural green spaces achieve an average score of 39 which is equivalent to the sample average. Outdoor sports facilities, amenity green space and provision for children and young people all score lower than the sample average.

Typology	No. of sites	Quality Range	Average Quality Score 2011	Average Quality Score 2005	Variance (+ve / -ve)
Parks & Gardens	26	26 - 72	44	40	4.0
Natural & Semi-natural Green Space	13	27 - 53	39	41	-2.0
Amenity Green Space	8	12 - 48	32	30.5	1.0
Outdoor Sports Facilities	3	27 - 34	30	29	1.0
Provision for Children and Young People	3	11 - 37	27	35	-1.5

Table 10 Average Quality Scores by Typology

The average score for the quality assessment carried out in 2005 was 35, based on a sample of 151 sites. The comparative data for those sites that were assessed in both 2005 and 2011 is shown in Table 10 above. Overall there was an improvement in the average quality score of 1.5 percentage points. Parks and gardens increased by 10% from 40 to 44 reflecting the level of recent investment. Amenity green space and outdoor sports facilities showed a modest increase, whilst natural and semi-natural green space and provision for children and young people showed, on average a modest decrease. However, these averages mask the greater improvements demonstrated at a site specific level which are highlighted below.

The highest scoring green space was Palfrey Park, a park & garden of neighbourhood level significance which has been subject to restoration work that has significantly improved its quality score. Willenhall Memorial Park (park & garden) was the second highest scoring space, ahead of Leamore Park (park & garden). Merrions Wood was the highest scoring natural and semi-natural green space and Western Avenue in Bentley was the highest scoring outdoor sports facility. All sites classified as provision for children and young people and assessed as part of the quality audit scored below the average quality score of 39.

Palfrey Park, Willenhall Memorial Park and Merrions Wood all achieved the Green Flag Award in 2011 having first attained the awards in 2007, 2008 and 2009 respectively.

The average quality score for the 25 "premier" green spaces was 45 which is significantly higher than the average quality score. This average is also higher than the average score for what were known in 2005 as Walsall's 24 "key sites", which scored an average of 42 which would suggest that quality has improved over time.

The quality assessment also looked at a sample of 14 statutory allotments. The audit found that the quality scores ranged from 9 to 64 with an average score of 36. The sites selected were known to be in varying condition with the two lowest scoring sites (Trees Road and Tame Street East Allotments) each scoring just 9 as they are both vacant sites which are currently uncultivated. Sutton Road was the highest scoring site at 64 and was selected as a good example of an allotment has good access, infrastructure and security and environmental sustainability and a future candidate for a Green Flag Community Award.

There was some variation in quality across the Borough recorded with St Matthew's/Paddock/Palfrey/Pleck partnership area having the highest average quality score of 48. Darlaston/Bentley partnership area performed least well with an average of 30 against the Borough average of 39. Generally sites in the west of the Borough were of lower quality than those in the east. Sites in central Walsall (including southern and northern geographical extremes) tended to perform at or near the Borough average.

ID	Area Partnership	No. of Sites	Quality Range	Average Quality Score
4	St Matthew's/Paddock/Palfrey/Pleck	9	36 - 72	48
3	Bloxwich/Blakenall/Birchills/Leamore	7	27 - 63	43
2	Aldridge/Streetly/Pheasey/Walsall Wood	11	32 - 47	39
1	Brownhills/Pelsall/Rushall/Shelfield	9	12 - 52	38
6	Willenhall/Short Heath	10	24 - 64	36
5	Darlaston/Bentley	7	11 - 39	30
		53	11 - 72	39

Table 11 Quality Score by Area Partnerships

The average criteria scores are show in Table 12 below.

Personal security and conservation of buildings and structures were on average, the highest scoring criteria within the quality assessment whilst provision of information and interpretation and the linked criteria, provision of appropriate information score the lowest. Buildings and

infrastructure maintenance and wider grounds maintenance and horticulture also performed at a low level.

As a guide in order to achieve the Green Flag Award a site would need to score between 6 and 7 across all criteria in order to achieve the overall pass mark of 66 or higher. The criteria scores shown in the table below are average scores across a wide range of sites which explains the relatively low overall criteria scores.

Comparing the results of the two audits in 2005 and 2011 the average quality score increased from an average of 35 to 39 an increase of just over 10% (although the sample sizes differ).

Overall the authority can demonstrate improvement across 15 of the 19 field criteria used in the quality assessment. There has been considerable improvement in areas such as provision of appropriate information and signage, safe equipment facilities, provision of appropriate educational interpretation / information and appropriate provision of facilities. These improvements are as a result of recent investment in key green spaces often as part of a whole site masterplan led approach which has provided new signage and interpretation, better facilities (particularly play and youth provision), and improvements to site infrastructure.

Criteria	2011 Average Score	2005 Average Score	Variance (+ve / -ve)
Provision of appropriate information	3.1	1.9	1.2
Signage	3.4	2.2	1.1
Safe equipment facilities	4.8	3.9	0.8
Provision of appropriate educational interpretation / information	1.6	0.7	0.8
Appropriate provision of facilities	4.7	4.0	0.7
Litter and waste management	4.3	3.6	0.7
Dog fouling	4.4	3.7	0.6

Criteria	2011 Average Score	2005 Average Score	Variance (+ve / -ve)
Conservation of buildings and structures	4.9	4.6	0.3
Conservation of landscape features	4.4	4.1	0.3
Good and safe access	4.2	3.9	0.3
Quality of facilities	4.0	3.7	0.3
Equipment maintenance	3.9	3.7	0.2
Equal access for all	3.6	3.5	0.1
Welcoming	4.3	4.3	0.0
Personal security in park	4.9	5.0	-0.1
Grounds maintenance and horticulture	3.4	3.5	-0.1
Buildings and infrastructure maintenance	3.3	3.5	-0.2
Arboriculture and woodland management	3.8	4.1	-0.3
Conservation of natural features, wild fauna and flora	3.9	4.3	-0.4

Table 12 Average Criteria scores

At a site specific level, Leamore Park recorded the largest increase to its quality score of all the green spaces assessed since the 2005 Quality Audit, which may be largely attributed to the 'New Deal' package of improvements that were completed in 2007. Looking more broadly, **over half of all sites assessed improved upon their absolute quality scores** (27 sites), 3 sites recorded no change and the quality of approximately 36% of sites declined (19 sites). A further 4 sites were not assessed as part of the 2005 audit so a comparison cannot be made. Overall, where investment has been made to provide a broad range of improvements the quality score has typically increased. Where investment has been focused on a single aspect of the site or a single facility it has been more difficult to demonstrate overall gains in quality.

Comparing the quality of green spaces in Walsall to neighbouring boroughs shows that green spaces in the Borough are on average marginally better than those in Sandwell and Dudley. This is based on Sandwell having commissioned a similar audit of 230 spaces which generated an average quality score of 34 and Dudley having a score of 33 based on 246 spaces.

4.5 Strategic Classification of Green Space

In developing the Walsall Green Space Strategy the Council has reviewed all green space managed by the authority. Consideration has been given to the earlier audit and the findings in terms of the quantity, quality, accessibility and value of green space. The distribution of green space is uneven with some wards having much less access to green space than the Borough average. These wards, many of which are in the west of the Borough have less green space and that provided is typically of lower quality than other areas of the Borough despite broadly equal levels of capital resource and revenue funding. Other areas experience limited access to specific types of green space, be that allotment provision or access to natural and semi-natural green space. A detailed analysis at Partnership Area level has been carried out the opportunities to address these deficiencies has been considered and identified. It is a strategic aim of this strategy that where feasible new green space will be created through development opportunities, but it is unrealistic to assume that all potential deficiencies can be addressed in this manner. Similarly, changes to management and the primary purpose will be delivered, subject to funding, land swaps and other opportunities to reduce deficiencies in access to specific types of green space.

However, if the quality of green spaces is to be addressed there will be the need to focus resources on those spaces that have most potential, where real improvements can be made and sustained and to ensure that the appropriate level of resources are identified to allow ongoing maintenance at the required level. In order to achieve this the authority is proposing a new Strategic Hierarchy of Green Space that will allow all communities to have access to high quality green space within reasonable walking times, whilst rationalising and standardising the maintenance requirements on

other less significant spaces. The table below sets out the categorisation and characteristics within this hierarchy

Through this strategy the focus will be on providing more strategic sites which will become high quality community hubs offering a wide range of facilities and features. This will build on the success of the 25 premier green spaces designated in the 2006 strategy, which will be revised to 43 strategic green spaces (made up of 83 component parcels of land). The aspiration is that all residents will have access to one of these within 1600m walking distance.

In designating green spaces as strategic sites, consideration has been given to Goscote, Bentley and Walsall Wood where previously non-premier greenspaces have been reclassified on the basis of several factors including their strategic prominence and lack of alternative provision locally. The strategic hierarchy sets out the management intent over the next five years and some sites at the start of the strategy period may not yet have realised their potential.

Since the first Green Space Strategy in 2006, 21 green spaces (or parts of sites) have been lost to development. This amounts to 62.9 hectares across the borough. Further green space sites may be identified through the Site Allocations Document as potential development sites, balancing the authority's need to plan for housing and employment land. The strategic hierarchy takes into account the most valuable green spaces across the borough and suggest that higher level spaces should be afforded a greater degree of protection from development.

Strategic Hierarchy	Management Intent	Criteria
Strategic Green Spaces	Justify multiple facilities, detailed development and investment to enhance or maintain quality. The best of these greenspaces (define this using GF criteria &/or the value/quality classification criteria used for the GSS) are worth improving to a green flag standard with a MMP and LIP. Other sites should at least have a LIP	<p>Quality & Value - typically high quality and high value spaces</p> <p>Size - typically larger sites often over 10 hectares.</p> <p>Access - may include car parking facilities but also accessible via public transport links & on foot. Travel time may be up to 15-20 minutes.</p> <p>Facilities - offering a range of facilities or experiences or for semi-natural sites may included way marked routes. May be suitable venues for medium scale or larger events. More formal spaces are likely to include play provision at a community hub level (play strategy)</p> <p>Proximity - Strategic spaces are the most significant in the wider area. There may be a number of strategic green spaces in any given area for key green space types (e.g parks and gardens, natural and semi-natural green space outdoor sports facilities).</p>

Strategic Hierarchy	Management Intent	Criteria
District Green Spaces	Some development may be required to bring them up to a required standard for this level (define this using GF criteria &/or the value/quality classification criteria used for the GSS). They will continue to be proactively managed and maintained with production of Global Management Schemes covering all sites of a type and/or by ward. Any development projects will require a specific SIP for the green space	<p>Quality & Value - typically moderate quality and value spaces</p> <p>Size - typically greater than 5 hectares or more in size (although may be smaller c. 2 hectares)</p> <p>Access - typically may not include car parking on site. Most visitors travel on foot for 10-15 minutes.</p> <p>District level spaces serve residents across the local neighbourhood but are unlikely to be a destination site for people living further afield.</p> <p>Facilities - may offer a range of facilities to serve the local district but more limited in scale and range than Strategic spaces. More formal spaces may include play provision.</p> <p>Proximity - other green spaces may exist in the neighbourhood but District spaces are typically more significant than most others.</p>

Strategic Hierarchy	Management Intent	Criteria
Community Green Spaces	<p>Some development may be required to bring them up to a minimum standard for this level, for sustainable use (define this using GF criteria &/or the value/quality classification criteria used for the GSS hierarchy). Alternatively some of these spaces may also be investigated for alternative use (primary purpose / green space function) if there is a surplus /deficiency of different types in the community.</p> <p>They will be managed with lower levels of grounds maintenance to ensure that spaces are safe and meet the minimum standards for use.</p> <p>Generally no MMP or SIP would be required (but a Global Management Scheme for all the community parks by type and/or ward would be appropriate if resources are available to produce them)</p>	<p>Quality & Value - typically spaces of fair quality and value appropriate to the local community</p> <p>Size - typically under 2 hectares in size (although may be larger).</p> <p>Access - typically on foot with most users travelling for no more than 5 minutes</p> <p>Facilities - typically very limited facilities, access points may not be formalised and path networks may be limited. May include play provision but typically this is not present.</p> <p>May be important local level spaces for information recreation, dog walking and for young people.</p> <p>Proximity - other more significant green spaces are located in the vicinity.</p>
Incidental Green Spaces	<p>Green Spaces with little or no benefit to be gained from developing or maintaining them and they have high maintenance costs for their size.</p> <p>They may be subject to disposal if no alternative use (primary purpose / green space function) can be identified. Subject to review through the Site Allocations Document.</p>	<p>Quality & Value - Poor quality with low priority for improvement</p> <p>Low value with little chance of improvement</p> <p>Identified as under performing</p> <p>Size - Sites typically smaller than 0.25 ha</p> <p>Facilities - typically no facilities</p> <p>Proximity - Other green space in close proximity.</p>

Table 13 Strategic Hierarchy of Green Spaces.

The table below shows the results of the classification of green spaces against this hierarchy.

Green Space Type	Strategic	District	Community	Incidental	n/a	Total
Allotments		37			2	39
Amenity Greenspace	4	20	64	59	10	157
Cemeteries & Churchyards			8		16	24
Green Corridor	1	1	15			17
Institutional Land					68	68
Natural & Semi-natural Greenspace	54	14	19	7	38	132
Outdoor Sports Facilities	4	5	4		38	51
Parks & Gardens	20	9	7	1		37
PCYP			9		1	10
Total	83	86	126	67	173	535

Table 14 Classification of Green Space Type by Hierarchy

A full list of the green spaces and their classification under the strategic hierarchy can be found in Appendix A to this strategy.

A total of 43 spaces have been classified as strategic green spaces (comprising 83 smaller sites), those which are typically the largest sites with the greatest range of facilities, are the most frequently visited and ensure that all residents have access the borough to a strategic site within 1200m (?). The management intent is to continue to invest in and an upgrade these spaces during the lifetime of this strategy and to move towards a planned a coherent maintenance regime, backed by adequate resources. Consideration has been given to ensuring that there is a good geographical spread of strategic green spaces across the Borough. A further 86 District level spaces have been classified which will continue to be managed and maintained to a good standard with less of a focus on new investment, upgrading or additional provision. These spaces will typically serve a smaller geographical area than strategic level spaces. Community level spaces are local level facilities with limited formal provision. These spaces will be maintained at a basic level to ensure they are safe and meet the minimum standards. Incidental level spaces will be reviewed to

see if they can be managed in different ways or the primary function changed to address other green space deficiencies elsewhere.

Figures 9 to 11 show the distribution and accessibility of different levels of the strategic green space hierarchy.

Table 15 below shows the results of the quality assessment by Strategic Hierarchy level. Whilst this is based on a sample of all green space it provides an indication of the existing quality of green space at each level of the hierarchy.

Figure 9 here

Figure 10 here

Figure 11 here

Classification	Number of Sites	(Quality Score) Range	(Quality Score) Average	Minimum Quality Standard
Strategic	31	27 - 72	43	45
District	12	26 - 53	40	35
Community	10	11 - 47	28	25
Total	53	11 - 72	39	N/A

Table 15 Average Quality Score by Strategic Hierarchy Level

Future minimum quality standards are proposed for each level of the hierarchy. All Strategic green spaces should achieve a minimum quality standard of 45, District green spaces 35 and community green spaces at 25. Quality assessment should be undertaken in 2015/16 to monitor progress and in 2017/18 to establish the change achieved during the lifetime of the strategy.

4.6 Service Delivery

The Council's Greenspace assets in Walsall are managed by Greenspace Services within Leisure and Community Health as part of the Neighbourhood Directorate

The Greenspace Service is responsible for strategic planning and a range of frontline services.

There are five specific operational areas:

- Park Ranger Service;
- Countryside Service;
- Infrastructure Maintenance;
- Urban Forestry Unit
- Green Space Improvement Service (including allotments and community gardening).

The service supports a range of friends groups (currently 24) and other community and voluntary organisations interested in green space management,

development and volunteering. Other responsibilities include customer consultation, production of Management and Maintenance Plans and Site Improvement Master Plans, research, policy and strategy including the Green Space Strategy, Allotment Strategy and Play Strategy. The service also has responsibility for facilitating events and activities, infrastructure management and enforcement action.

On behalf of the Green Space Service, grounds maintenance services in some the boroughs green spaces are undertaken by Street Pride Service (excluding retained housing land and that under property services). The Green Space Service have established a Service Level Agreement with Street Pride which sets out the relationship and responsibilities between the two service areas. This agreement is monitored by Green Space Services although the Grounds Maintenance Budget is held by Street Pride. Maintenance operations are typically reviewed on a site by site basis through the development of Management and Maintenance Plans.

Other organisations that manage and maintain green space in the Borough include Walsall Housing Group, educational institutions, the Canal and Rivers Trust (formerly British Waterways), community based organisations, sports clubs and private companies.

The organisational delivery is reviewed later in Section 6.

The Green Space Services budget for 12/13 is just under £2.3million which includes an income requirement of £371k

This does not include the grounds maintenance budget held by Street Pride of approx £2 million relating to Walsall parks and green space managed by Green Space Services

4.7 Performance and Benchmarking

As part of ongoing service review and improvement Walsall Council carried out a benchmarking exercise with similar authorities that considered value for money and quality factors. The 2011 review compared Walsall with the following authorities:

- Tameside
- Bolton
- Rotherham
- Wakefield
- Coventry

The aim of the review was to establish how Walsall could achieve Best in Class status by 2014/15 based on the cost effectiveness of service delivery (per head of population). The Best in Class review found that:

- The net budget (2009/10) for green spaces was £2.30 million and the gross budget, including all green space services (2010/11) was £3.94 million;
- Greenspace Services achieved the median figure by £3.62 per head of population based on 2010/11 CIPFA gross budget figures;
- Using this measure Walsall was ranked 4th out of the 6 authorities although there appeared to be considerable variation in the data across authorities;
- Walsall achieved a net cost per hectare of £1395 against £1304 for Rotherham and £13,084 for Wakefield. Against this measure Walsall was ranked second.
- Analysis of 2008 Place Survey results (customer satisfaction) clearly indicates that Walsall achieves the highest levels of customer satisfaction for its green spaces in comparison to Rotherham, Coventry and Wakefield.
- Based on the average quality score for each authorities green spaces, Walsall parks and green spaces achieve a much higher score than Rotherham and Wakefield in 2006. Since 2005 over £10 million pound has been invested in raising the quality of key borough, neighbourhood and local green spaces. The PGG17 (2009) report shows the average quality score for Walsall's green spaces has improved from 35% in 2005 to 40%.

- Recent analysis of several premier parks and gardens using the same GFA quality criteria shows a minimum of a 10 - 15% increase in the quality of these sites since 2005.
- Analysis of each of the 4 authorities projected annual visitor numbers identifies that Walsall parks and green spaces achieves 9 million visits per year more than Best in Class.
- **External funding** - Walsall Greenspace Services on average match the authorities' budget contribution with external funding on a pound for pound basis which funds the capital restoration and regeneration of Walsall's Parks and Greenspaces. In comparison 'Best in Class' secured £167k of external funding in 2010/11. The level of external funding secured by the other 2 authorities is minimal compared to the level of funding secured by Walsall for the same period.

5 Consultation and Community Needs

In developing this Green Space Strategy, Walsall Council Green Space Services carried out extensive consultation through a range of different methods and with different target audiences. This included:

- A questionnaire survey sent to a random sample of 10,000 households across the Borough in November 2011 which generated 1,258 responses, a return rate of 12.6%. This survey mostly mirrored the Household Survey in 2005 when 1,403 responses were received.
- An online survey targeted at children and young people and promoted through schools and school cluster groups. This generated 579 responses and is the largest consultation process with children and young people about their use and views of green space.
- Friends Group Survey - a questionnaire survey with community and voluntary groups involved in improving and developing Walsall's green spaces.
- Three workshops to discuss key issues affecting green space, identify priorities and to inform the development of the strategy. Separate workshops were run with friends groups and community based organisations; Walsall Council staff; and a range of stakeholders and interested parties including third sector organisations and residents.
- A series of meetings with key staff and stakeholders to identify key issues, challenges and priorities.
- Interviews and presentations to the Green Space Working Group.

5.1 Summary of Recent Consultation

5.1.1 Visitor Numbers

Overall 93.3% of respondents to the Household Survey indicated that they visited green spaces, with nearly six out of ten (58.9%) visiting either every day or weekly. A slightly lower proportion (51.7%) of children and young people visit weekly or more frequently. Only 5.4% of children and young people responding to the survey visited green space only very occasionally or never.

Based on the frequency of use in the Household and Children & Young Persons Surveys, and applying this to the wider population of the Borough gives an estimate of annual person visits in the region of 9.3 million to 9.9 million for adults and 3.2 million to 3.5 million for under 18s. Overall the estimates are between 12.5 million and 13.4 million annual person visits to Walsall's Green Spaces.

This is significantly greater than the estimate of 3.3 million annual person visits by adults in the earlier 2006 Green Space Strategy which looked at data from the Citizen's Panel. Data from visitor counters installed in key green spaces since the last strategy support an increase in use of green spaces in Walsall which can partly be attributed to improving and providing new green space facilities. Whilst the actual figures are estimates they do demonstrate that green spaces are one of the most used public assets in the Borough with much higher levels of participation than other forms of leisure and cultural provision. The Council will extend the use of automated people counters in order to provide more accurate and up to date management data about the use of green spaces.

The most frequently visited green spaces in the Borough recorded through the household survey are Walsall Arboretum (18.3% of respondents), King George V Playing Fields (6.0%), Pelsall Common (6.0%), Willenhall Memorial

Park (5.2%) and Aldridge Croft (54.3%). Natural and semi-natural green spaces such as Barr Beacon also feature in the most frequently visited spaces. Children and young people visit Walsall Arboretum (21.3%), Doe Bank Park (8.9%), Holland Park (6.3%), King George Vth Playing Fields (5.7%) and Palfrey Park (4.9%) most frequently. Nearly 19% of children and young people indicated they lived outside the Borough but attended school in Walsall and a high proportion of children and young people indicated they used green spaces outside the Borough near their homes. Typically there were fewer respondents to both surveys from respondents in the west of the Borough and to an extent this has influenced the spaces listed as most frequently used.

5.1.2 Accessing Green Spaces

Over two thirds of adults visit green spaces on foot with over 80% travelling for no more than 10 minutes. Just under half (48.5%) of children and young people walk to their most frequently used green space and a further 16.7% cycle or skate. Over a quarter (28.6%) of trips to green space involving children and young people are made by car suggesting that many visits are accompanied by family members. Where children and young people walk to green spaces over 80% of journeys are less than 10 minutes. From the survey data local accessible green spaces account for the majority of visits.

5.1.3 Quality and Satisfaction

The Household Survey asked respondents to score their most frequently used green spaces. Overall, the average score was 6.6 out of 10, an improvement on the average score from 2006 of 6.2 since 2006. **The highest scoring spaces were Arboretum Extension (8.0), Pelsall North Common (7.7), Cuckoos Nook & The Dingle (7.5), Shire Oak Park (7.5) and Pelsall Common (7.3).** Whilst the Arboretum Extension was the highest scoring space the more formal part of the park scored 6.9 (which may be attributable to the disruption caused during the delivery of the restoration project). Over one third of respondents considered the quality of their most frequently used green space to have increased over the last three years, whilst 45.5%

considered quality had remained the same. Children and young people were more likely to suggest that the quality of green spaces had increased (45.7%) which most likely reflects the significant investment in play and youth provision over the last three years.

Overall three quarters (74.3%) of respondents to the Household Survey were very satisfied or satisfied with their most frequently used green space.

Satisfaction levels among children and young people were much lower at just 12.3%. Around two thirds (67.3%) of children and young people expressed some dissatisfaction (although the survey with children and young people was carried out during the winter months when green space use is typically much lower).

Further analysis shows that children and young people’s satisfaction with green space outside the Borough was lower than those spaces within the Borough. Sutton Park (Birmingham) in particular generated a 95% dissatisfaction level and Red House Park (Sandwell) 90%.

Respondents to the Household Survey were least satisfied with provision for teenagers (56%). In addition, 37% were dissatisfied with children’s play provision. The highest levels of satisfaction were associated with parks and gardens (66.4%) and natural and semi-natural green space (65.2%).

5.1.4 Reason for Use

The main reasons for using greenspaces are:

Household Survey	Children & Young People
Fresh air (63.0%)	Visit the children’s play area (53.5%)
Walking / jogging (40.9%)	Meet friends & hang out (47.9%)
Relax / peace & quiet (38.7%)	Play sport with friends (45.0%)
Visit the children’s play area (32.5%)	Walking / jogging (44.8%)
Wildlife / nature (29.8%)	Skate / BMX / cycle (43.8%)

Table 16 Main reasons for use of green space

Not surprisingly children and young people use of green space tends to favour more active recreation and as a place to socialise and meet friends.

5.1.5 Barriers to use

Table 17 below shows the main barriers to use cited by non-users of parks and green spaces. The main barrier for non-users relates to age / disability and illness.

Other barriers include personal safety and anti-social behaviour cited by 30.7% and 24.3% of non-users respectively. Lack of time was stated by 22.9% of non-users. Dog fouling, lack of facilities and poor quality facilities were in the top 10 barriers to greater use of green space. Lack of site based staff ranked 15th.

For those regularly using parks and green space the main barrier to use was lack of time cited by 28.4%. However, anti-social behaviour (26.0%) and not feeling safe (24.2%) were the second and third most popular responses. Dog fouling is a potential barrier to greater use of green spaces recorded by 24.1% of users. Interestingly 22.1% of users suggested there were no factors that limited their use of green spaces.

Barriers to Use	Number of Respondents	% of Non Users
Age / illness / disability	83	40.5%
Don't feel safe	63	30.7%
Anti social behaviour	56	27.3%
Lack of time	47	22.9%
Dog fouling	44	21.5%
Too far away	25	12.2%
Lack of facilities	25	12.2%
Poor quality facilities	24	11.7%
Not interested	23	11.2%
Lack of transport	19	9.3%
No one to go with	17	8.3%
Lack of information	16	7.8%
Nothing prevents me	16	7.8%
Other	15	7.3%

Lack of site based staff	11	5.4%
Busy / dangerous roads or railways	6	2.9%
No reply	4	2.0%
Base	205	100.0%

Table 17 Barriers to use for non-users of green spaces

Children and young people appear more likely to experience barriers to their use of green space. Overall, 45.0% of children and young people indicated that lack of time was a barrier to greater use of green spaces and 30.4% indicated they were too busy. Anti-social behaviour / crime was cited by 27.1% of all children and young people and not feeling safe by 26.3%. Nothing to do there was cited by 23.6% and poor quality facilities by 17.2%. Lack of staff in parks and green spaces was recorded as a barrier by over 12% of children and young people.

The most common measures to increase use of green spaces included:

- Increased security to prevent vandalism and anti-social behaviour;
- provision of toilets;
- an improved range of facilities in parks including more seating;
- facilities for children and young people; and
- control of dogs

5.1.6 Improvements

The most requested improvements recorded in the Household Survey were:

Improvement	Support
Improved litter control / clearance	94.7%
Improved paths and access	86.2%
Improved grounds maintenance	84.7%
Improved wildlife habitats	84.6%
Improved children's play area	83.3%
Improved buildings	82.5%
Improved security	81.8%
Improved dog control	81.6%
Improved facilities for older people	81.5%
More / improved seating and tables	81.2%
Improved entrances and gates	77.7%

Better access / facilities for the disabled	76.6%
Improved facilities for teenagers	74.7%
Increased visibility or presence of on-site staff	72.0%
Improved horticultural features	69.0%
Improved sports provision	68.9%
More organised events and activities	64.3%
Improved car parking	61.4%
Better signage	61.1%
Improved food growing space / community gardens	54.2%
Improved art features	32.8%

Table 18 Household Survey - Desired Improvements

The most frequently requested improvements by children and young people included:

Better children's play areas (52.8%), improved buildings (such as toilets etc) (46.4%), cleaner parks (40.7%), better dog control (38.9%), more areas for wildlife (37.6%).

5.1.7 The Quantity of Green Space Provision

The Household Survey found there was a split between respondents that considered there was generally too little green space (48.8%) and those that considered the current quantity of provision was 'about right' (50.4%). Around two thirds of respondents considered that the current amount of parks and gardens, natural and semi-natural green space and amenity green space was about right. There is considered to be deficiencies in the amount of youth provision (82.1%), allotments and community gardens (59.1%) and to a lesser degree outdoor sports facilities (56.0%) and children's play provision (52.5%). Residents in Darlaston / Bentley; Willenhall / Short Heath; and Bloxwich / Blakenall / Birchills / Leamore partnership areas were most concerned about the quantity of provision.

5.1.8 Weighted Gap Analysis

The Household Survey asked respondents to provide an indication of the importance of different types of green space and also measured relative satisfaction. The weighted gap analysis considers the relationship between the satisfaction level and importance for each green space type. This calculation takes the importance respondents attach to a green space type and compares this to the satisfaction levels taking into account how meaningful that gap is to the sample.

Green Space Type	Importance	Satisfaction	Weighted Gap	Rank
Provision for teenagers	63.9%	11.4%	33.5	1
Children's play provision	69.4%	29.7%	27.6	2
Parks and gardens	87.8%	59.0%	25.3	3
Natural green space / nature reserves	84.5%	55.4%	24.6	4
Outdoor sports facilities	58.6%	21.4%	21.8	5
Amenity green space	67.1%	37.0%	20.2	6
Allotments and community gardens	53.1%	18.7%	18.3	7

Table 19 Weighted Gap Analysis

The higher the figure for the weighted gap the greater the shortfall in meeting the expectations of respondents. On this basis, the green space types that are in most need of improvement are provision for teenagers and children's play provision.

While facilities for teenagers and children's play are considered to be less important than parks and natural green space, the satisfaction levels with these greenspace types are significantly lower resulting in high weighted gap scores. Consequently, they should be a priority for improvement at the study wide level. The Play Strategy puts in place a 5 year programme of improvements costed at £4.2 million.

5.1.9 Friends Group Survey

The Friends Group Survey was completed by 28 community groups involved with green spaces across the Borough. On average most groups have been in existence for less than 10 years and average over 20 members.

Most groups felt that the parks or green space they are associated with had improved in quality over the last 5 years.

Generally the groups were satisfied with support from the Council and thought the Council was effective in supporting the group with external funding and responding to complaints. It was considered that improvements were need to better address the control of dogs in green spaces and that marketing and promotion could be improved. Satisfaction with the support from The Green Space Improvement Service was highest at 7.6 (out of 10) and Street Pride (Grounds Maintenance) lowest at 5.8.

80% of the groups responding considered that they had a reasonable influence over service delivery and over three quarters wanted to continue to have a role in the future direction of their parks and green spaces.

Whilst around 60% of groups have participated in the Borough wide friends group network, only half felt the network fulfilled its potential and there were a range of improvements suggested to support the development of the network in the future.

5.1.10 Workshops

Three workshops were run to inform the development of the Green Space Strategy. These were aimed at friends groups and community based organisations involved in the management and development of green space; Walsall Council staff; and a range of stakeholder, partner organisations and other third sector organisations in the Borough. Such organisations included West Midlands Police, Walsall PCT, Federation of City Farms & Community Gardens, Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and The Black Country, Play England, Walsall Housing Group, Bloxwich Business Partnership, Bloxwich Rugby Club, Caldmore Community Garden, Pelsall Villa Colts and Barr Beacon Trust.

Through the workshops, participants carried out a series of structured exercises to identify and prioritise the outcomes that the Green Space Strategy should seek to address.

The highest priorities across all workshops were:

Suggested Outcomes	RANK
More safe and secure green spaces	1
Green spaces contributing to a healthier borough	=2
Equal access for all residents to green spaces	=2
Improved value for wildlife	4
More welcoming and accessible green spaces	=5
More innovative service delivery	=5
More opportunities for community participation	=5

Table 20 Highest Priority Outcomes for the Green Space Strategy

Through the workshop process it was evident that a wide range of different organisations considered green spaces important community assets and that there were links with their own organisations agendas. Green spaces were also seen as local assets that could encourage greater community participation and make a positive difference to local quality of life.

5.2 Green Spaces Working Group

A working group was formed to assist the Community Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel in their review of the effectiveness of the 2006 Green Space Strategy and to make recommendations for the revised Strategy.

The Green Spaces Working Group was a cross-party working group comprising 5 elected members and 2 co-opted members from the Friends Group Network. The working group heard evidence from a range of services areas across the Council as well as members of various friends group and community based organisations, partner organisations such as the NHS and consultants commissioned to support the development of the Green Space Strategy.

The Green Spaces Working Group recognised that the first Green Space Strategy produced in 2006 had been effective in providing a strategic framework for the Council and that the majority of the 57 recommendations had been achieved fully or in part. The Green Spaces Working Group also recognised that this strategy had been recognised as an example of Good Practice at a national level, including publication in 2009 in the CABI

Space / Mayor of London document "Open Space Strategies - Best Practice Guidance"

The Green Spaces Working Group recommended a number of strategic priorities:

1. Greenspace in Walsall should be enhanced and improved
2. All green space should be safe and free of crime and anti-social behaviour
3. Green space should be used to increase the health and well being of residents
4. Commercial opportunities should be sought in green space
5. Greater partnership working for the development of all green space should be pro-actively developed
6. Green space should be used to create rich habitats and biodiversity

The working group met 10 times and in February 2012 published its report, which set out a series of priorities and recommendations that have been reviewed alongside all other research and evidence and used to inform the development of the Walsall Green Space Strategy. The report produced by the Working Group was approved by the Community Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel and presented to Cabinet in April 2012.

5.3 Discussion with Council Service Areas

A range of interviews and meetings were held to discuss the profile of green space within the authority and the links with the Council's priorities and those on a regional and national level.

Participants included:

- Property Services;
- Asset Management;
- Regeneration;
- Planning Policy;
- Leisure and Culture.

These exploratory discussions have been used to inform the development of the Walsall Green Space Strategy.

6 Analysis & Findings

This section sets out the vision, aims and recommendations for the Walsall Green Space Strategy. The analysis and findings have been structured around the 7 strategic aims and provide a brief commentary on the thinking and conclusions that have been reached.

6.1 Vision & Aims

The vision for green space in Walsall, as developed by the Green Space Working Group and modified based on further consultation is:

"We want Walsall's green spaces to be public assets that everyone has pride in and that secure the sustainable future of the borough for the benefit of the health and wellbeing of the whole community".

This sets out the aspiration and recognition that green spaces are central to our environmental, ecological and community wellbeing and economic prosperity. The vision restates the fact that green spaces are multi-functional and deliver a range of benefits across a wide range of policy agendas. In the following sections the Strategy sets out a series of aims and strategic objectives and the justification for these. Section 7 collates these into an Action Plan.

6.2 Aims

Seven aims have been developed for the Walsall Green Space Strategy. These are derived from the Green Spaces Working Group report, consultation through the Stakeholder Workshop process which looked at the outcomes that the strategy should address and the priorities highlighted through wider public consultation. These have been distilled down to seven aims which are set out below and provide a framework for the analysis and recommendations.

1) Green Spaces that Make the Borough an Attractive Place to Live, Work and Socialise

The Black Country Core Strategy recognises that the topography of the region is unique and for its size is the most geologically diverse area on the planet. The richness and variety of mineral deposits has shaped past development and continues to influence the region today. The landscape associated with the Black Country and Walsall is characterised by a number of prominent high points and ridges, most notably the Queslett to Shire Oak Ridge and Barr Beacon. Many characteristic green spaces are the result of the restoration and reclamation of former industrial working including Cuckoo's Nook and the Dingle, Park Lime Pits and Walsall Arboretum. The relationship between the built development, green spaces and key landscape features defines the environment of Walsall contributing to its character and uniqueness.

The review of green space distribution and its classification was discussed earlier in this strategy where it was found that nearly 25% of the land area of the Borough consists of green space although much of this has some form of access restriction. The quantity of green space is broadly similar to that of Sandwell and Dudley. In terms of green space with unrestricted access there are 315 recorded green spaces covering 1258 hectares which at a Borough wide level equates to 4.96 hectares per 1000 population. However, there is considerable variation in the amount of green space across the borough. At a ward level Brownhills has access to 13.2 hectares per 1,000 population and St Matthews just 1.41. Typically those resident in the west of the Borough have access to less green space than those resident in other areas. There are also localised deficiencies in the types of green space that residents have access to. Access to natural and semi-natural green space in Pleck and Palfrey is limited, and allotment provision in the north of the Borough particularly Brownhills is limited. There are also deficiencies in access to outdoor sports facilities and play and youth provision in some parts of the Borough.

Market research and public consultation undertaken as part of the development of the original 2006 Green Space Strategy, the 2010 PPG17 Green

Space Audit and more recently as part of this strategy suggests that the overall current quantity of green space provision at a Borough wide level is 'about right' but that there are key deficiencies in the amount and types of green space available at the local level.

Whilst green spaces are multi-functional and many can provide for a range of uses and cater to a range of audiences this strategy recognises that there are localised deficiencies. This strategy suggests that the current level of green space provision at 4.96 hectares per 1000 population is maintained and a policy of no net loss of green space is adopted, except where it can clearly be demonstrated that there is surplus provision in the area or that the quality and value of particular sites is so low that retention as green space is not desirable. The Strategy recognises the need to involve and consult local communities in this process as even small green spaces are often important at a local level.

Deficiencies in key types of green space provision will be addressed by a change in primary purpose of other spaces where practicable. Through the planning policy process the Council will seek to address overall deficiencies in the quantity of green space through new development wherever feasible. These principles will be set out in Supplementary Planning Guidance for Open Space as part of the continuing process through the Local Development Framework.

Where new green space is created it must be fit for purpose and achieve minimum criteria set out in new design guidance. This design guidance will set a minimum size threshold for new provision, include accessibility requirements and take into account future maintenance issues.

Accessibility standards for play and youth provision and allotments and community gardens will be set out through the adoption of the draft Play Strategy and through the production of a new Allotments and Community Gardens Strategy.

Strategic Objectives

1.1 Seek to protect existing green space provision through the planning

policy process at the existing Borough wide average of 4.96 ha per 1,000 population and adopt a policy of no net loss of green space.

1.2 Through the Local Development Framework develop Supplementary Planning Guidance for Green Spaces.

1.3 Seek to address localised green space deficiency through the change in primary purpose of other under performing green spaces.

1.4 Through the planning policy process, where feasible, seek to create new green space where deficiencies cannot be met through changes in the primary purpose of other green spaces.

1.5 Develop design guidance for the creation of new green space through the planning policy process.

1.6 Adopt the Draft Play Strategy and set accessibility standards for play provision.

1.7 Develop a new Allotments and Community Gardens Strategy and set accessibility standards.

The Council has reviewed the provision of green space across the Borough and in doing so developed a Strategic Hierarchy of Green Spaces based on their size, type, range of facilities, overall quality, geographical distribution and local context. This hierarchy will drive the accessibility standards, the need for which is set out above as well as providing a focus and justification for future investment and standards of maintenance. This strategy recommends that the focus for capital investment and quality improvements for the next five years is directed at Strategic Green Spaces. Capital investment will be sought from a variety of sources including planning gain through Section 106 (s106) agreements and the new Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Typically, the CIL will be used to address deficiencies in open space provision and s106 funding used to improve the quality of existing green spaces and bring these up to the minimum quality standards set out in the Strategic Hierarchy of Green Spaces.

The quality of Walsall's green spaces has an impact on the wider environmental quality of the Borough. The link between environmental quality and the ability to attract inward investment is well documented and the Black Country Core Strategy recognises the unique character of Walsall and the region resulting from geology and landscape quality. The Sustainable Community Strategy recognises the contribution of green space to the wider success of the Borough although the links between economic development and

environmental quality in the Corporate Plan are less explicit. This strategy recommends that the potential of green spaces to contribute to wider regeneration initiatives are recognised and considered more fully. As an example the restoration of Walsall Arboretum is a project of borough wide significance and is one of the key local assets that for many people is synonymous with Walsall. The Arboretum's significance has allowed regeneration funding through Growth Point to be used to support the restoration project. In addition, green spaces and civic spaces should be promoted as for events and commercial activity that support local business and the economic development of the Borough. The Strategy also recommends that signage to green spaces, and "identity" signage visible from key transport corridors is reviewed to promote green spaces and make the Borough more attractive and more welcoming.

Strategic Objectives
1.8 Adopt the Strategic Hierarchy of Green Spaces.
1.9 Raise the minimum quality of green spaces to achieve the quality standards set out in the Strategic Hierarchy of Green Spaces
1.10 Ensure that funding through the Community Infrastructure Levy and other planning gain is used to address green space deficiencies, improve accessibility or raise quality.
1.11 Promote high quality environment as a way of attracting new businesses.
1.12 Ensure that green spaces are considered as a fundamental part of wider regeneration initiatives.
1.13 Promote green spaces and civic spaces as places for events and commercial activity.
1.14 Review signage to promote green spaces and make the Borough more attractive and more welcoming.

2) Safer and More Secure Green Spaces

In terms of visiting green spaces or using green spaces more frequently the main barriers, other than lack of time, relate to crime and perceptions of crime, anti-social behaviour and personal safety. Such concerns are raised by one in four respondents to the Household Survey and a slightly higher proportion of children and young people who were consulted. Open comments received through the consultation include frequent references to these issues. Tackling community safety issues is also high on the agenda of friends groups and community based organisations involved with green spaces. Through the workshops events the highest ranking outcome for the Green Space Strategy was "more safe and secure green spaces". Friends groups, other community based organisations, staff and a range of stakeholders (including the Police) all indicated that safer and more secure green spaces should be a high priority.

Like all public space where access is not restricted, green space are subject to anti-social behaviour and criminal activity. Monitoring data indicates that around 600 acts of anti-social behaviour within parks and green spaces are recorded annually by the Green Space Service (2009/10 to 2011/12). The number of incidents appears to be increasing over this period but this may be attributable to improvements in monitoring and recording. Whilst these figures are not especially high, it is often the perception of green spaces that has a greater impact on their use.

A range of solutions has been suggested by the parties involved in discussion about developing the strategy. Suggestions include measures to promote green spaces, attract more users, encourage positive use and where anti-social behaviour occurs to tackle this promptly through enforcement action. Promoting and raising awareness of enforcement action was also seen by many parties as an effective deterrent that would send out a signal that crime and anti-social behaviour would be addressed and that there were consequences for such behaviour.

The Council as major landowners and providers of green space recognises the role it has to play in tackling anti-social behaviour and criminal activity

and works in partnership with West Midlands Police, West Midlands Fire Service, Probation Service and other organisations. Recent restructuring and service improvements within the Council's Greenspace Services now mean that Park Rangers have enforcement powers under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act and these powers are now beginning to be applied. The Council will continue to work closely with law enforcement agencies to ensure that incidents are properly recorded and that appropriate responses are made to addressing crime and anti-social behaviour within green spaces as part of this partnership approach.

In addition to this reactive approach, the Council will seek to find solutions to design out crime and where appropriate to change maintenance regimes or modify the design and layout of green spaces to assist with improved community safety. This approach will be done sympathetically within the context of the green spaces concerned recognising that landscape quality and more secluded areas are often an important part of the design and layout of many green spaces. This process will be implemented through crime and community safety audits as part of the wider master planning and management planning process. Lighting and CCTV in green spaces may be an appropriate solution for some sites but this will be considered as part of a range of solutions at a site specific level rather than a blanket approach.

Other proactive approaches to anti-social behaviour will include educational and enforcement measures to address dog fouling, the control of dogs, litter and other issues.

Strategic Objectives
2.1 Rationalise signage to promote key green spaces, encourage positive use and help support enforcement action.
2.2 Undertake crime and community safety audits as part of site management planning.
2.3 Implement enforcement action against criminal and anti-social behaviour that take place in parks and open space.
2.4 Prosecutions should be actively promoted as a further deterrent to other residents who cause anti-social behaviour.
2.5 Develop education programmes to promote responsible dog ownership.
2.6 Undertake targeted enforcement action to address dog control and fouling.

3) Green Spaces Contributing to Greater Health & Well-Being

Walsall Borough experiences some massive challenges with regard to public health and well-being outcomes. Those resident in the west of the Borough have significantly lower life expectancy than those in other areas. Residents experiencing deprivation, often multiple deprivation, have lower health outcomes and experience lower educational attainment and poorer economic circumstances compared to the Borough average. The workshop events and Green Space Working Group identified that high quality accessible green spaces can contribute positively to improving health and well-being and that this outcome should be a priority for the Green Space Strategy.

Many urban parks were created in the Victorian era in response to declining public health and legislation through the various Health Acts. Green spaces are just as relevant today in meeting leisure, recreational and community needs and in contributing to healthier lifestyles and overall well-being. Whilst health issues are typically complex and require a multi-agency approach there are examples of good practice in Walsall of joint working. Walsall was one of the initial walking for health national pilot schemes and this continues to be sustained through partnership working with the PCT and the support of local volunteer health walk leaders.

Current use for health related activity includes (2011/12):

- 762 regular participants for Health Walks
- 40 regular participants for Jogging
- A total of 14,291 person sessions for Walk On
- A total of 1,544 person sessions for Jogs
- A total of 32 Volunteers who delivered 1, 978 hours of free health walks/jogs.

More recently the PCT and other partners have provided some capital funding for outdoor fitness and gym equipment and these new forms of provision are proving very popular across a wide range of users and will be rolled out in a strategic fashion. The draft Play Strategy identified opportunities for further development.

Providing suitable facilities within green spaces, along with promotion and marketing can encourage participation in sport and recreation. Programmes of activity can also help attract new users and add a social dimension to the experience as well as potentially helping to address barriers to participation and any potential concerns over personal and community safety (discussed above).

The Green Space Strategy notes the recommendations of the 2010 Playing Pitch Strategy that found that there were deficiencies in the number of pitches for mini and junior football and a surplus of senior pitches. This strategy also found that demand for other pitch sports was being met although the quality of provision of pitches and ancillary facilities appeared to be potentially suppressing future demand. Implementing the recommendations of the Playing Pitch Strategy will contribute to greater participation in sport and potentially greater health outcomes. The strategy also identified the need to increase female participation rates in sport and outdoor activities and through investment in facilities, developing attractive programmes and effective marketing.

In order to understand levels of participation, identifying areas of need, measuring the effectiveness of programmes, better data collection and sharing across partners is required. The Council will in partnership with the PCT and other partners seek to develop more effective monitoring data including customer satisfaction data.

Strategic Objectives
3.1 Promote green spaces as venues for events and activities that are attractive to children and young people and encourage positive activity.
3.2 Develop more programmes of health and fitness activity in parks.
3.3 Strong partnership working with all partners, but particularly health colleagues needs to be developed to maximise the potential contribution green space can make to health and well being.
3.4 Implement the recommendations of the Playing Pitch Strategy to address deficiencies in pitch provision and improve the quality of key sites.
3.5 Female participation in sport and outdoor activities needs to be increased to male levels to assist in improving the health and wellbeing of the area. Female friendly activities for all ages should be designed, marketed and implemented across the borough.

3.6 In partnership with health colleagues improve customer-satisfaction and other data collection and sharing, and monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of health and activity programmes.

4) Well Maintained and Accessible Green Spaces

The Council has invested over £10 million capital in key green spaces across the Borough in the last 5 years, with funding through planning gain, regeneration initiatives, lottery funding, land fill tax, partners resources and the Council's capital resources via the work of the locally and nationally recognised Green Space Improvement team.

Whilst this investment has resulted in better quality spaces across the Borough and has been recognised in the consultation results, further investment is still needed to ensure that green spaces meet their potential and the needs of local communities. The Council will continue to invest in Strategic Green Spaces that are below the minimum quality standard and in measures to address deficiency in access to green space. As such this strategy proposes the development of a capital programme for future investment in Strategic Green Spaces with funding drawn from planning gain and other sources. Where new green space is created through development the Council will require that developers provide commuted sums to cover maintenance costs over a minimum of a 20 year period.

Master planning and management planning processes are central to the effective delivery of capital investment and the ongoing management and maintenance of green spaces beyond this period of investment so that standards can be maintained. The Council will produce Landscape Improvement Master Plans (LIP) or Site Improvements Plans (SIP) supplemented by Management and Maintenance Plans (MMP) for all Strategic Level Green Spaces. Such plans will be produced in partnership with friends groups and local communities. This process provides the opportunity to consider access and equality issues and relevant audits should be carried out as part of this overall approach (along with crime and community safety audits discussed under "Safer and More Secure Green Spaces").

When developing master plans and Management and Maintenance Plans consideration should be given to the wider context of the local area and complementary provision. The Green Space Working Group raised the issue of public toilet provision for park users and the lack of a strategic approach. Some larger green spaces have toilet provision but often for the authority the challenge is to be able to lock and unlock and arrange cleansing where sites do not have a full time staff presence. It is recommended that a review of toilet provision within town and neighbourhood centres is undertaken along with that in Strategic Green Spaces and opportunities to provide a more joined up service at a neighbourhood level are identified. This will be conducted in tandem with a review of buildings in parks and lease agreements (discussed under Stronger Partnership and Innovation below).

As mentioned earlier (Section 4.6 - Service Delivery) Currently there is a division in the way the Council manages, maintains and develops its green space. The Green Spaces Service are the land asset managers, undertake the strategic planning, regeneration, community programming and operational delivery for the area. On behalf of Greenspace Services grounds maintenance operations with some of the councils green spaces is delivered by the Street Pride Service. Street Pride Services uniquely however have direct control of the grounds maintenance budget. Whilst both services are part of the Neighbourhoods Directorate there is a split between management and grounds maintenance operations, strategy and operational management. Roles and responsibilities between the two services around the grounds maintenance function are set out in a Service Level Agreement but the current arrangement is not considered to be entirely realistic and there is little ongoing monitoring. In addition, there is a lack of adequate budgetary information that is up-to date and available at a site specific level relating to grounds maintenance. This fragmentation of service delivery was addressed via the last strategy with grounds maintenance functions for the main premier parks transferring to Green Spaces but a corporate decision was undertaken in 2010 which reversed this change.

The fragmentation that now exists makes management planning and holistic service delivery and improvement difficult and communities find the lack of adequate data, accountability, ambiguity and level of reporting frustrating.

The Green Space Working Group heard evidence from a range of service areas and have reviewed national good practice guidance including that published by (the former) CABE Space⁹ and the National Audit Office¹⁰ which sets out the need for a single coherent management structure and clear accountability. On this basis, the Green Spaces Working Group recommended that a single holistic service be created to deliver the strategic planning, management and maintenance of all green spaces across the Borough and that this should be managed by the existing Green Spaces Service. The grounds maintenance budget should transfer to the Green Spaces Service to make this possible. The Council through this Green Space Strategy recognises and adopts this proposal which will be implemented for the start of financial year 2013/14. A review of the management responsibility for retained housing land and other green spaces of strategic, district and community significance should also be carried out in the same timeframe with the aim of ensuring that all accessible green spaces lie within a single service area.

Following the transfer of grounds maintenance operations to a new single service area, there should be a review of all grounds maintenance operations linked with the Strategic Hierarchy of Green Spaces. The arrangements for litter collection and control in green spaces should be reviewed and measures adopted to raise performance in this area which was consistently identified as a weakness through public consultation. The review will result in revised grounds maintenance schedules and specifications being produced.

As part of any review of grounds maintenance operations opportunities should be identified to adopt more ecological and sustainable forms of maintenance

⁹ CABE Space (2006) Urban Parks : Do you know what you're getting for your money?

¹⁰ National Audit Office (2006) Enhancing Urban Green Space

in order to mitigate against climate change and to benefit biodiversity. The review should focus primarily on the future maintenance of District and Community level green spaces and identify measures which achieve higher environmental standards through less frequent intervention and reduced inputs. However, there may also be opportunities in Strategic Level Green Spaces particularly with regard to more sustainable alternatives to seasonal bedding which also have benefits for biodiversity. This approach may necessitate some initial investment in establishing new regimes and training requirements to support ongoing maintenance.

Service Standards should be developed following the remodelling of grounds maintenance services and these will be communicated and promoted effectively with local communities as will data on the compliance with these service standards.

As an external benchmark the Council will seek accreditation against national awards and other quality benchmarks such as the Green Flag Award and In Bloom. The authority currently holds 3 Green Flag Awards and will seek to achieve and retain 6 by the end of the Strategy period.

Strategic Objectives
4.1 Establish a capital programme for future investment in Strategic Green Spaces with funding drawn from planning gain and other sources.
4.2 All new green spaces created as part of planning conditions to have commuted sums to cover maintenance costs over a minimum of a 20 year period.
4.3 Develop Management and Maintenance Plans / Landscape Improvement Master Plans / Site Improvement Plans for all Strategic Green Spaces.
4.4 Undertake site specific access and equality audits as part of the management planning process and capital investment programmes.
4.5 Undertake a strategic review of availability of toilet provision within town and neighbourhood centres.
4.6 Grounds maintenance responsibilities and budgets be delegated to the existing Green Space Service.
4.7 Review the management responsibility for retained housing land and other green spaces of strategic, district and community significance.
4.8 Review the arrangements for litter collection and control in green spaces.
4.9 Review grounds maintenance standards / specifications to allow more

Strategic Objectives

ecological & low maintenance approaches which mitigate against climate change and bring benefits for biodiversity.

4.10 Develop Service Standards and promote to residents and communities.

4.11 Benchmark the quality of service provision through the achievement of external awards.

5) Conserving and Enhancing Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Whilst the biodiversity and geological diversity of Walsall and the wider Black Country is unique and valued by many residents of the Borough, its national and global significance, at times, is not always fully recognised. The Council will help secure the future of these resources by working in partnership with other organisations and funding bodies to deliver projects which recognise, enhance and protect our natural and cultural heritage. The Council are currently working with the Wildlife Trust to deliver the Birmingham and Black Country Nature Improvement Area initiative - one of twelve projects nationally. The Council and the Barr Beacon Trust have also recently secured over £440,000 from Heritage Lottery Fund for the Raising the Barr project to restore key built and natural heritage features at Barr Beacon. The authority is also working with local landowners to deliver Environmental Stewardship and Woodland Grant Schemes which improve the landscape quality of the Borough, benefit wildlife and can offer new recreational opportunities for residents. The Council has secured Woodland Grant Scheme funding for woodland creation in the Arboretum Extension on the site of the former golf course and are working to better link the town centre, through the Arboretum to other green spaces and green infrastructure such as the canal network and Public Rights of Way. This will provide better opportunities for walking, leisure cycling, recreation and commuting along traffic free routes. The landscape could also be managed more effectively to produce green materials and generate economic returns. Whilst there have been recent examples where we have trialled this effectively, we propose carrying out a feasibility study to look into the scope, viability, potential funding and management options available to create a Walsall Country Park which extends east through the Arboretum from the town centre.

Other natural and semi-natural green spaces, including key habitats and species in the Birmingham and Black Country Biodiversity Action Plan will continue to be protected and enhanced either through direct management, by working in partnership with other landowners or by designations through the planning process. Walsall already meets the Natural England quantitative

standard for accessible natural green space (of 1.0 hectare of designated LNR per 1,000 population) but we will continue to designate further Local Nature Reserves where they meet the threshold as set out by national guidance. The Council will continue to monitor its performance and that of other landowners and seek to increase the proportion of local nature conservation sites (SINCs and SLINCs) in positive management and report this through the National Indicator mechanism (NI197).

The Council through its Countryside Service will continue to provide opportunities, events and activities for Borough residents to learn about and participate in protecting and enhancing our natural environment. We will do this by continuing to deliver and develop programmes of environmental education, Forest Schools and other accredited training by working in partnership with other organisations and by encouraging and supporting volunteers to carry out practical works and biological and geological recording.

Finally, the Council is committed to ensuring that the value of green spaces in terms of ecosystem services is better understood within the Borough and promoted more effectively. We will achieve this in partnership with other authorities in the region and through the Black Country Partnership.

Strategic Objectives
5.1 Continue to deliver the Birmingham and Black Country Nature Improvement Area initiative.
5.2 Implement the Raising the Barr Heritage Lottery Fund project.
5.3 Secure and deliver Environmental Stewardship and Woodland Grant Schemes.
5.4 Protect and enhance and seek opportunities to develop green corridors and green infrastructure links.
5.5 Carry out a feasibility study to establish the viability and scope of the proposed Walsall Country Park and to set out an appropriate management structure.
5.6 Enhance and protect target habitats and species in the Birmingham and Black Country Biodiversity Action Plan.
5.7 Protect and enhance natural and semi-natural by designating further Local Nature Reserves
5.8 Increase the proportion of local nature conservation sites (SINCs and

Strategic Objectives

SLINCs) in positive management (NI197).

5.9 Encourage volunteer participation in the management and maintenance of natural and semi-natural green spaces and in biological and geological recording.

5.10 Develop programmes of environmental education, Forest Schools and other accredited training by working in partnership with other organisations.

5.11 Ensure that the value of green spaces in terms of eco-system services is better understood within the Borough and promoted.

6) More engaged communities & neighbourhoods

Walsall has a rich tradition established over decades, of community involvement and participation in service delivery, not just within greenspaces, but across the spectrum of public services. It has also led the way in community involvement in parks and green spaces, being at the vanguard of supporting the establishment of friends groups and community based organisations wishing to become involved in improving green spaces. This approach has been very effective and the number of community groups now involved in green space improvements has grown considerably over the last 20 years. The approach adopted by Walsall has been recognised a good practice and adopted across the country. The Green Flag Award requires that managing organisations provide suitable opportunities for local people to be involved in the management and development of green spaces.

The Friends Group Network provides a forum for community groups to come together on a regular basis, to network, share learning and identify common issues and to improve communication with the authority. As the number of groups has grown, the ability of the authority to effectively support and service the network has not increased. In addition, new community groups have formed which are focused on improvements to natural and semi-natural green spaces, allotments and community gardens, not just urban parks. Other partner organisations are also engaged with local residents wishing to improve their neighbourhood and local environment. New and existing social enterprises are also seeking to develop skills and training programmes around horticulture and local food production. The Council will continue to

develop and promote a range of volunteer opportunities for greater participation in green space management and improvement including those that address the Corporate Social Responsibility agenda.

Community management of allotments in Walsall is well established in the Borough with 25 allotment sites managed by 5 Local Management Associations which each receive a grant from the local authority and retain rental income. The remaining 12 sites are managed by Walsall Council. The current arrangements for some areas work well but in other areas there are issues with high waiting lists, varying levels of unmanaged plots and dereliction, low income generation and often poor monitoring and reporting.

The authority has appointed a new Allotments and Community Gardens Officer who commenced in August 2011 with the responsibility at the same time transferring to the Greenspace Improvement Service. This has kick-started the process to review the current position across the borough and to discuss options for improving services with a range of organisations delivering nationally recognised good practice. Early achievements include opening up 45 new allotment plots which were previously derelict and helped to reduce waiting lists. These improvements have also generated more demand with new applications for allotments. The Council has also committed £100,000 capital to deliver improvements across a range of allotment sites.

It is clear that there is considerable potential to improve access to allotments, reduce waiting lists and improve site quality. The Council is committed to continuing with the principles of self management but will undertake a review of the options, which could include self management at a site specific level, as part of the development of an Allotments and Community Garden Strategy. To facilitate this process it is recommended that a Borough wide allotment and community gardening forum is established to support networking, sharing of good practice, promote allotments and community gardening and encourage the uptake of vacant plots where these exist. This should be part of any wider framework that supports community participation in green space.

The Friends Group Survey found that around 60% of friends groups in the Borough were still involved in the network but that there was a feeling the network needs reviewing and reinvigorating. A review of the network will be carried to establish the way forward and to see how other groups can be engaged in working together to improve all forms of green space in the Borough. The ambition is to establish a wider more inclusive Green Space Forum which provides an arena for all community based organisations and other agencies involved in green management and development to come together. Such partner organisations are likely to include those that have contributed to the development of this strategy including West Midlands Police, Walsall PCT, the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens, Walsall Housing Group and third sector organisations. It is recommended that the Walsall Green Space Forum looks to appoint a lead person to act as an independent Green Space Champion for the Borough, someone who will promote green spaces and their value to a wider audience and seek to influence a range of policy agendas within the Borough and region. It is recommended that the Green Space Champion is independent of the authority and is drawn from outside any existing friends group in order to avoid any potential conflict of interests.

It is recommended that through the Green Spaces Forum a range of pilot projects are supported and promoted which showcase the diversity of community participation and engagement with green spaces across the Borough. This should include projects supported not just by the Council but other partners such as Walsall Housing Group and Walsall PCT.

Green spaces are excellent resources for education and life long learning. Many spaces are already used for formal educational visits either self-led or supported by rangers and other staff. Large scale capital investment projects such as those at Palfrey Park, Willenhall Memorial Park and Walsall Arboretum have improved the facilities and developed other publicity and learning materials to support education and life long learning. This process will be continued wherever feasible and the Council will work with a range of partners to deliver these outcomes. Green spaces also offer excellent venues for community events and activities which bring new visitors and make more vibrant spaces. The Council will promote green spaces as venues for

such events (on a range of scales) and support groups in planning and delivering such events.

Currently the marketing and promotion of green spaces is rather ad hoc. With the introduction and increasing adoption and effectiveness of social media there is a need to review the approach with respect to green spaces. The Council will develop a marketing plan for green spaces which includes the Council's online presence and use of social media.

Strategic Objectives
6.1 Develop the role and membership of the existing Friends Group Network towards a more inclusive and wider Green Space Forum.
6.2 Explore the options to appoint an independent Green Space Champion.
6.3 Review the resources available to directly support Friends Groups and seek to develop a networking and support role for the Green Spaces Forum.
6.4 Develop opportunities for social enterprises to deliver services in green spaces.
6.5 Develop and promote a range volunteer opportunities for greater participation in green space management and improvement including those that address the Corporate Social Responsibility agenda.
6.6 Review the self management of allotments as part of the development of an Allotment and Community Gardens Strategy.
6.7 Develop a Borough wide allotment and community gardening forum.
6.8 Develop a range of pilot projects which showcase community managed green space.
6.9 Education and lifelong opportunities should be maximised in green spaces
6.10 Promote green spaces as venues for events and activities and support communities in running events.
6.11 Develop a marketing plan for green spaces and review the effectiveness of different consultation approaches including GreenSTAT.
6.12 Review and update information on the Council website and develop the use of social media to promote green spaces, encourage greater use and participation and service standards.

7) **Stronger Partnerships and Innovation**

Delivering this strategy will require successful partnerships between Walsall Council and statutory bodies such as Walsall PCT and West Midlands Police, the voluntary sector and community based organisations. There will also need to be stronger relationships with local businesses, the private sector in the delivery of events, activities and the realisation of commercial opportunities in green spaces to generate more income. It is recommended that a Green Space strategy Board with direct links to the Green Spaces Forum is established to oversee the implementation of the Green Space Strategy. This should include representation from all Council service areas that deliver services in parks and green spaces and key strategic partners such as the PCT, West Midlands Police, Walsall Housing Group and the Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country. There should be third sector representation linking to the Green Spaces Forum and the Board should be chaired by the Green Space Champion.

There are opportunities to make better use of green space assets with respect to buildings, events space, concessions, delivery of programmes of activity and in developing new markets for green products. Many of the larger green spaces in Walsall have buildings associated with them whether park lodges, pavilions, sports changing or other structures. Their use is usually by parks staff, other service areas, sports clubs, community groups or some are let as residential properties. Others remain vacant and require investment to bring them up to an acceptable standard that will allow income generation. Some buildings are currently leased to community based organisations who have exclusive use of the facility which is often used for just a few hours per week. This results in buildings and facilities that are not widely available to the community and not fulfilling their potential. Wider use of buildings may allow better public toilet provision in green spaces removing a key barrier for some visitors. The Council will review all leases and other agreements relating to buildings and structures in green spaces with the aim of generating more regular community use and access to these assets and generating more income.

The Council will work with community based organisations and enter into partnership and other agreements which may include asset transfer where this will unlock external funding and other investment.

Concessions and licences are currently in place for the operation of cafes, kiosks and mobile catering outlets in a number of green spaces. The opportunities to offer more concessions and develop existing opportunities to provide better services which generate more income will be reviewed.

Walsall Council lets sports pitches, courts and greens and changing pavilions to a variety of sports clubs and community based organisations. Levels of participation and demand for pitches has for some sports declined and there is a surplus of senior football pitches although demand for junior and mini-football is growing. The Playing Pitch Strategy found that the condition of some pitches, changing rooms and ancillary facilities is potentially suppressing demand and further capital investment is required to achieve better quality provision. Opportunities for gaining external funding will continue to be explored by the Council in partnership with sports clubs. In terms of ongoing maintenance, the running costs greatly exceed any income received. With ever increasing pressure on revenue budgets there is a need to ensure that income from green spaces is increased to support future service delivery and provision. Within this context it is recommended that a review is carried out of the current fees and charges for sports, recreational and other provision (including allotments) with the aim to establish a new pricing structure that more closely reflects market rates. This will be balanced against the aspiration to sustain and increase participation rates in sport and other forms of recreation.

Around events, the level of commercial activity varies and investment in green spaces may need to be made to support developments in this area. Currently, there are a small number of sites that can support large scale events. Those that have sufficient space, such as the Arboretum Extension and Aldridge Airport require further investment in drainage, access or other infrastructure improvements. There is also a need to balance the more intensive use of sites for events with the expectations of resident communities. Whilst there is an aspiration to consider using green spaces

for more large scale events this areas will need further review. This Strategy recommends that an events policy is developed that considers the scale, frequency, locations, costs and benefits of further developing medium to large green space events. However, on a smaller scale there is the opportunity to develop opportunities for programmes of activity delivered by the private sector that increase use of parks and contribute to improved health and well being. Parks and green spaces provide excellent venues for outdoor fitness programmes (whether military style fitness or tai chi) and the Council will explore the opportunities to work with commercial organisations to develop programmes that increase use of green space and generate income.

Earlier in this Strategy we recommended that a Capital Programme is developed to allow for future planning and funding of new investment in green spaces focused on Strategic Green Space. In order to achieve this the Council will seek to ring-fence capital receipts from the development of green space to re-invest in other green infrastructure through the capital programme.

This Green Space Strategy embraces the principles of stronger partnership with other organisations and a greater role for the third sector in delivering high quality accessible green spaces. In order to achieve this the Council will need to invest in ensuring that the right skills are within the organisation to support this change. This is particularly pertinent with the proposed creation of a single service area to manage and maintain all green spaces. However, a broad set of skills will be required in order to achieve this including but not limited to horticulture, community engagement and development, leadership, management planning and business planning. The process for carrying out the audit will be through the Council's existing performance management framework. In order to support community development there will need to be a corresponding process which identifies existing skills levels of volunteers and within community groups and that opportunities for skills development should be identified and supported. The proposed Green Space Forum should provide the framework for this to be progressed. As well as informal learning and skills sharing the opportunities for more formal apprenticeship and training placement should

be developed with appropriate training providers to ensure that skills and developed for the future.

In terms of service delivery there is scope for more innovation and improved outcomes. One area that has been identified as needing improvement is monitoring and reporting of grounds maintenance and financial information at a site specific level. It is recommended that this is achieved through the review and reorganisation of grounds maintenance services supported by better integration of the two reporting systems currently deployed, namely PSS (inspection software) and Mayrise (grounds maintenance monitoring).

Strategic Objectives
7.1 Establish a Greenspace Strategy Board with representation from a wide range of internal and external partners.
7.2 Develop an events policy for medium and large scale events which seeks to increase income.
7.3 Opportunities for rental income from green space assets should be reviewed.
7.4 Review all lease agreements and establish policies for future agreements that ensure that wider community use of buildings within green spaces is achieved.
7.5 Review fees and charges and consider developing a new pricing structure which reflects costs and market rates.
7.6 Develop partnership arrangements and asset transfer with local community based organisations to unlock capital investment.
7.7 Develop partnerships with commercial organisations delivering health & fitness and other activities in parks and green spaces.
7.8 Explore the opportunities to create new markets for green products (i.e. compost) through appropriate trials.
7.9 Develop and implement more opportunities to engage with influential and respected national agencies such as Royal Horticultural Society, Tree Council, Woodland Trust and the support/challenges they can offer.
7.10 Opportunities to increase the skills and responsibilities of those who work in, volunteer and visit local open space should be created.
7.11 Ensure any income derived from green space lost to development is ring-fenced and re-invested in other green infrastructure.
7.12 Undertake a skills audit of all green space staff and seek to raise skills in key areas (including horticulture, community engagement and development, leadership, management planning & business planning).
7.13 Carry out a skills audit with volunteers and community groups through the Green Space Forum and develop a programme to share and improve skills.

7.14 Develop apprenticeship programmes with education and training providers.

7.15 Develop new accounting mechanisms to ensure accurate and up-to-date records of maintenance costs are available at a site specific level.

7.16 Integrate inspection software (PSS) with that used for planned maintenance (Mayrise).

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7 Delivering the Strategy

The delivery of the Green Space Strategy is shown in the Action Plan in the following section.

Monitoring and evaluation of the strategy is set out at section 7.2 following the action plan.

7.1 Resources

This Green Space Strategy has been produced at a time when ongoing revenue resources are limited and have reduced in real terms over the past few years. Forecasts suggest that revenue funding across all Council service areas will need to reduce significantly over the next five years. Funding for green spaces will be subject to the same pressures and the level of available resources from the Council are expected to reduce. This strategy has been developed within this environment of reduced revenue expenditure.

The strategy proposes that capital funding will be sought to develop large scale improvements to strategic level green spaces as and when external funding, planning gain and other sources of funding are available.

The Council in reorganising grounds maintenance operations and bringing these services within the control of the existing Green Space Service will create a unified and more cost effective service. The strategic hierarchy of green spaces will provide a framework for top level spaces to continue to be improved (subject to capital funding) and revenue resources redirected to maintain standards. District and Community level spaces will be reviewed with respect to grounds maintenance operations with the aim of improving biodiversity and reducing revenue costs.

The strategy also seeks to harness the commitment, enthusiasm and skills of local people across the borough in working with the Council and other partner agencies to ensure that green spaces are valued, well used and sustained for the future. Walsall has an impressive track record in community participation around green spaces and the Council wishes to build upon these strong foundations.

7.2 Action Plan

1. Aim : Green Spaces that Make the Borough an Attractive Place to Live, Work and Socialise

Ref	Strategic Objective	Lead Organisation	Partners	Timescale	Review Date	Performance Measure	Progress
1.1	Seek to protect existing green space provision through the planning policy process at the existing Borough wide average of 4.96 ha per 1,000 population and adopt a policy of no net loss of green space.	GSS Planning Policy		Year 1	Annually	Quantity of unrestricted green space per 1000 population. Area of green space lost.	
1.2	Through the Local Development Framework develop Supplementary Planning Guidance for Green Spaces	Planning Policy	GSS Regeneration Services Planning Services	Year 1	Annually	Adopted SPD Amount of planning gain (£)	

Ref	Strategic Objective	Lead Organisation	Partners	Timescale	Review Date	Performance Measure	Progress
1.3	Seek to address localised green space deficiency through the change in primary purpose of other under performing green spaces.	GSS	Planning Policy	Year 3	Year 4	Area of green space where primary purpose has been changed. Reduction in green space deficiency (ha / %)	
1.4	Through the planning policy process, where feasible, seek to create new green space where deficiencies cannot be met through changes in the primary purpose of other green spaces.	Planning Policy	GSS Planning Services Regeneration Services	Year 1	Annually	Amount of green space created. Reduction in green space deficiency (ha / %)	
1.5	Develop design guidance for the creation of new green space through the planning policy process.	Planning Policy	GSS	Year 2	Year 3	Production of guidance	

Ref	Strategic Objective	Lead Organisation	Partners	Timescale	Review Date	Performance Measure	Progress
1.6	Adopt the Draft Play Strategy and set accessibility standards for play provision	GSS	Planning Policy Play Partnership	Year 1		Accessibility standards. Reduction in green space deficiency (ha / %)	
1.7	Develop a new Allotments and Community Gardens Strategy and set accessibility standards.	GSS	Planning Policy New Allotment Forum	Year 4	Monitor annually. Review after 5 years	Production of strategy.	
1.8	Adopt the Strategic Hierarchy of Green Spaces.	GSS	Planning Policy Regeneration Services	Year 1	Annually		
1.9	Raise the minimum quality of green spaces to achieve the quality standards set out in the Strategic Hierarchy of Green Spaces	GSS	Street Pride FGN	Year 1	Annually	Minimum quality standards: Strategic - 45 District - 35 Community - 25	

Ref	Strategic Objective	Lead Organisation	Partners	Timescale	Review Date	Performance Measure	Progress
1.10	Ensure that funding through the Community Infrastructure Levy and other planning gain is used to address green space deficiencies, improve accessibility or raise quality.	Planning Policy	GSS Planning Services	Year 1	Annually	Amount of green space create Planning gain (£)	
1.11	Promote high quality environment as a way of attracting new businesses.	Regeneration / Economic Regeneration Corporate Comms and Marketing	GSS	Year 2	Annually	Contribute to marketing materials. Contribute to corporate plan.	
1.12	Ensure that green spaces are considered as a fundamental part of wider regeneration initiatives.	GSS Regeneration Services Planning Policy	NMA and PRG'S	Year 1	Annually	Protection of green space. Case studies.	
1.13	Promote green spaces and civic spaces as places for events and commercial activity.	GSS Corporate Communications and Marketing	Regeneration Town Centre Partnership NMA's	Year 4	Year 5	Marketing plan.	

Ref	Strategic Objective	Lead Organisation	Partners	Timescale	Review Date	Performance Measure	Progress
1.14	Review signage to promote green spaces and make the Borough more attractive and more welcoming.	GSS	FGN Allotment Forum	Year 3	Year 4	Marketing plan.	

2. Aim : Safer and More Secure Green Spaces

Ref	Strategic Objective	Lead Organisation	Partners	Timescale	Review Date	Performance Measure	Progress
2.1	Rationalise signage to promote key green spaces, encourage positive use and help support enforcement action.	GSS	-	Year 4	Year 5	Compliance of new signs to template(s) (Target 100%)	
2.2	Undertake crime and community safety audits as part of site management planning	GSS	WM Police NMA ASB Unit Enviorn mental Protect ion	Year 3	Year 4 / Annuall y	Audits for strategic parks (100% GF parks by 2014, remainder by 2017)	
2.3	Initiate enforcement action against criminal and anti-social behaviour that take place in parks and open space.	GSS WEst Midlands Police	NMA ASB UNit	Year 2	Year 3	Police reports or survey data (Trend to reducing ASB incidents)	
2.4	Prosecutions should be actively promoted as a further deterrent to other residents who cause anti-social behaviour	GSS Corporate Comms and Marketing	WM Police	Year 2	Year 3	No. of prosecutions. Publicity target.	

2.5	Develop education programmes to promote responsible dog ownership	GSS	Environmental Health Corporate Cooms and Marketing Environmental Protection FGN	Year 2	Year 3	Education & marketing programme (in place and operating by 2014)	
2.6	Undertake targeted enforcement action to address dog control and fouling	GSS	Environmental Health	Year 2	Year 3 / Annually	Surveys and complaints recorded (trend to reducing level of complaints)	

3. Aim : Green Spaces Contributing to Greater Health & Well-Being

Ref	Strategic Objective	Lead Organisation	Partners	Timescale	Review Date	Performance Measure	Progress
3.1	Promote green spaces as venues for events and activities that are attractive to children and young people and encourage	GSS	Youth Service Play	Year 2	Year 3 / Annually	No. of events	

	positive activity.		Partnership NMA's FGN Corporate Comms and Marketing		y		
3.2	Develop more programmes of health and fitness activity in parks	Sport & Leisure	GSS NHS FGN	Year 4	Year 5	No. of events No. of participants % of people achieving 5 x 30 mins exercise per week	
3.3	Strong partnership working with all partners, but particularly health colleagues needs to be developed to maximise the potential contribution green space can make to health and well being.	GSS	NHS Youth Services Children Services Sport and Leisure	Year 2	Year 3	New initiatives developed. Funding secured.	

3.4	Implement the recommendations of the Playing Pitch Strategy to address deficiencies in pitch provision and improve the quality of key sites.	Sport & Leisure	GSS FGN and User Groups	Year 3	Year 4	Delivery of recommendations of strategy.	
3.5	Female participation in sport and outdoor activities needs to be increased to male levels to assist in improving the health and wellbeing of the area. Female friendly activities for all ages should be designed, marketed and implemented across the borough.	Sport & Leisure	GSS NHS	Year 5	Year 5	Level of participation. Production of marketing materials.	
3.6	In partnership with health colleagues improve customer satisfaction and other data collection and sharing, and monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of health and activity programmes.	GSS	NHS Sport and Leisure	Year 3	Year 4	Availability of up to date customer survey data on GSSs (5 yr programme of surveys in place)	

4. Aim : Well Maintained and Accessible Green Spaces

Ref	Strategic Objective	Lead Organisation	Partners	Timescale	Review Date	Performance Measure	Progress
4.1	Establish a capital programme for future investment in Strategic Green Spaces with funding drawn from planning gain and other	GSS	Planning Policy	Year 1	Year 2	Funding secured (£)	

Ref	Strategic Objective	Lead Organisation	Partners	Timescale	Review Date	Performance Measure	Progress
	sources.		Regeneration Capital and Resources Partnership Planning Policy and Services				
4.2	All new green space created as part of planning conditions to have commuted sums to cover maintenance costs over a minimum of a 20 year period.	Planning Policy	GSS Planning Services	Year 1	Year 2	No. of agreements	
4.3	Develop Management and Maintenance Plans / Landscape Improvement Master Plans / Site Improvement Plans for all Strategic Green Spaces.	GSS	Friends of Groups	Year 2	Year 3 & annually	No. of MMPs No. of LIPs No. of SIPs	
4.4	Undertake site specific access and equality audits as part of the management planning process and capital investment programmes.	GSS	Specialist support	Year 2	Year 3	No. of audits. No. of sites where	

Ref	Strategic Objective	Lead Organisation	Partners	Timescale	Review Date	Performance Measure	Progress
			Equalities and Diversity Team			recommendations implemented / deemed to have good access.	
4.5	Undertake a strategic review of availability of toilet provision within town and neighbourhood centres	Neighbourhood Managers Property Services	GSS Town Centre Managers / Partnership	Year 3	Year 4	Reviews carried out.	
4.6	Grounds maintenance responsibilities and budgets be delegated to the existing Green Space Service	Executive Director Portfolio Holder	GSS	Year 1	Year 2	Reorganisation	
4.7	Review the management responsibility for retained housing land and other green spaces of strategic, district and community significance.	GSS Capital and Resources Partnership	Planning Policy Estates NMA	Year 2	Year 3	Amount of land transferred.	
4.8	Review the arrangements for litter collection and control in green spaces.	GSS	FGN	Year 2	Year 3	Revised specification. Customer satisfaction.	
4.9	Review grounds maintenance standards / specifications to allow more ecological &	GSS	FGN Regener	Year 3	Year 4	Cost saving. Improvements	

Ref	Strategic Objective	Lead Organisation	Partners	Timescale	Review Date	Performance Measure	Progress
	low maintenance approaches which mitigate against climate change and bring benefits for biodiversity.		ation Services			for biodiversity.	
4.10	Develop Service Standards and promote to residents and communities.	GSS	FGN's NMA's Corporate Comms and Marketing	Year 3	Year 4	Production of service standards.	
4.11	Benchmark the quality of service provision through the achievement of external awards	GSS	Friends of Groups	Year 2	Year 3 & annually	No. of Awards achieved	

5. Aim : Conserving and Enhancing Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Ref	Strategic Objective	Lead Organisation	Partners	Timescale	Review Date	Performance Measure	Progress
5.1	Continue to deliver the Birmingham and Black Country Nature Improvement Area initiative.	WT	GSS Regeneration Services	Year 1	Year 2	Delivery of project aims. Evaluation report.	
5.2	Implement the Raising the Barr Heritage Lottery Fund project	GSS	Barr Beacon Trust	Year 1	Year 2	Delivery of project aims. Evaluation report.	
5.3	Secure and deliver Environmental Stewardship and Woodland Grant Schemes	GSS		Year 1	Year 2 & annually	No. of grants secured. External funding secured (£).	
5.4	Protect and enhance and seek opportunities to develop green corridors and green infrastructure links	GSS Planning Policy and Planning Services	Regeneration Services	Year 3	Annually	Area / length of green corridor. Amount of new green corridors created	

5.5	Carry out a feasibility study to establish the viability and scope of the proposed Walsall Country Park and to set out an appropriate management structure.	GSS	WT Arboretum Country Board	Year 1	Year 2	Feasibility study delivered.	
5.6	Protect and enhance natural and semi-natural green space by designating further Local Nature Reserves.	GSS	Planning Policy / Natural England. FGN	Year 1	Year 2	No. of LNRs Area of LNR per 1000 population.	
5.6	Enhance and protect target habitats and species in the Birmingham and Black Country Biodiversity Action Plan.	GSS	WT BCCWT Natural England	Year 1	Year 2 & annually	Area of habitat improved / protected. No. of species benefiting.	
5.8	Increase the proportion of local nature conservation sites (SINCs and SLINCs) in positive management (NI197)	GSS	WT Volunteers	Year 1	Year 2 & annually	% of nature conservation site in favourable condition (NI197)	
5.9	Encourage volunteer participation in the management and maintenance of natural and semi-natural green spaces and in biological and geological recording.	GSS	Friends groups TCV	Year 3	Year 4 & annually	No. of volunteer days Volunteer satisfaction (survey)	

5.10	Develop programmes of environmental education, Forest Schools and other accredited training by working in partnership with other organisations.	GSS	Friends groups TCV Children Services Schools	Year 3	Year 4 & annually	No. of events No. of days of accredited training	
5.11	Ensure that the value of green spaces in terms of eco-system services is better understood within the Borough and promoted.	GSS	Planning Policy WT Corporate Comms and Marketing Regeneration Services	Year 3	Year 4 & annually	Improved environmental quality. Level of awareness. Appropriate approaches in other policies and strategies.	

6. Aim : More Engaged Communities & Neighbourhoods

Ref	Strategic Objective	Lead Organisation	Partners	Timescale	Review Date	Performance Measure	Progress
6.1	Develop the role and membership of the existing Friends Group Network towards a more inclusive and wider green space forum	GSS	External support Third sector Walsall VA LMA's NMA	Year 2	Year 3 & annually	No. of member organisations Participation in forum Satisfaction with forum	
6.2	Explore the options to appoint an independent Green Space Champion.	GSS	-	Year 2	Year 3	Appointment of Champion	
6.3	Review the resources available to directly support Friends Groups and seek to develop a networking and support role for the Green Spaces Forum.	GSS	NMA	Year 1	Year 2	Review carried out. Group satisfaction.	
6.4	Develop opportunities for social enterprises to deliver services in green spaces.	GSS	Third sector Walsall Housing Group Think Walsall / Economic Regenerat	Year 5		Review carried out. No. of projects delivered by social enterprise.	

Ref	Strategic Objective	Lead Organisation	Partners	Timescale	Review Date	Performance Measure	Progress
			ion NMA's				
6.5	Develop and promote a range volunteer opportunities for greater participation in green space management and improvement including those that address the Corporate Social Responsibility agenda.	GSS	Third sector partners NMA's Corporate Comms and marketing FGN LMA's Local Training Providers	Year 4	Year 5	No. of volunteers days. No. of corporate volunteer days.	
6.6	Review the self management of allotments as part of the development of an Allotment and Community Gardens Strategy.	GSS	Allotment Groups (LMA's) Property Services Federatio n of City Farms and Gardens NSALG	Year 3	Year 4	No. of groups under self management. Quality of allotment sites.	
6.7	Develop a Borough wide allotment and community gardening forum.	GSS	Federatio n Of City	Year 5	Year 5	Forum established.	

Ref	Strategic Objective	Lead Organisation	Partners	Time scale	Review Date	Performance Measure	Progress
			Farms And Community Gardens NSALG LMA's			Level of participation	
6.8	Develop a range of pilot projects which showcase community managed green space	GSS	Third sector. Friends groups. LMA's NMA's	Year 5	Year 5	Demonstration projects. Case studies.	
6.9	Education and lifelong opportunities should be maximised in green spaces	GSS	Youth Service Adult learning Childrens Services	Year 4	Year 5	No. of events No. of learning events.	
6.10	Promote green spaces as venues for events and activities and support communities in running events.	GSS	Marketing & Communications Team NMA's FGN	Year 3	Year 4	Marketing Plan	
6.11	Develop a marketing plan for green spaces and review the effectiveness of different	Marketing & Communicati	NMA's	Year 1	Year 2	Marketing Plan	

Ref	Strategic Objective	Lead Organisation	Partners	Timescale	Review Date	Performance Measure	Progress
	consultation approaches including GreenSTAT.	ons Team GSS					
6.1 2	Review and update information on the Council website and develop the use of social media to promote green spaces, encourage greater use and participation and service standards.	GSS	Marketing & Communications Team FGN LMA's NMA's	Year 1	Year 2	Updated web pages. Social media developed.	

7. Aim : Stronger Partnerships and Innovation

Ref	Strategic Objective	Lead Organisation	Partners	Timescale	Review Date	Performance Measure	Progress
7.1	Establish a Greenspace Strategy Board with representation from a wide range of internal and external partners.	GSS	Internal / External partners	Year 4	Year 5	Green Space Strategy Board established	
7.2	Develop an events policy for medium and large scale events which seeks to increase income.	GSS	SAG Town Centre Partnerships	Year 2	Year 3	Events policy	

Ref	Strategic Objective	Lead Organisation	Partners	Timescale	Review Date	Performance Measure	Progress
			FGN				
7.3	Opportunities for rental income from green space assets should be reviewed	GSS	FGN Property Services LMA's NMA's	Year 4	Year 5	Additional revenue generated	
7.4	Review all lease agreements and establish policies for future agreements that ensure that wider community use of buildings within green spaces is achieved.	GSS	Estates NMA's FGN LMA Property Services	Year 5	Year 5	No. of leases reviewed. No. of new leases with improved community access.	
7.5	Review fees and charges and consider developing a new pricing structure which reflects costs and market rates.	GSS	FGN LMA	Year 4	Year 5	Review of fess and charges. Additional income generated.	
7.6	Develop partnership arrangements and asset transfer with local community based organisations to unlock capital investment.	GSS	NMA Property Services FGN LMA's	Year 5	Year 5	No. of assets transferred.	
7.7	Develop partnerships with commercial organisations delivering health & fitness and other activities in parks and green	GSS Sport and Leisure	Think Walsall NHS	Year 4	Year 5	No. of new partnerships developed.	

Ref	Strategic Objective	Lead Organisation	Partners	Timescale	Review Date	Performance Measure	Progress
	spaces.						
7.8	Explore the opportunities to create new markets for green products (i.e compost) through appropriate trials.	GSS	WT	Year 4	Year 5	No. of markets created. Sales revenue (£)	
7.9	Develop and implement more opportunities to engage with influential and respected national agencies such as Royal Horticultural Society, Tree Council, Woodland Trust and the support/challenges they can offer.	GSS	Friends groups LMA's	Year 4	Year 5	Participation levels. No. of new organisations engaged with. Attendance at Green Spaces Forum meetings.	
7.10	Opportunities to increase the skills and responsibilities of those who work in, volunteer and visit local open space should be created.	GSS	Third sector partners HR NMA's FGN LMA's	Year 4	Year 5	No. of additional opportunities created	
7.11	Ensure any income derived from green space lost to development is ring-fenced and re-invested in other green infrastructure.	GSS Planning Policy Capital Asset and Resources	Regeneration Services	Year 2	Year 3	Additional income generated. Improvement in quality score through	

Ref	Strategic Objective	Lead Organisation	Partners	Timescale	Review Date	Performance Measure	Progress
		Partnership				investment.	
7.1 2	Undertake a skills audit of all green space staff and seek to raise skills in key areas (including horticulture, community engagement and development, leadership, management planning & business planning).	GSS	HR	Year 4	Year 5	Skills Audit Annual Performance Reviews	
7.1 3	Carry out a skills audit with volunteers and community groups through the Green Space Forum and develop a programme to share and improve skills.	GSS	Friends Groups Green Space Forum LMA's NMA's Training Provider s	Year 4	Year 5	Audit delivered.	
7.1 4	Develop apprenticeship programmes with education and training providers.	GSS	Training Provider s NMA's Walsall College	Year 4	Year 5	No. of apprenticeships No. of accredited training schemes.	
7.1 5	Develop new accounting mechanisms to ensure accurate and up-to-date records of maintenance costs are available at a site	GSS	Finance	Year 4	Year 5	Systems established.	

Ref	Strategic Objective	Lead Organisation	Partners	Timescale	Review Date	Performance Measure	Progress
	specific level.						
7.1 6	Integrate inspection software (PSS) with that used for planned maintenance (Mayrise).	GSS	ICT	Year 1	Year 2	Systems integrated.	

Key

GSS	Green Space Services	Year 1	September 2011 to March 2013
WT	Wildlife Trust for Birmingham & the Black Country	Year 2	April 2013 to March 2014
TCV	The Conservation Volunteers	Year 3	April 2014 to March 2015
		Year 4	April 2015 to March 2016
		Year 5	April 2016 to March 2017

7.3 Monitoring & Evaluation

The strategy will be used in the Neighbourhood Services Business Planning process which occurs annually. This will ensure that there are clear links and a golden thread between the Green Space Strategy, the Corporate Plan and the Sustainable Community Strategy.

The action plan will be monitored on a quarterly basis in order to track progress and implementation of the strategy. There will be a review of the implementation and delivery of the strategy annually to feed into the Business planning process outlined above. The annual review should be presented to the Green Spaces Forum and published on the Council's website.

The Green Space Strategy Board will meet at least twice per year to plan and co ordinate the implementation of the strategy and to review progress in its delivery. This process will feed into partners forward planning approaches.

The strategy will be formally reviewed in 2017/18.

Appendix A

Strategic Green Space Hierarchy

List of Sites