

**CHELTENHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL  
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Green Space Strategy**

**CHELTENHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL  
Parks, People and Wildlife –  
A Green Space Strategy for Cheltenham**

**2009-2024**

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**A Draft Green Space Strategy for Cheltenham**

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## 1. Summary

- 1.1** This is the first time that a comprehensive strategy for the borough's green spaces has been developed and, as such, is a landmark document that joins-up the various elements of green space provision and management with strategic land management, sustainability, biodiversity, and resilience to climate change.
- 1.2** The draft outline strategy focuses on all publicly accessible green space, regardless of owner or manager, within the borough and brings together a number of pieces of research that have been carried out over the past two years. It will set out a 15 year vision for green space within the borough, including the establishment of a number of core objectives and policy recommendations to ensure the protection and enhancement of green space.
- 1.3** The development of the strategy is a response to the audit of green space completed in 2007. The audit mapped all green space within the borough but excluded agricultural land. All school grounds and their sports facilities were also mapped and were classified as sites with limited access.
- The audit also considered key issues such as:
- Quantity – how much green space is there in the borough?
  - Distribution – where is the space located in relation to people?
  - Quality – what is the current quality of the green spaces?
  - Value – how important are the green spaces?
  - Need – what are people's needs for green spaces within the borough?
- 1.4** The audit included a significant consultation exercise in which 5000 households were sent a questionnaire covering such issues as how they traveled to parks and green spaces, why they visited, what were the key barriers to greater use, what they thought of overall quality and what they felt needed to be improved. The results of this consultation exercise are summarized in section 5 of this document.
- 1.5** Overall the audit found that the borough has a significant amount of green space with almost 13% of the land mass of the area. Of the accessible green space three quarters of the spaces are less than 0.5 hectares in size and only 2 sites (less than 1% of the total number) are over 20 hectares in size. The quantity overall equates to around 3.1 hectares per 1000 population but this is not evenly distributed with some wards having less than 0.1 hectares per 1000. Ward based analysis can be misleading in that there might be a green space in the adjacent ward that serves the population.
- 1.6** When the accessibility of space is looked at there are some small areas of the borough where residents do not have accessible space within a reasonable walking distance. However over 90% of residents do have access.

- 1.7** Quality of provision<sup>1</sup> was assessed across 119 green spaces and again there was found to be an uneven distribution of quality across the Borough. Following the PPG17 guidance an assessment of value was also carried out and then this was combined with the quality scores in a matrix which has been used to develop policy options for the spaces assessed. The quality audit has also been re-visited as part of the development of this strategy and has found that quality is improving in the borough and that the sites that have improved serve most of the more deprived areas of the borough.
- 1.8** The strategy has further built on the audit by bringing in key issues such as a review of the delivery of services in relation to green space, additional consideration of strategic land use planning issues, the development of local standards and key considerations around biodiversity and climate change. It has been informed by additional consultation with key stakeholders to help identify the big issues to be addressed and to help in prioritising the council and its partner's responses to these issues.
- 1.9** The consultation process will continue and the views of all stakeholders will be sought through a range of appropriate mechanisms during the implementation of this strategy.

## **2. Vision**

### **2.1 Cheltenham Borough Council's vision for green spaces is:**

*Working together to ensure a comprehensive network of attractive, valued and well used, locally distinct green spaces, that are accessible, safe and welcoming, which meet the existing and future needs of the community, enhance biodiversity and are managed sustainably to reduce our impact on climate change.*

The existing and future needs of the community include looking at the physical and mental health benefits and opportunities of green space, improved community resilience and support local food production, and the social and educational value of our green infrastructure

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<sup>1</sup> See Section 5.1.3 "Green Space Classification" for explanation of quality

### 3. Aims

#### 3.1 Beneath the overall vision sit a series of aims that the strategy sets out to address. This strategy and its subsequent implementation will:

- Establish a long term vision for the green spaces of Cheltenham which supports the delivery of Civic Pride;
- Be clear on how positive contributions will be made to managing and adapting to climate change;
- Develop the opportunities arising from the Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy in the identification of strategic green space and the role of section 106 obligations and/or the Community Infrastructure Levy towards the maintenance and enhancement of existing green space and provision of new green space, where appropriate.
- Inform part of the Local Development Framework package as a Supplementary Planning Document on open space/amenity space and play space and will replace the existing Supplementary Planning Guidance Notes on these subjects.
- Provide a coherent and flexible approach to providing and maintaining green space areas within the Borough over the next 15 years;
- Provide a realistic and achievable action plan that will provide a basis for the review of the Sustainable Communities Strategy and the Council's business plan
- Improve engagement with councillors, partners, stakeholders and local community on green space matters;
- Provide a basis for forming partnerships to support long term management, maintenance and development of green spaces;
- Value and protect all the Boroughs historic green spaces, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Ancient woodlands, Local Nature Reserves and other designated sites.

## 4. Introduction

### 4.1 What is a green space strategy?

CABE Space<sup>2</sup> define a green space strategy as a document that “sets out an authority’s vision for using its green space and the goals it wants to achieve, plus the resources, methods and time needed to meet these goals.”

**4.1.1** A green space strategy should form part of a suite of interconnected council documents that cut across departments, service areas and political boundaries and contribute to delivering the council’s corporate aims and objectives set out in the community strategy.

**4.1.2** A strategy goes further than a PPG17 assessment of needs and opportunities in that it needs to consider what has caused the current situation and what the authority and its partners need to do to address it. It needs to look in detail at how management, maintenance and development of green spaces is currently carried out as well as looking at how the wider community are consulted and engaged in delivering change.

**4.1.3** It is vital to agree the scope of the strategy at the outset. The focus of this document is green space. The Government’s planning policy guidance sets definitions for open space and clarifies the distinction between green spaces and civic, or hard, spaces. Planning Policy Guidance Note 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (PPG17) states that:

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

**4.1.4** Whilst we have captured information about all green space in the borough, the focus of this strategy is on all publicly accessible green space. Some areas of the wider public realm such as small formal gardens which may include a hard landscape element have been included. The ‘non green’ parts of the street scene or civic space are covered by other council strategies or initiatives”.

**4.1.5** CABE Space<sup>3</sup> have also recently stated;

“The policy agenda and context for delivering quality open space is shifting. The planning system is undergoing significant change, as is the way local authorities manage public services. More importance is being placed on the better integration of strategies and programmes, partnership working and effective community involvement. Both mean that open space can no longer be viewed in isolation.”

**4.1.6** Thus this strategy needs to have significance at a high level within the policy framework of Cheltenham Borough Council.

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<sup>2</sup> Green Space Strategies A good Practice Guide (2004)

<sup>3</sup> Open Space Strategies Good Practice Guidance (2008)



## **4.2 Why do we need a green space strategy for Cheltenham?**

- 4.2.1** There are a number of key drivers for investing in the production of a green space strategy for Cheltenham.
- 4.2.2** At a national level, Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (2002) (PPG 17) requires Local Planning Authorities to undertake a robust assessment of the existing and future needs of their communities for green space and from these develop local standards of quantity, quality and accessibility for green space provision.
- 4.2.3** At a regional level the Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West sets out plans for <sup>4</sup>significant housing growth at the same time as requiring protection and enhancement of the natural landscape, the development of a green infrastructure plan and the provision of networks of green spaces. The development of a green space strategy is therefore linked in to these three key requirements.
- 4.2.4** At a sub regional level the Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy (JCS) and the emerging Green Infrastructure study will again require evidence from the green space strategy for Cheltenham to feed into these wider frameworks. The JCS will be a spatial plan, allocating land for development and other uses, but also influencing via planning policy issues such as accessibility to green spaces, health and well being. Some of the key themes the JCS will need to address are:
- Addressing the effects of climate change and putting in place adaptation measures.
  - Protecting and enhancing high quality landscapes.
  - Protecting and enhancing biodiversity.
  - Ensuring communities have access to active play and amenity facilities.
  - Contribution to general health and well being of communities by improving quality and accessibility of existing green spaces.
  - Setting a strategy for the delivery of strategic green infrastructure.
- 4.2.5** Work to date on the JCS has identified gaps in the evidence base that the green space strategy addresses and thus this document will again link in to high level strategic land use planning.
- 4.2.6** At a local level people clearly value parks and open spaces highly and they are an important element in what makes Cheltenham special. As the steward of most of these important community resources it is essential that the council has a strategic overview of current and future factors impacting upon the protection, provision and enhancement of green space within the borough. In addition, it is important to undertake a strategic review of the green spaces to ensure that they remain relevant to people's needs, as many were established years ago and have not been reviewed or adapted to reflect modern interests, usage patterns or changes in demand.
- 4.2.7** Also at a local level the green space strategy will form part of the Local Development Scheme package as an evidence base for the development of a Supplementary Planning Document which will replace the existing

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<sup>4</sup> although the council does not support the level of housing growth identified, it is never the less obliged by the Government to implement it.

Supplementary Planning Guidance Notes on these subjects. Again the evidence base built up initially by the green space audit has been critical in developing the understanding of current provision. This strategy takes it one step further in developing local standards for green space provision that feed into the SPD and future developer contributions, ensuring not only protection of green space but also a funding source for improvements.

- 4.2.8** The authority has produced a Sustainable Community Strategy which sets out an aspirational long term sustainable vision for Cheltenham over a 20 year period. This document will influence all other plans and strategies produced by Cheltenham's Strategic Partnership's partner organisations, including the Local Development Framework.
- 4.2.9** Promoting Sustainable Living - The Green Space Strategy will contribute significantly to the principles of sustainable living and help achieve best practice in sustainability. It will help promote environmental education and understanding and will focus on the challenge of adapting to and mitigating the impact of climate change, in accordance with the council's Climate Change strategy.
- 4.2.10** Economic Development and Regeneration - The Green Space Strategy will support the principle of economic development and regeneration through helping to achieve a thriving and prosperous economy with an attractive and enhanced environmental and social fabric, and by helping to improve the quality of life for all through improved health and activity, a richer cultural life and leisure opportunities
- 4.2.11** Improving Environmental Quality - The priority of improving environmental quality is inherent with the Green Space Strategy through protecting and enhancing the quality of the local environment. A clear evidence base and sound science will be used to ensure clarity and understanding in the allocation of resources and in the future management, maintenance, care and protection of Cheltenham's heritage of parks, gardens, green spaces and biodiversity.
- 4.2.12** Partnership Working to Promote Community Safety - The Green Space Strategy will help to promote partnership working for community safety and safer and stronger communities through helping to design-out crime, tackling anti-social behaviour in parks and open spaces, reducing the perception and fear of crime and through improving the local environment. It will also help to develop stronger communities by continuing to give people a voice, strengthening the voluntary and community network and improving people's access to decision-making and services.
- 4.2.13** Partnership Working to Promote Healthy Communities - The Green Space Strategy will help to promote partnership working for healthy communities by encouraging opportunities for increased physical activity, improving access to the natural environment to counter the effects of mental distress and illness, promoting the growing of healthy food and taking exercise through allotments and community gardening.

### **4.3 Cheltenham's green heritage**

**4.3.1** Cheltenham became established as a Spa town, during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century and rapid building expansion continued throughout that period. The development of the town was planned around the activities associated with the taking of the Spa waters, the associated walking through the formally laid out Pleasure Gardens and riding or walking through the tree lined avenues. Cheltenham was always intended to be a summer resort, and the shade provided by the many trees was always intended to be part of that Cheltenham summer experience. Buildings were strategically positioned at the end of long vistas and the green spaces around the buildings were designed to enhance the architecture. Cheltenham has the most complete 19<sup>th</sup> town plan in England, and the plan together with many of the original tree planting schemes, makes the Borough unique. It is this special town plan together with the historic parks; squares and tree lined avenues, which has given it the title of "a town within a park".

The town's parks, gardens and tree lined avenues have been nationally recognised as some of the best in the country. The town is also known for the Racecourse and the nearby Cotswolds escarpment, but the green infrastructure of the town is much more diverse than these elements. The provision ranges from small formal gardens and churchyards, to allotments, playing fields, equipped play areas, local nature reserves, and large areas of accessible countryside on the urban fringes. Spaces are also linked by recreational and wildlife corridors such as the Chelt Walk.

**4.3.2** Cheltenham has won many awards in the annual Britain in Bloom competition. Recently the authority has also established a track record in securing the Green Flag Award, the national quality scheme for green spaces.

**4.3.3** The council is also actively restoring and regenerating green spaces through creative use of external funding. Recent examples include the restoration of Montpellier Gardens and the new master plan for Pittville Park, two of the towns most significant and historic spaces.

**4.3.4** The council has recently adopted the Cheltenham Civic Pride Urban Design Framework SPD and is beginning its implementation. Key to the project is the creation of green links and nodes, to help both place-making and sustainable, calmed traffic management. The greening of streets and spaces and the creation of new spaces is a central theme. For example, the Framework proposes the extension of the character of The Promenade to establish a continuous green pedestrian link between Montpellier Gardens and Pittville Park. It also promotes improved cycle links - particularly on the east-west axis to repair the fractured linkages between routes in the east – including Sandford Park - and the Honeybourne Line.

**4.3.5** At the other end of the scale, the borough's heritage of green space is coming under an increasing threat through pressure on the green belt, the increase in housing allocations, garden land development and the potential future impact of climate change.

#### **4.4 How did we go about producing an outline green space strategy?**

**4.4.1** The strategy has been developed over a period of time and began with the green space audit and some of the key findings are set out in the summary in section 1. The development of the strategy was supported by external consultants and has involved a wide range of people, staff from across service areas, key stakeholders and community groups.

#### **4.5 The green space audit included some key pieces of work:**

**4.5.1** Mapping of all recreational green space across the borough

**4.5.2** Using existing Geographical Information Systems (GIS) data, Ordnance Survey mapping, aerial photography and the quality assessment process, all green spaces within Cheltenham were mapped. Agricultural land was typically excluded from the study except where unrestricted public access was known to exist. All school grounds and their sports facilities were mapped as institutional land but were not included in the quality audit as they are not freely available to the public for recreation. The audit also did not look at water courses or civic squares that were predominantly hard landscaping but these have subsequently been considered as part of the development of the strategy.

#### **4.6 In order to classify the green space in the audit a number of levels were used;**

**4.6.1** An initial classification based on land use and primary purpose (typology).

**4.6.2** A classification of how accessible the site is to the public (accessibility)

**4.6.3** A classification of the site's significance (hierarchy).

#### **4.7 Quantity and accessibility analysis**

**4.7.1** Using the GIS data detailed analyses were run to see how much green space existed by type and hierarchy and also to look at travel distances to green spaces.

**4.7.2** The quantity analysis also looked at the amount of green space per head of population at borough and ward levels to begin to identify any areas of under provision.

**4.7.3** The accessibility analysis used GIS modeling to look for areas where people lived that did not have access to green space within reasonable walking distance.

#### **4.8 The 2005 Household Survey for Parks and Green Spaces**

**4.8.1** A questionnaire survey was designed distributed by post to a random sample by ward of 5,000 households in Cheltenham. A total of 921 completed household surveys were received giving a return rate of 18.4%.

**4.8.2** The survey asked key questions around

**4.8.2.1** Use of green space – which one(s) people visited, how they traveled there, how often they visited, key barriers to use

**4.8.2.2** Quality of space and key improvements – had the quality of space changed and what did people view of the key areas for change

**4.8.2.3** Quantity of space – whether people felt there were enough parks, children’s play areas, facilities for young people or natural green space locally

**4.8.3** The results of the survey are included in section 11 of this document.

## **4.9 Quality and value assessments**

**4.9.1** 119 green spaces (out of the 322 sites with unrestricted access) were assessed using the field assessment criteria of the Green Flag Award, the national quality standard. The findings were analysed by type of space, by hierarchy and by ward in order to understand the quality issues across the borough.

**4.9.2** An assessment of value was carried out using a variety of data sources including level of use, ecological designations, proximity to cycle routes, community engagement and the site’s strategic location in the borough.

**4.9.3** The quality and value assessments were combined into a matrix for the 119 sites audited.

**4.9.4** Following the green space audit other key areas of work have been undertaken to complete the strategy. These have included

- Additional mapping work around private green space
- A detailed policy review to establish the wider strategic context and key linkages to this document
- A biodiversity audit to establish the quality and value of a number of spaces across the borough
- Mapping of water courses, flood areas and key wildlife corridors
- Detailed analysis of current provision against national standards
- In depth consultation with stakeholders, partners, staff, elected members and community groups

## 5. Strategic context

5.1 As part of the development of this document a comprehensive review of national, regional and local policy has been carried out to assess the linkages at a strategic level. The full review document is set out as appendix A, the text below is a summary of the key implications and connections to wider policy.

### 5.2 National Policy Context

5.2.1 The overall national policy context is now set out within the Sustainable Communities Act 2007 which promotes the sustainability of local communities through a broad agenda for partnership working at the local level, including the development of sustainable community strategies and the negotiation of local area agreements. In addition, the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduced a new spatial planning system, comprising regional spatial strategies (RSS) and local development frameworks (LDF), and a requirement for a sustainability appraisal to be undertaken of the proposals in each document.

5.2.2 Following the enactment of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the government has updated national planning policy, superseding planning policy guidance (PPG) with 7 planning policy statements (PPS). These highlight the important role that open space has to play within the spatial planning process. Key PPS for open space are listed below and in Appendix A:

- *PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development (2005)*
- *Supplement to PPS1: Planning and Climate Change (2007)*
- *PPS3: Housing (2006)*
- *PPS6: Planning for Town Centres (2005)*
- *PPS9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (2005)*
- *PPS11: Regional spatial strategies (2004)*
- *PPS12: Local Spatial Planning (2008)*
- *PPS25: Planning and Flood Risk (2006).*

5.2.3 The key national planning document is PPG17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (2002). PPG17, which is yet to be superseded by a PPS, states that 'local authorities should undertake robust assessments of the existing and future needs of their communities for open space, sports and recreational facilities' (paragraph 1). The companion guide to PPG17 recommends a strategy approach and sets out ways that local authorities can undertake assessments and audits of open space. Included in its guiding principles for assessment is the need to define the 'extent to which open spaces meet clearly identified local needs and the wider benefits they generate for people, wildlife, biodiversity and the wider environment' (paragraph 2.1).

5.2.4 Open space strategies should also be considered in light of the European Landscape Convention, ratified by government in March 2007. This encourages public authorities to adopt policies and measures at local, regional, national and international level for protecting, managing and planning all landscapes throughout Europe.

**5.2.5** Other new national initiatives will impact and influence the open space agenda:

- Healthy weight, healthy lives – a cross-government strategy for England (Department of Health 2008) – highlights the important role that open space can play in encouraging people to live more healthy and active lifestyles
- Fair Play – a consultation on the play strategy (Department for Children, Schools and Families 2008) – puts forward a vision to make public space more child-friendly
- Building Schools for the Future (BSF) and the Primary Capital Strategy - recognise the important role that school grounds have to play to meet the education, recreational and social needs of young people and the wider community
- Manual for streets (Department for Transport, 2007) - provides guidance on the design of residential streets, promoting increased consideration of the 'place' function of streets, for pedestrians and cyclists
- Lifetime Homes – Lifetime Neighbourhoods (Communities and Local Government 2008) –a national strategy for ensuring there is appropriate housing, services, facilities and environments that an ageing society can participate in and enjoy
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) - is a charge that local authorities will be able to apply to developments to fund the infrastructure needs of the development as identified by the local development framework (LDF). Infrastructure needs include parks, play areas, green spaces and open spaces.
- Building for Life (CABE 2008) – is the national standard for well designed neighbourhoods and is a core indicator in the Council's Annual Monitoring Return for planning. It requires an assessment of play and open space provision.
- World Class Places: The Government's Strategy for Improving the Quality of Place – DCMS and CLG (2009) – establishes the Government's policy for improving the way the places where we live and work are planned, designed, developed and maintained. It identifies the design and upkeep of spaces and the provision of green space and green infrastructure of two of the four elements of a quality place.

### **5.3 Regional and Sub Regional Policy Context**

**5.3.1** A full review of all relevant regional policy has been undertaken and is provided in appendix A.

### **5.4 Local Policy Context**

**5.4.1** A full review of all relevant local policy has been undertaken and is provided in appendix A.

## **6. Natural environment and impact of climate change**

### **6.1 Climate Change**

- 6.1.1** Climate change is now widely regarded as the most pressing environmental problem confronting mankind in the 21st century. Although the earth is naturally warmed by a combination of gases that trap the sun's heat to create the 'greenhouse effect', man-made emissions of these gases are now building up in the atmosphere and are starting to change the earth's climate. We need to avoid making the problem worse, so cutting carbon emissions is a priority. But all of us - individuals, businesses, Government and public authorities - will also need to adapt our behaviour to respond to the challenges of climate change.
- 6.1.2** Climate change will impact on Cheltenham's green spaces in two key ways:
- 6.1.3** There is a growing need to reduce the release of greenhouse gases caused by activities involving the use and maintenance of all types of green space (mitigation) and
- 6.1.4** The climate of Cheltenham will inevitably change making it more difficult for existing species and wildlife to survive unless they can adapt to their changing environment (adaptation)
- 6.1.5** The following two sections explain in more detail the impact of climate change on Cheltenham and the types of measures that will need to be introduced to reduce carbon emissions and help adapt to the inevitable consequences.

### **6.2 Reducing Carbon Emissions (Mitigation)**

- 6.2.1** The UK Government is committed to addressing both the causes and consequences of climate change and approved a Climate Change Act in November 2008. This commits the UK to a greenhouse gas emission reduction target of at least 80% by 2050, and reductions in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of at least 26% by 2020, against a 1990 baseline.
- 6.2.2** The Gloucestershire Local Area Agreement (May 2008) includes a target of reducing carbon emissions across the county by 9.1% by 2011 from an average of 7.7 tonnes per capita in 2006.
- 6.2.3** Cheltenham Climate Change Strategy, published 2005, contains an overarching aim of a carbon neutral borough, and seeks a 20% reduction in carbon emissions from 1990 levels by 2010 and 60% by 2050, targets which will need to be revised to reflect the Climate Change Act. Cheltenham Low Carbon Partnership is responsible for delivering a programme of activities designed to reduce carbon emissions from activities in Cheltenham, working in partnership with key employers and organisations.
- 6.2.4** In line with its leadership role in the local community, Cheltenham Borough Council Business Plan 2008/9 contains targets of a 5% reduction in carbon emissions from 2006 to 2010, and a 20% reduction in energy consumption 2006-10 for council services. An internal Carbon Reduction Group is delivering a Carbon Reduction Programme, approved by Cabinet in January



2009) which includes a number of measures designed to reduce the council's carbon footprint. Overall council premises and fleet services account for over 3000 tonnes of carbon per annum, and since 2006 this footprint has grown by 1.5%, largely as a result of increases in electricity consumption in operational premises and on fleet fuel use, due to increased re-cycling activity.

**6.2.5** The management of the council's green space resources impacts on carbon emissions in a number of ways, from the use of energy in running premises such as offices to the use of grounds maintenance machinery and the way this is transported to parks and open spaces etc. Table 1 below identifies the main ways that the council's green environment services add to carbon emissions.

<b>Table 1 – The impact of Cheltenham Borough Council green environment activities on carbon emissions</b>	
<b>Sources of Carbon Emissions</b>	<b>CBC green environment activities</b>
Energy (gas, electricity and oil) used in buildings	Operational buildings to provide Green Environment Services – offices, depot, nursery, sports pavilions, park lighting
Transport	CBC fleet vehicles – lawn mowers and maintenance vehicles, vans for green waste etc Transport of plants/other materials
Materials	Use of peat (loss of carbon storage), plastic pots, pesticides etc, packaging
Waste	Disposal of waste materials – landfill generates methane
Water	Use of treated and pumped water for irrigation

Table 14 in section 12 includes a number of measures that the council is implementing or could introduce to mitigate the impact of carbon emissions from its own activities across a range of green space typologies.

### **6.3 The impact of climate change on Cheltenham (Adaptation)**

**6.3.1** The Earth's climate is changing. Rising global temperatures will bring changes in weather patterns, rising sea levels and increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather. Experts predict that average UK temperatures could rise by between 2 to 3.5°C by the 2080s.

**6.3.2** For Cheltenham this could mean:

- Hotter, drier summers - 'Hot' days will occur more frequently and get even hotter – by 2080 summers could be up to 5.5<sup>o</sup> C warmer and periods of summer drought could increase with 30% less rainfall by 2050.
- Warmer, wetter winters - Rainfall events will become more intense, with more winter storms – predictions of up to 15% wetter by 2050's – and more frost-free days.

**6.3.3** Other impacts could include rising sea levels and more tidal surges. The changing climate will have major consequences on every aspect of our

economy, society and environment and, although there are likely to be some positive benefits, many will bring disruption through increased risk of flooding and winter storm damage, loss of habitats for wildlife, summer water shortages etc.

**6.3.4** Cheltenham Climate Change Strategy assesses the likely impact of climate change on Cheltenham and identifies a range of measures that should be introduced to help individuals, businesses, organisations and wildlife adapt to the inevitable consequences. Table 2 below, based on the strategy, summarises the key challenges and opportunities that the changing climate will bring for green space in Cheltenham.

**6.3.5** The government requires all local authorities to report on progress on adapting to climate change through national indicator NI 188. This indicator has been built into Gloucestershire's Local Area Agreement under the theme of improving the resilience of our natural and built environment. This sets out a pathway for achieving the four levels of adaptation required by NI 188 and work is underway to ensure that all authorities in the county achieve Level 1 by the end of 2009 and Level 2 by the end of 2010.

<b>Table 2 - Possible impacts of climate change on Cheltenham</b>		
<b>Climate change impact</b>	<b>Opportunities for green space</b>	<b>Challenges for green space</b>
Higher temperatures, especially in summer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Longer growing season for crops and plants.</li> <li>• Less hardy species will survive better, scope to plant more tender plants/crops</li> <li>• Increased potential for outdoor activities, could lead to more intensive use of parks and green spaces</li> <li>• Scope to use trees for summer shade and reduce demands for air conditioning in buildings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for more control over weeds and pests as these will survive better</li> <li>• Plants needing cold winters to germinate etc may fail</li> <li>• Stress on wildlife (flora and fauna) during heat waves</li> <li>• Sunburn and heatstroke risks to outdoor workers</li> </ul>
Drier summers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide corridors and links for wildlife to migrate to more suitable habitats - species need to move 40ft/day to keep up with change</li> <li>• Scope for drought resistant planting</li> <li>• Scope for innovative water storage measures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water shortages in summer, which will impact on vegetation and wildlife and gardens</li> <li>• Traditional species of trees could suffer from drought, which could threaten existing habitats/ landscapes</li> <li>• Increased risk of fires</li> <li>• Increased risk of building subsidence</li> <li>• Low river flows and higher concentrations of pollutants</li> </ul>

Wetter winters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scope for planting in spaces and streets to mitigate flooding through SUDS</li> <li>• Scope to store winter rain for use in drier summers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased flooding risk, especially in floodplain areas</li> <li>• Plants requiring drier conditions may struggle in water-logged soil</li> <li>• Extended grass cutting season</li> </ul>
More storms and weather extremes		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heavy winds could damage tree and plant stock</li> <li>• High run-off could deplete soils</li> <li>• Interruptions to service provision</li> </ul>

## **7. Biodiversity**

### **7.1 Introduction**

- 7.1.1** Biodiversity encompasses the whole variety of life on Earth. It includes all species of plants and animals, but also their genetic variation, and the complex ecosystems of which they are a part. It covers the whole of the natural world, from the commonplace to the critically endangered.
- 7.1.2** Biodiversity forms the natural capital that makes up the living landscapes around us, sustains living systems and enhances our quality of life. It is an important component of the view from our window, the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the materials and medicines we use, and the functioning of the natural systems and processes on which our lives depend. Biodiversity is a core component of sustainable development, underpinning economic development and prosperity, and has an important role to play in developing locally distinctive and sustainable communities.
- 7.1.3** From 1 October 2006, all local authorities and other public authorities in England and Wales have a Duty to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in exercising their functions. The Duty set out in Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006 aims to raise the profile and visibility of biodiversity, to clarify existing commitments with regard to biodiversity, and to make it a natural and integral part of policy and decision making.

### **7.2 Biodiversity audit**

- 7.2.1** The council commissioned a biodiversity audit of Cheltenham in 2006 -2007 in order to :
- increase the evidence base and demonstrate the council's commitment to sustainable development and management;
  - provide objective baseline information and sound science to influence the sustainable management and maintenance of the council's own land holdings;
  - identify areas with the potential opportunity to deliver specific biodiversity conservation, restoration and enhancements objectives;
  - identify opportunities to strengthen the strategic networks of natural habitats;
  - identify areas of significant natural heritage that may be particularly sensitive to change (i.e. change brought about by large scale developments or adverse effects caused by climate change);
  - ensure the production of a comprehensive Green Space strategy that is properly integrated with the principles of sustainable development, the new Biodiversity Duty and the Local Development Framework

**7.2.2** The study collated known biodiversity data for the Borough from a variety of sources:

- MAGIC website
- Local Biodiversity Record Centre/Wildlife Trust
- Cheltenham Borough Council website
- UK and Local BAP websites.

**7.2.3** Extended Phase 1 Habitat Surveys were completed of the key open space areas (c. 130sites) including samples from nature conservation sites, public open space e.g. playing fields and parks, green corridors and potential development sites. Following the data collation of known records and the field surveys, the following assessments were completed:

- Review of National and Local Biodiversity Action Plans ( BAPs) in relation to Cheltenham Borough
- Assessment of implications of appropriate assessments in relation to European Legislation
- Existing and potential value of each site assessed in terms of protected species,
- UK and Local BAPs (species and habitats) and probable function as wildlife corridors.
- Determination of biodiversity value of each site surveyed
- Determination of potential for wildlife corridors across the Borough.

**7.2.4** A GIS data resource was developed to store and allow easy interrogation of the data collected during the project, including suggested management prescriptions for each site. The biodiversity quality of each site is related to those criteria outlined in Table 3 below. The biodiversity value of a site has taken the following into consideration:

- Frequency of the habitat at Local and National level
- Spatial extent of the habitat at Local and National level
- Conservation designations of the habitats at Local and National level
- Species diversity within the site
- Presence of Local and National BAP species
- Presence of other notable species.

**Table 3 - Biodiversity Quality Description/Rationale**

A	Large site with moderate/high existing biodiversity value OR small site with high existing biodiversity value
B+	Large site with low/moderate existing biodiversity value and with moderate/high potential biodiversity OR small site with moderate existing biodiversity value
B	Moderate site with low/moderate existing biodiversity value
C	Small site with low biodiversity value and minimal potential biodiversity

## **7.3 Findings**

**7.3.1** Each CBC Open Space Category was then given an overall value, based upon the average site value. This is visually represented in Figure 1 Biodiversity Quality (see map section at end of document).

- A Local Nature Reserves
- B+ None
- B/B+ Green corridor
- B Allotments; Natural green space; Potential development sites
- C/B Playing fields
- C Cemetery/churchyard; Green open space; Parks & gardens

**7.3.2** The audit identified the following nature conservation sites that have significant importance.

- European Protected sites within 10 km of the Borough (outside Borough)
- SSSI within the Borough
- 2 Ancient woodlands within the Borough
- 1 AONB (in part) within the Borough
- 9 non-statutory nature conservation sites within the Borough.

**7.3.3** The following species information was recorded

- 20 European protected species
- 28 Nationally protected species
- 7 UK BAP priority species
- 8 Gloucestershire BAP priority species
- 23 Other notable species (includes RSPB Red/Amber listed birds and Nationally scarce, notable and local species).

## **7.4 Enhancements**

**7.4.1** There are a variety of opportunities for enhancement through the Borough.

- Large areas – potential for buffer zones; wildlife planting ie, perimeters of large grass spaces.
- Watercourses – encourage closed systems to be opened up.
- Young plantations - encourage structural diversity
- Hedgerows – plant more, and increase diversity
- Trees – encourage species and age diversity
- Non-native woody species – gradual replacement with native cultivars that support more diversity.
- Scrub – reduce encroachment to conserve valuable limestone grassland, or encourage it elsewhere to encourage wildlife habitat
- Mosaic habitats - encourage
- Water bodies – encourage natural vegetation
- Bird and bat boxes etc.
- Trees and greening of streets and spaces – encourage wildlife corridors; encourage species and age diversity.

## 8. Green space audit

### 8.1 Green Space Classification

**8.1.1** As set out earlier the green space audit provided a detailed assessment of the current provision of accessible recreational green space. The audit followed national guidance<sup>5</sup> in classifying the green space present using the typology shown in the table 4 below.

Table 4 – Typology used for the green space audit

Level 1 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 Greenspace	Opportunities for informal activities close to home or work or enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas
Cemeteries and Churchyards	Quieter contemplation and burial of the dead, often linked to the promotion of wildlife conservation and biodiversity. Also includes closed burial grounds used for informal recreation.
Civic Space	Providing a setting for civic buildings, public demonstrations and community events.
Green Corridors	Walking, cycling or horse riding, whether for leisure purposes or travel, and opportunities for wildlife migration
Institutional Land	Educational land or land owned by other institutions such as hospitals and government agencies.
Natural and Semi Natural Greenspaces	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 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

**8.1.2** Two other methods were also used to classify green space and these were accessibility and hierarchy.

**8.1.3** Accessibility was used to identify those spaces which the public could freely access at all reasonable times without membership or specific consent of the owner. It was based on 3 levels as shown in Table 5 below.

<sup>5</sup> Assessing needs and opportunities (2003)

Table 5 Cheltenham Green Space Accessibility

Accessibility Level	Description
Unrestricted	Sites have unrestricted public access although some sites may have limitations to access between dusk and dawn.
Limited	Sites may be publicly or privately owned but access is limited either by a physical barrier such as membership, or psychological barrier such as a feeling that a green space is private.
Not accessible	Sites are out of bounds to the general public

**8.1.4** Finally hierarchy was based on the significance of the space taken from a variety of factors including community consultation information (Table 6).

Table 6 Cheltenham Green Space Hierarchy

Hierarchy level	Description
Borough	Those sites whose significance should attract people from across the entire borough. Usually large sites with a range of facilities or designated importance for history or nature conservation.
Neighbourhood	Those sites which perform a function that serves a more immediate community. Unlikely to attract people from across the borough
Local	Those sites which perform a function to a small area – typically areas of amenity green space.

**8.1.5** Civic space was only addressed in the green space audit where it was green space, i.e. formal gardens. Civic space that was predominantly hard landscape was not addressed.

## **8.2 Assessment of supply and demand**

**8.2.1** The detailed assessment work of the green space audit has provided a clear picture on the current levels of supply of green space. Figure 2 Green Space Framework (see map section at end of document) is taken from the audit and shows the distribution of space mapped and classified.

**8.2.2** This section of the report considers supply of green space in Cheltenham with regard to the typology, hierarchy and accessibility.



Table 7 Distribution by Green Space Type

Level 1 Typology	Number	Area (Ha)	% of Total (Area)
Allotments	18	29.47	4.74
Amenity Green Space	322	69.33	11.14
Cemeteries & Churchyards	13	25.75	4.14
Civic Space	1	1.08	0.17
Green Corridor	7	11.42	1.84
Institutional Land	41	204.25	32.82
Natural & Semi-Natural Green Space	13	107.68	17.30
Outdoor Sports Facilities	22	94.18	15.13
Parks & Gardens	22	78.74	12.65
Provision for Children & Young People	2	0.41	0.07
<b>Total</b>	<b>461</b>	<b>622.28</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

**8.2.3** Table 7 above shows the total amount of green space (regardless of accessibility) within Cheltenham that was recorded as part of the green space audit. A total of 461 sites cover an area of 622.28 hectares equivalent to 13.40% of the total land of the Cheltenham area.

**8.2.4** The most common green space type in Cheltenham is Amenity Green Space accounting for 70% of the total number of sites yet they make up only 11.14% of all green space reflecting the small size of most green spaces of this type.

**8.2.5** The analysis also found that just over two thirds of sites recorded are less than 0.5 hectares in size and less than 1% are greater than 20 hectares.

### 8.3 Green Space with Unrestricted Access

**8.3.1** This section considers only those green spaces with unrestricted access. Sites with limited access and those that are not accessible were removed from the analysis since these sites typically have less recreational value than sites which are freely available for public use.

**8.3.2** When all of the 461 green spaces were categorised according to accessibility around 70% had unrestricted access as shown in Table 8 below.

Table 8 Accessibility of Green Spaces in Cheltenham

Accessibility	Number of Sites
Unrestricted	322
Limited	135
Not Accessible	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>461</b>

**8.3.3** When the distribution of unrestricted access sites was analysed by the type of space the key forms of provision were:

Natural and semi natural green space	29%
Parks and Gardens	24%
Outdoor sports	19%
Amenity green space	18%

**8.3.4** When analysis of the distribution by size of unrestricted sites is carried out again it shows a high proportion of small spaces (75%) and less than 1% greater than 20 hectares.

#### **8.4 Quantity of Green Space per 1000 Population**

**8.4.1** The 2001 Census recorded a resident population of 110,013 for Cheltenham. This figure has been used to calculate the amount of accessible green space per 1000 population for Cheltenham. This data has also been broken down by green space type as shown in Table 9 below.

Table 9 Quantity of Green Space per 1000 Population

<b>Typology Level 1</b>	<b>Amount of Green Space (Ha)</b>	<b>Amount of Green Space (Ha) per 1000 Population</b>
Amenity Green Space	61.43	0.56
Cemeteries & Churchyards	25.67	0.23
Civic Space	1.08	0.01
Green Corridor	11.15	0.10
Natural & Semi-Natural Green Space	97.81	0.89
Outdoor Sports Facilities	65.15	0.59
Parks & Gardens	78.74	0.72
Provision for Children & Young People	0.41	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>341.43</b>	<b>3.10</b>

**8.4.2** Comparison of these levels of provision with national standards is carried out in section 8.7 below.

**8.4.3** When all accessible green space is analysed at a ward level then significant variation is found from areas such as Charlton Park and Pittville having 16 and 8 hectares per 100 population respectively down to wards such as Park and all Saints both with less than 1 hectare per 1000 people. As mentioned earlier in this document ward level comparison can be misleading as a site just inside a ward boundary of a neighbouring ward will potentially provide for both wards.

## 8.5 Accessibility

**8.5.1** In order to build a picture of whether people have sufficient open space within a reasonable walking distance of where they live a model was constructed using the hierarchy discussed earlier in this report. A walking distance was assigned to each level based on national guidance and previous studies undertaken by the consultants.

**8.5.2** The theoretical walking catchments (distance threshold as defined in the companion guide to PPG17) for each level of the hierarchy are shown in Table 10 below;

Table 10 Hierarchy and Walking Distance

Hierarchy Level	Description	Walking Distance (m)
Borough	Those sites whose significance should attract people from across the entire borough. Usually large sites with a range of facilities or designated importance for history or nature conservation.	1200
Neighbourhood	Those sites which perform a function that serves a more immediate community. Unlikely to attract people from across the borough	600
Local	Those sites which perform a function to a small area – typically areas of amenity green space.	400
Local (<0.2ha)		50

**8.5.3** The catchment distances were then compared to the findings of the household survey and an accessibility hierarchy was considered. The walking distances were then used in mapping analysis to create models showing areas of deficiency. As part of the modelling, physical barriers to use of space e.g. road crossing, railway lines and water courses were considered.

**8.5.4** Overall the borough was found to be well served but there were some key areas where people were found not to have access to green space and these were in the All Saints and Park wards. The Green Space Deprivation map is shown at Figure 3 (see map section at end of document).

**8.5.5** When considering the different levels of provision:

- Borough level green space – the borough has some extremely important green spaces which fall into this category but they are all located in the eastern or central neighbourhoods. The authority has limited policy options to address this and indeed needs to consider whether it is appropriate to try to upgrade an existing space to this level. Alternatively it could look to future planning proposals e.g. NW extension and see if these could address the deficiency.
- Neighbourhood level green space – 64 spaces were classified at this level and they have a more even geographical distribution and only very small areas of some wards do not have reasonable access.
- Local level green space – there are very large areas of the borough which do not have access specifically to local level green space however borough and neighbourhood level green spaces perform a local function and address most areas.

## 8.6 Quality

**8.6.1** A detailed quality audit of 119 sites was carried out using the field assessment criteria of the Green Flag Award, the national quality standard. Whilst the Green Flag Award contains both desk and field research this project was limited to site based assessments. Thus the final scores should not be read as the site's score against the Green Flag Award. There are 8 key criteria for the Green Flag Award. Under these eight key criteria are 27 field assessment criteria. Of the 27 field assessment criteria, 19 can be judged on site without reference to a Management Plan or other documentation as identified in the Table 11 below.

Table 11 – Green Flag Criteria

<b>Key Criteria for Audit</b>	<b>Field Assessment</b>	<b>Criteria Used for Audit</b>
<b>A Welcoming Park</b>	Welcoming	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Good and safe access	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Signage	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Equal access for all	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Healthy, Safe and Secure</b>	Safe equipment facilities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Personal security in park	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Dog fouling	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Appropriate provision of facilities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Quality of facilities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Clean and Well Maintained</b>	Litter and waste management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Grounds maintenance and horticulture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Buildings and infrastructure maintenance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Equipment maintenance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Sustainability</b>	Arboriculture and woodland management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Environmental sustainability energy and natural resource conservation, pollution	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Pesticides	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Peat Use	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Waste minimisation	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Conservation and Heritage</b>	Conservation of natural features, wild fauna and flora	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Conservation of landscape features	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Conservation of buildings and structures	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Community Involvement</b>	Appropriate provision for the community	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Community involvement in management and development including outreach work	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Marketing</b>	Provision of appropriate information	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Provision of appropriate educational interpretation/information	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Marketing and promotion	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Management</b>	Implementation of the management plan	<input type="checkbox"/>

**8.6.2** The quality audit found that the overall average quality score was 44 out of 100, the range of scores is shown in Figure 4 Quality Assessment Scores

(see map section at end of document). The key quality issues were:

- Overall criteria performing badly were grouped around signage and interpretation and also conservation of heritage and nature conservation.
- Cemeteries and church yards scored the highest overall average, followed by parks and gardens
- The lowest scoring types of space were green corridors and natural and semi natural green space

**8.6.3** There was significant variation in quality across the 20 wards in the borough with the top three performing areas being

- College
- Lansdown
- Pittville

**8.6.4** And the lowest 3 being

- St. Peter's
- Swindon Village
- Charlton Kings

## **8.7 Comparison with national standards**

**8.7.1** The English Nature Accessible Natural Green Space Standard (ANGSt) model includes the following measures 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*

Having mapped all natural green space greater than 2 hectares and then applied a 300m catchment there are significant areas of the borough that do not have access to this size of space within this distance. This includes the more natural areas of formal parks such as Pittville Park.

- *Provision of at least 1 ha of local nature reserve per 1000 population*

Currently the borough only has one designated Local Nature Reserve (LNR) at Griffiths Avenue. The site is just under one hectare which would give a current provision standard of 0.1 ha per 1000 population. The previous Local Plan set out that other sites were to be considered for designation however no further work was done on the evaluation of these sites or what the merits were of designation. The biodiversity audit found the proposed sites to be of high wildlife corridor value and relatively high wildlife quality. The proposed sites were

Site Name	Size (hectares)
Pilley Bridge / Kingsholm Line	2.3
Honeybourne Line	5.9
Charlton Kings Common	35.0

Even with the existing space this would only give a total of 0.44 ha per 1000 population which is still less than half of the standard.

Natural England recommends that LNRs should be:

- normally greater than 2ha in size,
- capable of being managed with the conservation of nature and/or for study, research or enjoyment of nature as the priority concern.

LNRs should also be either;

- of high natural interest in the local context, or
- of some reasonable natural interest and of high value in the local context for formal education or research or
- of some reasonable natural interest and of high value in the local context for the informal enjoyment of nature by the public.

The local authority should consult with Natural England, local communities and voluntary conservation bodies such as the county Wildlife Trust and put together outline management proposals for the site, making it clear what the long term objectives are (i.e. a management plan).

- *There should be at least one accessible 20 ha site within 2 km from home*

There are four main sites in the rural areas surrounding the town that are greater than 20 hectares (Cleeve Hill, Leckhampton Hill / Charlton Kings Common, Dowdeswell Woods and Lineover Woods). When these are plotted with the 2km accessibility only the south eastern and a small part of the north east of the borough are covered. It is estimated that over 80% of residents do not have access at this standard.

## 8.8 Children's' play provision

The authority has already begun assessing play provision both in terms of its distribution and also its nature as part of the county wide Play Pathfinder bid to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). The national programme represents a £235m investment in play and will transform local areas into innovative and adventurous play spaces.

As part of the green space audit the authority mapped all existing play provision and has been able to make comparisons against the national standards set out by the (former) National Playing Fields Association (NPFA- now Fields in Trust) as part of its 6 acre standard (now Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play (PAD)).

The 6 acres (2.4ha) measure is split between 4 acres (1.6ha) for outdoor sport and 2 acres (0.8ha) for children's playing space. Within the 2 acres are "*designated areas for children and young people*" which contain a range of facilities within an area or environment which is designed to provide opportunities for outdoor play. The

definition of children’s playing space is wider than just equipped play areas as it includes “*casual or informal playing space within housing areas*”.

The NPFA standard includes a series of categories for children's play area provision that attempt to act as qualitative measures for different levels of provision:

- LAP - Local area for play
- LEAP - Local equipped area for play
- NEAP - Neighbourhood equipped area for play

The NPFA standard gives accessibility criteria for each of its levels of provision as shown in the table below.

Category	Time (minutes)	Pedestrian Route (metres)	Straight line distance (metres)
LAP	1	100	60
LEAP	5	400	240
NEAP	15	1000	600

Figure 5: comparison of current play provision against the NPFA standard (see map section at end of document).

All known publicly accessible play areas within the borough were assessed and classified under the above NPFA categories. According to the category a buffer was then placed around each play area reflecting the straight line distance and an allowance made for barriers to access such busy roads and railways. Blue shading represents areas of the town with access to play as defined by this standard.

## 8.9 Demand - general

**8.9.1** Demand for green space has been assessed using three main data sets, firstly the household survey, secondly bookings held by the borough council and finally demographic information about current and future population trends.

**8.9.2** The household survey (2005) gave a useful insight into the views of local people about various aspects of provision. When people were asked how often they visit their most frequently used space almost 75% said weekly or more often.

**8.9.3** The top 5 most frequently visited spaces were

- Pittville Park
- Sandford Park
- Hatherley Park
- Imperial Gardens
- Montpellier Gardens

**8.9.4** There were significant links between the users' perceptions of quality and the quality audit in that the most popular spaces were above average quality, indeed they all fell in the top 20% of the quality rankings. Around a third of people also felt that the quality of their most used space was improving but half thought quality has stayed the same over the previous 3 years.

**8.9.5** The top reasons for visiting green spaces were

- Walking
- Relaxing
- Peace and quiet
- As a through route
- Children's play area

**8.9.6** These findings show the importance of green space for passive forms of recreation.

**8.9.7** When people were asked about quantity of provision 75% thought that there was sufficient parks and recreation grounds. Children's play and natural green space were split with a third of people saying there was too little provision and the remainder saying there was enough. Provision for teenagers and young people was thought to be the most deficient form of provision with almost two thirds stating this was lacking.

**8.9.8** This matches with the findings of the quantity audit which showed that natural green space and parks and gardens provided the largest hectare per 100 figures

## **8.10 Demand - Bookings data**

The council parks service holds a range of information about activities that take place in green spaces and, where possible, these have been analysed to examine any trends in usage or any management issues arising from particular types of use.

- Montpellier Gardens and Imperial Gardens generate significant amounts of income however they also suffer as a result from erosion and long term compaction
- Some of the biggest users of green space are Cheltenham Festivals yet no income is generated from their use – combining this with the reduction in quality of the green space presents a significant issue

## **8.11 Demographic information**

**8.11.1** The population of Cheltenham is changing, the population has steadily been increasing and also changing in its make up. The total population under 15 is decreasing and the total over 65 is gradually increasing. This picture is set for a massive change with the proposed additional house building. The Regional Spatial Strategy shows 6500 new homes in the existing urban area, some of which will be within Tewkesbury Borough. Two major areas for this expansion are North West Cheltenham which will see 5000 homes (4000 in Tewkesbury Borough and 1000 in Cheltenham Borough) and South Cheltenham (5000 in Tewkesbury Borough and 800 in Cheltenham Borough).



**8.11.2** The average persons per household figure for Cheltenham was 2.1 in 2006/07 and has been steadily falling since 2001. Applying this figure to the above proposals would give an additional 13650 people within the urban area. This would be made up of 10500 at North West Cheltenham (2100 in Cheltenham Borough, 8400 in Tewkesbury Borough) and 2730 at South Cheltenham (1680 in Cheltenham Borough, 1050 in Tewkesbury Borough).

## **8.12 Demand - specific**

**8.12.1** Various types of green space have the subject of different strategies or reviews that have provided useful information in relation to demand.

## **8.13 Playing Pitches Demand**

**8.13.1** Since the production of the Playing Pitch Strategy in 2002 demand for playing pitch provision on Council land has largely been met. A recent in-house study has indicated that a total of 847 pitches were let during the 2007 / 2008 season. A brief qualitative assessment of each playing field was undertaken to score each element of the sites such as parking, security, drainage and changing facilities. Whilst the results are not completely conclusive in demonstrating the association of high usage with high quality sites it does provide a useful position statement and identifies areas where investment is needed in low quality sites that are currently receiving high levels of usage, and also low usage sites that could support higher usage if quality issues were addressed, i.e. poor drainage.

## **8.14 Allotments Demand**

**8.14.1** Demand for allotments has increased considerably in recent years. At the time of writing, there are 570 people on waiting lists for the 9 allotment sites run by Cheltenham Borough Council. Five years ago, in 2004, there were less than 50.

**8.14.2** The rate of applications has increased year on year, culminating in an 80% increase in 2008 alone. During 2007 and 2008, the typical 'wait' for an allotment was under 2 years and at one site where new plots were created, it was less than 6 months.

**8.14.3** However, while the number of allotment applications has more than doubled in the last 2 years, plot turnover has remained a fairly constant 20%. With 625 available plots and 570 people on a waiting list, this means that the wait for a recent applicant for an allotment with Cheltenham Borough Council is now 4.5 years.

**8.14.4** This is echoed across Cheltenham with several Parish and church-run allotment sites reporting that their waiting lists are now closed with an estimated 5 year wait for a plot for the more recent applicants.

**8.14.5** It is estimated that there are now over 1000 people across Cheltenham waiting for an allotment and, given that several waiting lists are closed, it is possible that the level of demand is actually higher.

**8.14.6** The increase in demand may be due to the high media profile that allotments have enjoyed in recent years and an increasing awareness of the potential benefits of 'growing your own'. The profile of the allotment-holder is changing,

with many new tenants in their 30's and 40's. There are many more families with children on allotment sites and many more people who work. This has led to a demand for smaller plots and a considerable number of the larger ones have been divided up.

**8.14.7** In the 3 years from 2005 to 2008, 106 new plots were established either by bringing derelict land back into cultivation or by dividing larger plots. This represents a 20% increase in tenancies during that period. Clearly this will have had a positive impact on the waiting lists but it would appear that despite these measures, there is still a significant demand for growing space that is not currently being met.

## **9. Resources**

**9.1** As with many local authorities responsibility for the planning, design, management, development and maintenance of green space falls across different service areas. One function of a green space strategy is to look objectively at this and ask some key questions around what is the council's overall vision for green space, who manages what and why, who drives change, have we got the right skills and resources to look after the space, do current systems work etc. This section of the strategy sets out the current structures relating to green space and how this position was arrived at and it then goes on to look at the service review carried out as part of strategy development. Where information exists from other sources such as community consultation this has also been fed in to provide a fuller picture.

### **9.2 Current structure and responsibilities.**

**9.2.1** The Operations Division has responsibility for almost 300 hectares of accessible green space at an annual cost of £2.392 million and is the largest land manager in the authority and in the borough as a whole. Green space is also managed by

- Cheltenham Borough Homes – an arms length housing management organisation
- Corporate Property – manage pockets of green space and farmland

**9.2.2** Other key service areas within the authority with an input into green space include:

- Heritage and Conservation
- Strategic Land Use
- Urban design

**9.2.3** Other external key bodies include

- Gloucestershire County Council – education and highways
- Parish Councils
- Severn Trent
- Woodland Trust
- Churches and private landowners
- Environment Agency

**9.2.4** The current structure of the organisation is shown in Figure 6 below with Figures 7 and 8 showing the detail in relation to green space management.

**9.2.5** Politically the authority has 40 elected members (currently 17 Conservative, 20 Liberal Democrat and 3 People Against Bureaucracy). The council has a cabinet comprising the leader of the council and 6 portfolio holders with green spaces falling within the sustainability portfolio. There is also an Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee which has a role in green space.

Figure 6: Council structure

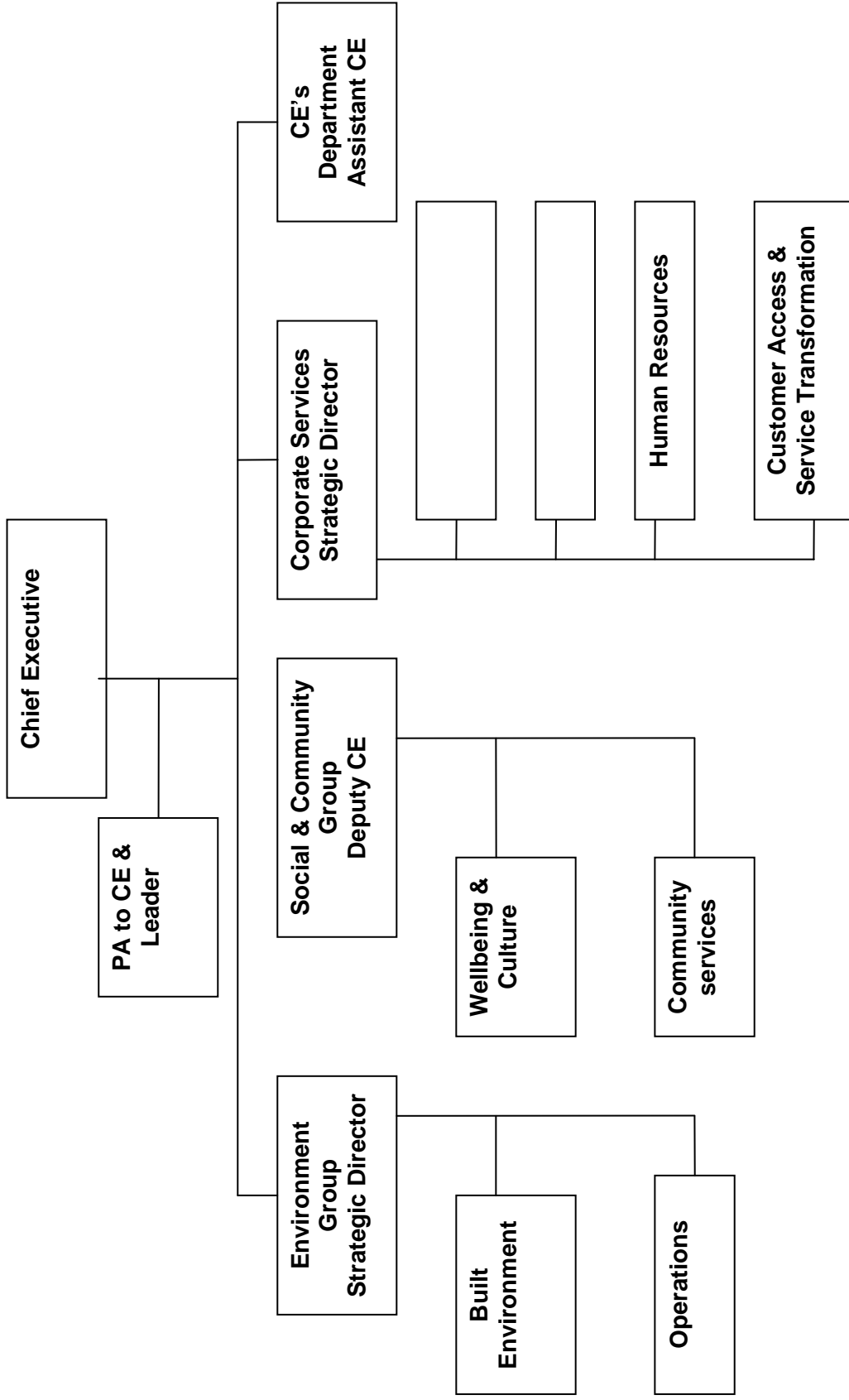


Figure 7- Operations Division Structure

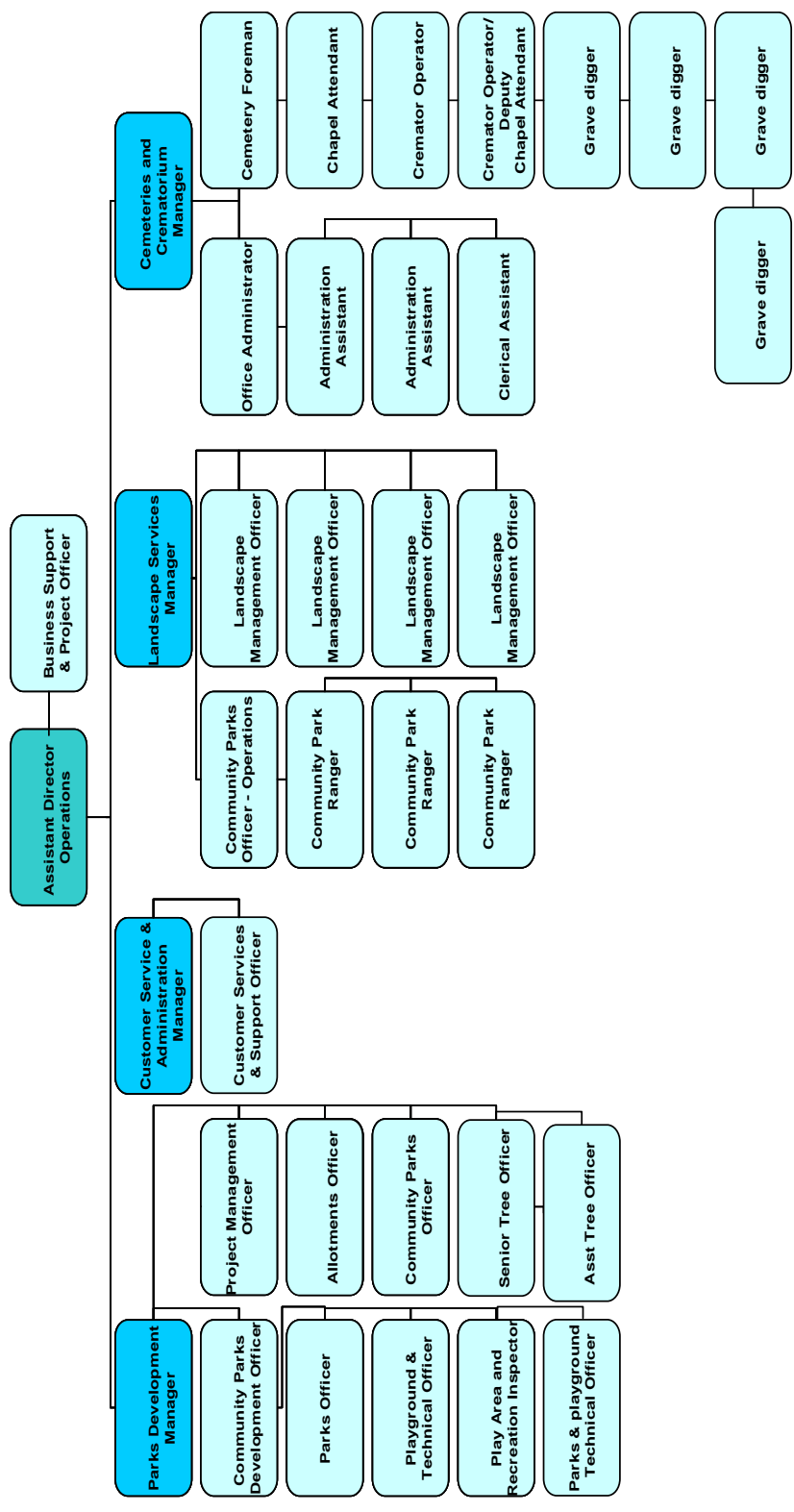
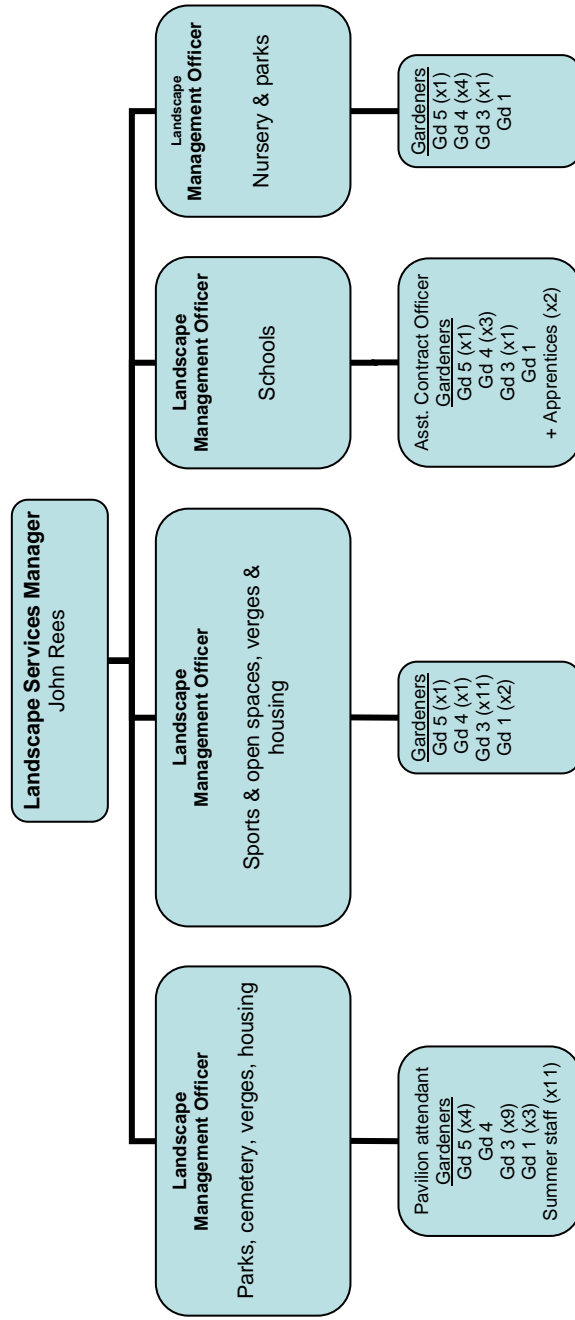


Figure 8 – Landscape Operations Team Structure



### 9.3 Funding

9.3.1 The council spends a considerable part of its budget on providing, maintaining and improving public green space. The table below provides a breakdown across service areas and by expenditure heading. Investment required to deliver strategic objectives, or indeed cost efficiencies delivered through service reviews, will be subject to the annual budget consultation and approval process.

Table 12 – Budget 09/10

Activity	Parks & Gardens	Grass Verges	Sports & Open Spaces	Allotments	Total
Cost Centre	C22110	C22115	C22120	C22190	
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Employees	314,500	145,800	182,800	0	643,100
Premises	113,400	10,000	138,200	15,600	277,200
Transport	85,800	83,700	90,300	1,300	261,100
Supplies and Services	211,900	63,300	119,700	4,200	399,100
Support Services	377,500	61,400	343,100	87,400	869,400
Capital Financing	41,700	0	109,400	0	151,100
<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>1,144,800</b>	<b>364,200</b>	<b>983,500</b>	<b>108,500</b>	<b>2,601,000</b>
<b>Income</b>	<b>92,800</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>100,400</b>	<b>15,300</b>	<b>208,500</b>
<b>Net Cost of Service</b>	<b>1,052,000</b>	<b>364,200</b>	<b>883,100</b>	<b>93,200</b>	<b>2,392,500</b>

9.3.2 As part of the strategy a review has been undertaken of the funding within green spaces. In terms of external funding the council has been successful in securing over £1.2 million of grants since 2003 as set out in the table below.

Table 13 – External Funding

Source	Amount (£)	Where it was spent
HLF	728,000	Montpellier Gardens
Esmee Fairburn Foundation	14,000	Allotment/Community Garden improvement
The Big Lottery Fund - Breathing Spaces	10,000	Jenner gardens
The Big Lottery	43,500	Norwood Triangle
The Summerfield Charitable Trust	10,000	Jenner gardens
Gloucestershire Environmental Trust	40,000	Jenner gardens
Severn Trent Recovery Fund	112,000	Pittville Park

Breathing Spaces	5,700	Hatherley Park
Living Places	13,200	Hatherley Park
Severn Trent Recovery Fund	7,300	Hatherley Park
Environmentally Sensitive Area Payments (Natural England)	2300 / annum	Leckhampton Hill
Single Farm Payment (Rural Payments Agency)	3000 / annum	Leckhampton Hill
Capital Works Programme – Conservation Plan Rural Payments Agency)	30,000 2008/2009	Leckhampton Hill
ENTRUST	40,600	Clyde Crescent Doorstep Green
Countryside Agency – Doorstep Green	55,000	Clyde Crescent Doorstep Green
Single Regeneration Budget	10,000	Clyde Crescent Doorstep Green
Sure Start	25,000	Clyde Crescent Doorstep Green
Lloyds TSB Foundation	2,000	Clyde Crescent Doorstep Green
Surestart	100,000 (approx)	Various Play Areas
ENTRUST	45,000	Caernarvon Park

**9.3.3** At the time of writing the authority is also working on major bids for Play Pathfinder (around £200k). A recent HLF bid for the restoration of Pittville Park (£4.2m) was unsuccessful.

#### **9.4 Service review**

**9.4.1** As part of the development of the strategy a review has been carried out for green spaces. The review focused primarily on the parks service but also included significant inputs from service areas across the authority which have an impact in the way green spaces are managed, maintained and developed. The scope of the review included

- Parks and greenspace management & development
- Parks and landscape maintenance
- Tree and woodland management
- Biodiversity
- Allotments
- Strategic planning of greenspace
- Greenspace events & activities (Council run & others)
- Provision for children and young people
- Provision of sports pitches / courts and other facilities
- Community engagement and development activities
- Contribution to healthy living
- Contribution to tourism & regeneration
- Sustainable development & climate change

**9.4.2** The review used Towards an Excellent Service (TAES) as a tool for self assessment. TAES was selected because it was a comprehensive tool that would gather evidence to support the development of the Cheltenham Green Space Strategy and it is a model developed specifically for green spaces by



IDeA, ISPAL and CABE Space. The TAES framework is organised around 8 themes:

- Theme 1 Leadership
- Theme 2 Policy & Strategy
- Theme 3 Community Engagement
- Theme 4 Partnership Working
- Theme 5 Use of Resources
- Theme 6 People Management
- Theme 7 Standards of Service
- Theme 8 Performance Measurement & Learning

9.4.3 Overall the assessment uses a four point scale as shown in the table below

Poor	No approaches have been planned
Fair	Approaches are being planned and implemented
Good	Approaches have been planned & implemented systematically covering all Descriptors
Excellent	Approaches have been planned & implemented systematically, measured, reviewed & improved & are having a positive impact

9.4.4 The diagram below summarises the self assessment against the 8 themes

Theme	Poor	Fair	Good	Exc
Leadership			★	
Policy and Strategy			★	
Community Engagement		★		
Partnership Working		★		
Use of Resources			★	
People Management			★	
Standards of Service			★	
Performance Measurement and Learning		★		

The strengths and areas for improvements are considered in the analysis section later.

## **10. Strategic green infrastructure**

### **10.1 National context**

- 10.1.1** Green Infrastructure is a planned network of multi-functional greenspaces and interconnecting links that contributes to high-quality natural and built environments.
- 10.1.2** Helping to provide sustainable 'green access' to the countryside, such networks can help areas to adapt to climate change by reducing flood risk and overheating, and they promote access to open space, nature, culture, heritage and sport, thereby improving the quality of life for all.
- 10.1.3** In 2003, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's Sustainable Communities Plan identified that the supply of new homes had failed to keep pace with demand and described the government's aim to take radical action to increase housing provision by speeding-up supply, reforming planning processes and raising standards in high demand areas. Alongside the need for growth, the Government identifies Green Infrastructure as facilitating the delivery of multiple objectives because it can frame and shape the growth of sustainable communities and strengthen their image. In short, it helps define people's quality of life and liveability and underpins the quality, character and distinctiveness of new neighbourhoods.
- 10.1.4** Successful Green Infrastructure networks will incorporate a strategic approach to enhancing wildlife networks and sustaining and improving biodiversity in urban and rural areas, in the face of climate change and development.
- 10.1.5** It is linked to a wide range of functions and benefits. Not least is its ability to:
- *provide opportunities for recreation and enjoyment*
  - *provide important linkages, networks and gateways*
  - *help preserve heritage and culture*
  - *support and enhance habitat and biodiversity*
  - *support economics, food production and green produce*
  - *address both local and national issues relating to sustainable flood risk water management and impacts of climatic change.*

### **10.2 Regional and sub regional context**

- 10.2.1** As set out earlier in the strategy the Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West sets out plans for significant growth at the same time as requiring protection and enhancement of the natural landscape, the development of a green infrastructure plan and the provision of networks of green spaces, within Policy GI1, Green Infrastructure.
- 10.2.2** Draft RSS policy - GI1 Green Infrastructure
- 10.2.3** Development of networks of Green Infrastructure (GI) will be required to enhance quality of life in the region and support the successful accommodation of change. GI networks will comprise multifunctional, accessible, connected assets, planned around existing environmental characteristics. This may take the form of protection, enhancement or extension of existing resources or the provision of new or replacement

facilities.

**10.2.4** When planning the proposed distribution of development, GI is required as an integral part of development, with provision for a network of GI incorporated in the Spatial Strategy. Local authorities and partners will:

- *Build upon existing expertise and initiatives to identify priorities and partnerships for GI*
- *Incorporate GI policies setting out broad locations for GI appropriate to the extent and distribution of development proposed, co-ordinated across administrative boundaries as appropriate*
- *Develop a GI plan with a delivery programme to support GI policies )*

**10.2.5** At a sub regional level the Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy (JCS) will be a spatial plan, allocating land for development and other uses, but also influencing issues such as people's accessibility to green spaces, their health and well being and the protection of historic green space.

**10.2.6** The RSS proposes significant growth within the JCS area, for Cheltenham an additional 6,500 homes within the existing urban area and two 'areas of search' for the development of sustainable, mixed use urban extensions; one to the north west of Cheltenham to accommodate 5,000 homes; and one to the south of Cheltenham to accommodate 1,300 homes. Both of the areas of search span Cheltenham and Tewkesbury's administrative boundaries.

**10.2.7** Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Councils will work together with partners, including Natural England, to produce a green infrastructure plan which will inform the Joint Core Strategy. The green infrastructure plan will seek to identify strategic networks of multi functional spaces, linking strategic and local areas of green space within the urban area and beyond to the rural areas, including linkage to Strategic Nature Areas (SNAs) within the JCS area. The green infrastructure plan will play an important role in the master planning of the proposed urban extensions to ensure adequate provision and linkage of sites and information from the Green Space Strategy will be used to inform this process.

### **10.3 Watercourses and flood zones**

As part of the development work for the strategy the importance of green corridors especially watercourses as biodiversity and recreational opportunities was highlighted. Additional mapping work has captured the main water courses in the borough and their linkages not only to other important corridors such as the Honeybourne Line but also to other green spaces both formal and informal. This information has been combined with flood zone mapping, the green space audit and the biodiversity audit to enable an overview to be taken of the potential for enhancing these corridors. The findings are shown in Figure 9 Watercourses, wildlife and pedestrian links (see map section at end of document).

## **11. Community Consultation and Stakeholder Involvement**

### **11.1 Household survey**

**11.2** In order to gather people's views we undertook a number of consultation exercises including a questionnaire based survey of residents using a postal survey of households - of 5000 distributed, 921 people replied

**11.3** What did we find?

**11.4** For sites managed by Cheltenham Borough Council we found that:

- three quarters of respondents currently use green spaces within the borough
- lack of time is a significant barrier to greater use
- a large proportion of people use their green space weekly or more often
- considerable emphasis is placed on sites being clean and well maintained, with
- litter and dog bins being the most popular improvements
- facilities for young people was identified as an area for improvement and the linkage between this with vandalism and perceptions of personal safety are all too obvious
- further barriers to greater use that the Council needs to tackle are dog fouling and vandalism and graffiti
- staff presence on site consistently scored as one the areas where service delivery needs to improve
- grass cutting, trees, floral bedding and shrub maintenance were all rated very highly
- provision for young people needs to be addressed and needs to be complemented with organised activities and supervision which will require a multi agency approach

### **11.5 Public Satisfaction Ratings**

**11.6** The outcome of the 2003/2004 Best Value general satisfaction survey for BVPI 119e, Public Satisfaction with Parks and Gardens, saw a rating of 85.5% which placed the service high in the top quartile and at the top of the "Exeter Family" benchmarking group.

**11.7** The objective in the business plan for 2005/2006 was to "increase our customer satisfaction level for parks and open spaces to 87% by 2006 from a baseline of 85.5% in 2004".

**11.8** The results of the 2006/2007 have recently been published and show a customer satisfaction level for parks and open spaces of 89% which exceeds the target and is one of the highest ratings nationally.

**11.9** The general customer satisfaction survey is currently carried out every three years, however there is a need to regularly collect and utilise high quality data on usage, satisfaction and quality to continuously improve service standards. If this is designed and carried out effectively it can:

- aid and simplify the identification of issues and problems

- engage residents and service users in the setting and monitoring of standards
- help to prioritise and reallocate resources
- help develop an objective auditing system for all staff to improve the quality of sites
- provide meaningful benchmarking of the service in terms of usage, satisfaction and quality

#### **11.10 Sustainability Partnership**

As part of the consultation process two presentations and discussions took place with the Sustainability Partnership on the process and development of the audit and strategy. Key points arising from this consultation were:

- the need to ensure that the strategy is closely linked and proofed against the ongoing Climate Change work that is taking place within the council and with the Carbon Reduction Partnership
- greater use of more sustainable methods of management and maintenance need to be employed
- the need to ensure water management is addressed in for example sustainable systems of drainage, rainwater harvesting and storage, irrigation and watering of plants.

#### **11.11 Youth consultation**

Young people are often overlooked or excluded in consultation exercises and as part of the strategy a small, discrete piece of work was done to engage with young people to explore their perceptions of green space. This only represents a small amount of the work required to adequately engage with young people around green space issues. It did however highlight key inter generational issues to do with the legitimacy of young people's use of green space

*“old people think they own the parks and young people shouldn't be in them”*

#### **11.12 Stakeholder consultation**

An on line and postal survey was sent to a wide range of voluntary sector and community based organisations to explore their views on the emerging issues of the strategy. These issues were further explored through an evening workshop. The issues explored were quantity (how much of each types of space would a neighborhood or borough need), quality (what should the council's aspirations be to reach national standards), accessibility (how far would it be reasonable for people to walk to space of differing value) and finally community engagement and partnership working (do the aspirations of the community and the council match). The thinking from the workshop is incorporated into the analysis section below.

## **12. Analysis of issues and opportunities**

This section of the strategy identifies and evaluates the emerging issues that Cheltenham Borough Council faces with regard to green space provision and what the opportunities are to deliver change.

### Climate Change Issues

Table 14 below identifies the opportunities and challenges raised by the need to adapt to the changing climate for each of the typologies outlined earlier. It also identifies a range of measures that can be introduced to reduce the carbon footprint of green infrastructure activities for each typology. Some of these are measures currently underway or in place, others flag up the direction that should be taken in future.

<b>Table 14 – Challenges and Opportunities</b>		
<b>Typology</b>	<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
Allotments	<p>Insufficient capacity to meet demand</p> <p>Increasing demand as local produce becomes more appealing and communities seek to become more resilient</p> <p>Protecting allotment land from the pressures of development, neglect and vandalism</p> <p>More pests and diseases – controls needed</p> <p>Increase in extreme weather events</p> <p>Increased theft of produce</p> <p>Accessibility for disabled and minority groups</p>	<p>Rationalisation of under used/poor quality plots.</p> <p>Securing the provision of new allotments in areas of need by developing local standards enshrined within the Local Development Framework.</p> <p>Working in partnership to provide alternative sites and funding.</p> <p>Local management of allotment sites</p> <p>Release under used (low value, low quality) green space for growing food.</p> <p>New composting toilets with photovoltaic lighting installed on 10 sites 2008 - scope for other renewable energy and water conservation initiatives.</p> <p>Community composting on site and limiting bonfires</p> <p>Longer growing season and scope for more tender crops</p> <p>Scope to manage parts of allotment sites as wildlife corridors</p>

<b>Table 14 – Challenges and Opportunities</b>		
<b>Typology</b>	<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
		<p>Improved security</p> <p>Disabled provision</p> <p>Promote allotments, especially those groups under-represented in the allotment community such as women, families, ethnic communities, people with special needs and people on low incomes</p> <p>Provide bike stands to promote sustainable transport</p> <p>Consider allotment provision as part of new developments</p> <p>Consider ability of new spaces (especially under civic pride) to deliver growing space</p> <p>Consider ability of new developments to relieve pressure on allotment demand particularly through increased garden size, green roofs and balconies</p>

<b>Table 14 – Challenges and Opportunities</b>		
<b>Typology</b>	<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
Amenity Greenspace	<p>Longer growing season – more mowing needed, more pests and diseases</p> <p>Increase in extreme weather events</p> <p>More demand for recreational use of space</p> <p>Cleanliness and anti social behaviour</p>	<p>Review management practices to reduce use of powered mowing/ maintenance equipment in some areas</p> <p>Managed ‘wild’ areas to encourage biodiversity. Achieve biodiversity standard B+.</p> <p>Scope for more tree planting to provide summer shade</p> <p>More drought resistant planting</p> <p>Consider alternative use on some sites e.g. allotments / community supported food production</p> <p>Increased environmental enforcement and joint working with the police to tackle anti social behaviour</p> <p>Scope for landscaping regimes to address sustainable drainage and help tackle flooding</p> <p>Scope for increased levels of casual amenity space through innovative street design – particularly tree planting and small space provision. Coincidental benefit in terms of improved safety on streets and spaces and improved environment for sustainable transport options</p> <p>Scope for Civic Pride to provide increased levels of low maintenance amenity green space</p>
Cemeteries and Churchyards	<p>High expectations of cleanliness and grounds maintenance.</p> <p>Increased land holding</p> <p>Longer growing season – more mowing needed</p> <p>Increase in extreme weather events – impact on mature trees, potential for partial site flooding at Bouncer’s Lane</p>	<p>Review management practices to reduce fleet fuel use</p> <p>Scope for more tree planting to provide summer shade in lawned gardens</p> <p>More drought resistant planting</p> <p>Managed ‘wild’ areas to encourage biodiversity. Achieve biodiversity standard B.</p>



<b>Table 14 – Challenges and Opportunities</b>		
<b>Typology</b>	<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
Civic Space	<p>Ongoing maintenance costs</p> <p>Coping with summer drought</p> <p>Increase in extreme weather events – impact on mature street trees</p> <p>Maintain historic planting layouts in appropriate places</p>	<p>Need to ensure high standards of sustainable construction in development proposals impacting on civic spaces</p> <p>Ensure water conservation through use of grey water and rain water harvesting</p> <p>Review bedding planting practices to reduce carbon emissions</p> <p>More demand for outdoor living</p> <p>Scope for more tree planting to provide summer shade</p> <p>More drought resistant and tender planting</p> <p>Provide bike stands to promote sustainable transport</p> <p>Scope for Civic Pride to provide increased levels of low maintenance civic space</p>
Green Corridors	<p>Wildlife trapped in isolated habitats, unable to adapt to more Mediterranean climate</p> <p>Low water flows in watercourses in summer</p> <p>Increase in extreme weather events</p>	<p>Create linked corridors of connected green space, open space and habitats to enable species to migrate – corridors, stepping stones and buffers</p> <p>More wildlife friendly, native species where possible</p> <p>Drought resistant planting</p> <p>Achieve biodiversity standard A.</p>
Institutional Land	<p>Increase in extreme weather events – impact on mature trees</p>	<p>Scope for renewables?</p> <p>Scope to reduce mowing and maintenance in certain areas.</p> <p>More tree planting to provide summer shade and cooling for office workers</p> <p>Increase biodiversity</p> <p>Encourage the provision of linked corridors of green space to enable species to migrate – focus on planting for wildlife</p> <p>Encourage dual use</p> <p>Address green space provision on new developments.</p>

<b>Table 14 – Challenges and Opportunities</b>		
<b>Typology</b>	<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
Natural and Semi Natural Greenspaces	<p>Wildlife trapped in isolated habitats, unable to adapt to more Mediterranean climate</p> <p>Native woodland will suffer in drought conditions</p> <p>Public perception of use</p> <p>Maintain biodiversity standard A.</p>	<p>Scope for renewables?</p> <p>Provide linked corridors of green space to enable species to migrate</p> <p>More drought resistant and tender planting</p> <p>Habitat creation to strengthen resilience of species under threat</p> <p>Ensure new development respects 'biodiversity budget' – no net loss</p> <p>Community management</p> <p>Review Leckhampton Hill management plan and achieve HLS higher level stewardship scheme in conjunction with Natural England.</p> <p>Increase provision of natural and semi natural green spaces through planting proposals for new developments</p>
Outdoor Sports Facilities	<p>Maintaining quality with existing resources</p> <p>Damage to pitches from extreme weather events</p> <p>Longer growing season – more mowing needed</p> <p>More demand for recreational use of space</p> <p>Cleanliness and anti social behaviour</p>	<p>Energy efficiency improvements to sports pavilions (Agg Gardners and Beeches improved 2008), commitment to replacing lighting at Prince of Wales stadium when low energy lanterns become available</p> <p>Transport/access to pitches</p> <p>More enduring species of grass</p> <p>Scope to create linked corridors of habitats for wildlife</p> <p>Managed 'wild' areas to encourage biodiversity. Achieve biodiversity standard B.</p> <p>Investment to improve quality – S106 or levering in funding from external sources</p> <p>Increased environmental enforcement and joint working with the police to tackle anti social behaviour</p> <p>Provide bike stands to promote sustainable transport</p>

<b>Table 14 – Challenges and Opportunities</b>		
<b>Typology</b>	<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
Parks And Gardens	<p>Maintaining floral excellence within the context of sustainability and financial hardship</p> <p>Cleanliness and anti social behaviour</p> <p>Increase in extreme weather events – impact on mature trees</p> <p>Longer growing season – more mowing needed</p> <p>Marketing parks for alternative uses e.g. special events</p>	<p>Build on existing site specific management plans</p> <p>Seek sponsorship for floral displays.</p> <p>Continued partnership working with Cheltenham in Bloom, friends groups and community groups.</p> <p>More drought resistant planting – less seasonal bedding, less intensive maintenance regimes</p> <p>Scope for more tree planting to provide summer shade</p> <p>Energy efficiency improvements to buildings in parks such as Pump Room and Montpellier Gardens</p> <p>Measures to reduce energy/materials/waste from landscape maintenance services (fleet vehicles and nursery) – mowing regimes, bedding planting</p> <p>Provide linked corridors of green space to enable species to migrate</p> <p>Improved signage</p> <p>Bike stands</p>
Provision For Children And Young People	<p>Lack of facilities and activities for young people</p> <p>More demand for recreational use of space</p> <p>Equality of opportunity across the Borough</p>	<p>Use of sustainable materials – recycled, local, low energy and low waste</p> <p>Scope for more tree planting to provide summer shade and cooling</p> <p>More resilient play equipment</p> <p>Incorporate the design best practice advice contained in “Design for Play – A guide to creating successful play spaces”</p> <p>Promote use of existing facilities – boating, golf, tennis</p> <p>Increase availability of pavilions for youth service activities.</p> <p>Engage with MAD young people’s council</p> <p>Continue links with summer play schemes</p>

**Recommendations**

Ensure that the wide range of opportunities to address climate change are fully considered in strategic planning, land management and service delivery

## Biodiversity Issues and Opportunities

### Biodiversity

There are a number of key areas to be considered under this heading including performance against national standards, changing our management practices and wide strategic land use issues.

### Standards

Greenspace provision in the borough does not meet aspects of the Natural England ANGSt standard. Given the size and distribution of any green space in the borough we do not feel that we can meet the 300m catchment for spaces greater than 2.0 hectares. Instead we will look to how we can improve biodiversity within formal spaces and also through changing the use of low quality low value spaces.

In terms of the element of the ANGSt standard relating to Local Nature Reserves the authority's focus will be on looking at how the southern and north western extensions may be able to provide new LNR's along with county wildlife sites to the west of the town.

For the final criteria of the large sites over 20 hectares the council is extremely limited in how it can achieve this other than through the proposed housing extensions.

### Recommendations

The authority should continue to map areas of natural and semi natural green space that form components of other types of green space.

It should also extend the size limit of 2 hectares downwards to see what sites below this threshold could contribute to meeting the 300m accessibility standard.

Other ways of addressing the deficiency are to look at the change of use of low quality low value green spaces

A further way to address the deficiency is through the proposed North West Extension housing development.

The council should see how the proposed urban extensions can provide additional Local Nature Reserves.

The council should investigate the possibility of county wildlife sites to the west of the town becoming Local Nature Reserves.

### Management Practices

The council has shown a key willingness to change management practices to encourage biodiversity and there is great support for this within the community. This has come through in other areas of the development of this strategy most notably from the biodiversity audit and work on climate change. On the latter, table 14 above shows a wide range of opportunities that the authority could consider across each of the types of space it currently manages.

Opportunities for enhancement identified within the biodiversity audit include:

- Large areas – potential for buffer zones; wildlife planting ie, perimeters of large grass spaces.
- Watercourses – encourage closed systems to be opened up
- Young plantations - encourage structural diversity
- Hedgerows – plant more, and increase diversity
- Trees – encourage species and age diversity
- Non-native woody species – gradual replacement with native cultivars that support more diversity
- Scrub – reduce encroachment to conserve valuable limestone grassland, or encourage it elsewhere to encourage wildlife habitat
- Mosaic habitats - encourage
- Water bodies – encourage natural vegetation
- Bird and bat boxes etc.

### **Recommendations**

Develop an action plan to translate the recommendations of the biodiversity audit into clear measures to improve biodiversity across the borough

The council should seek to increase people’s access to natural green space through changing management regimes

The council should use evidence from the biodiversity audit to adopt more sustainable management practices on council land

Implement existing action plans such the Leckhampton Hill, and develop additional plans for LNRs and other key sites

When considering management plans for any sites the authority needs to consider the recommendations of the biodiversity audit and the opportunities to address climate change.

### **Land use policy**

As well as the consideration of the ANGSt standard earlier there is also a need to ensure that the natural environment is adequately protected through planning policy

Whilst the green space audit focussed its attention on the green space that is publicly accessible the green space strategy has also considered the contribution made by land that it is not accessible. This includes private sports provision, garden land, private green space, schools and educational institutions land. Such space is important in its contribution to the overall character and amenities of the borough and in enhancing biodiversity. This work also links to the recent Supplementary Planning Document on garden land and the conservation area appraisals for the borough.

### **Recommendations**

The authority should ensure that the contribution of private green space is recognised for its amenity and biodiversity contribution.

Ensure that the natural environment of the borough is protected and enhanced through sustainable management practices and planning policy

Ensure all development opportunities respect biodiversity principles and include nature conservation benefits

## Play Issues and Opportunities

### Play Space - Provision for Children and Young People

Green spaces have a long association with facilities for children and young people, with many now having areas specifically set aside with dog proof fencing, standard catalogue play equipment and safety surfacing. Cheltenham, until very recently, has followed this traditional model. This situation has evolved in recent years to a more expansive view of play in the landscape. The recent publication “Design for Play – A guide to creating successful play spaces” published by the Department for Culture Media and Sports introduces 10 design principles for successful play spaces:

1. are “Bespoke”
2. are well located
3. make use of natural elements
4. provide a wide range of play experiences
5. are accessible to both disabled and non-disabled children
6. meet community needs
7. allow children of different ages to play together
8. build in opportunities to experience risk and challenge
9. are sustainable and well maintained
10. allow for change and evolution

#### Recommendations

The council should adopt the 10 design principles for successful play spaces in the creation of all new play areas and the refurbishment of existing provision.

As part of its work on the planning and design of new and existing streets and spaces, it will address issues of children’s play, working with developers and other agencies to consider innovative street design solutions to local play provision and safe access to play.

Figure 5 earlier showed the identified gaps in provision as measured against national standards. The authority has a number of options to address any deficiencies including creation of new equipped play areas and adapting space or more natural play. In line with current thinking the authority has chosen to focus on the creation of more natural play provision and will look at suitable opportunities to deliver this, especially on sites that have been identified as low quality and low value in the green space audit. Natural play will also help with other areas of the strategy including enhancing biodiversity and sustainability.

#### Recommendations

The council should address any gaps in current play provision through the creation of natural play.

Furthermore, the Manual for Streets introduces a new approach to street design which introduces the opportunity to treat streets as places and consider innovative approaches to their design. The Council will take opportunities to address this issue with the County Council, as Highway Authority.

## Allotment Issues and Opportunities

In November 2004, cabinet approved the principle of consulting upon and adopting strategy for allotments within Cheltenham. Over the following 10 months, the council consulted widely and developed the draft strategy further through collaborative working between council officers, elected members and representatives from Cheltenham and District Allotment Holders association and the Allotment Forum.

The strategy has been guided by the aspirations to help live life to the full by promoting healthy lifestyles, set out in Cheltenham's Community Plan Our future, our choice, and by protecting and improving the environment of Cheltenham, as stated in the council's Business Plan 2004-2007.

The vision for allotment is to ensure a thriving network of allotments and community gardens that meets the needs and contributes to the well-being of the whole community of Cheltenham by providing people with opportunities to grow their own food, encouraging healthy eating, more opportunities for exercise and more sustainable food production.

This vision for allotments in Cheltenham aims to ensure that allotments will be available and well used by the widest possible spectrum of Cheltenham's community and are used in a way that provides for the range of needs and abilities and make a positive contribution to health and well-being.

The objectives of the strategy are to ensure that the benefits of allotments and community gardening in Cheltenham are actively promoted, to provide people with opportunities to grow their own healthy food and take part in social activities such as community gardening, to encourage the principles of healthy eating and exercise, and sustainable food production and to raise awareness of the benefits and to forge and develop an active partnership between allotment and community gardeners and the council, and to maintain and monitor progress.

The strategy commits the Council to working with allotment holders and other allotment providers to the recommendations set out below.

- Provide sufficient high quality allotments, in the right places, to meet the needs of the people of Cheltenham. This will involve:
- Protecting allotment land from the pressures of development, neglect and vandalism by setting local standards, and taking a more flexible approach to the requirements of potential tenants
- Securing the provision of new allotments in areas of need by developing local standards enshrined within the Local development Framework.
- Developing partnerships to attract additional financial investment in allotments
- Provide, within available resources, an excellent service to plot holders from which they can expect:
  - High quality, safe sites, accessible to all parts of the community and supported by appropriate infrastructure
  - Efficient and effective administration with fair rents and charges and advice, information and assistance
- Promote allotments

- To potential tenants, especially those groups under-represented in the allotment community such as women, families, ethnic communities, people with special needs and people on low incomes
- To the wider community so that they become aware of the value of allotments and their contribution to a sustainable town
- Consult with and involve allotment holders and their representatives in the strategic provision and operational management of allotments, including exploring opportunities for the devolved management of allotment sites
- Organise, subject to available resources, a programme of work and support for the service standards set out above and to invest in the allotment service and infrastructure using monies received from the sale of former allotment land or other sources
- Identify opportunities to establish links with Cheltenham Farmers' Market and communities such as schools and nursing homes to contribute to minimising waste and encouraging re-use, recycling and composting and also to supporting a healthy and sustainable local economy;
- Identify opportunities to reflect sustainability issues and climate change resilience including the use of chemicals, peat free compost, water conservation, adapting crops, the importance of local food, producing less waste and packaging, using more sustainable materials and reducing greenhouse gas emissions;
- Improve the provision of cycle parking and access for people with disabilities at allotment sites.

<b>Recommendations</b>
<p>Protect the overall availability of allotment land from the pressures of development, neglect and vandalism</p> <p>Identify opportunities to increase provision of new allotments or land for local food production.</p> <p>As part of its work on the planning and design of new and existing streets and spaces, the council will consider the potential for small scale local allotment provision, working with developers and other agencies to consider innovative design solutions</p> <p>Promote local food production to potential tenants and the local community</p> <p>Establish wider community links to support local food production and promote sustainable approaches to land management</p> <p>Improve the provision of cycle parking and access for people with disabilities at allotment sites</p>



## Tree Issues and Opportunities

Cheltenham is an immensely attractive place to live, work in and visit. This is due in major part to its trees, many of them now mature. Residents and visitors alike value this green resource as a means of relaxation and escape from the stresses of daily life. At a local level, trees provide a wide range of benefits - some obvious, others less so, for example individually and collectively the towns' trees absorb harmful pollutants and carbon dioxide, filter noise, soften the built environment, provide shelter and shade, reduce glare, reduce stress, provide seasonal colour and contributes to the attractiveness and economic well being of the town.

This collective grouping of individual trees that encompass street trees, parks, open spaces, allotments, private grounds, or large shrubs and woodland, forms what is referred to as Cheltenham's "urban forest".

Recently the responsibility for the nearly 8000 street trees in the borough has transferred from Cheltenham Borough Council to Gloucestershire County Council. This includes the magnificent tree lined avenues, such as Bayshill and The Promenade, which are within the central Conservation Area and are therefore afforded protection. However, many street trees are not within Conservation Areas and are more vulnerable.

In view of the change in management responsibility, it is essential that CBC works in partnership with Gloucestershire County Council to preserve the tree lined avenues and tree cover generally.

The council is working in partnership with the county council to achieve joint objectives and is also developing an "Outline Tree Strategy for Cheltenham" Key recommendations are:

### Recommendations

The council should:

Increase its tree related resources to reflect the borough's ageing tree population

Invest in a computerised system for recording the tree stock and link this to its GIS mapping systems

Make the Tree Preservation Order database available to the general public

Develop a more consistent approach to the management of highway trees with Gloucester Highways

Clarify the responsibilities of other landowners regarding the management and preservation of trees.

Develop an Outline Tree Strategy for Cheltenham for consideration by Environment, Overview and Scrutiny Committee and cabinet.

## Resource Issues and Opportunities

This section looks at the issues that arose from the green space audit and the TAES self assessment process.

### Service Planning

#### Leadership

Overall the review found that the authority was building stakeholder engagement and was open to scrutiny and challenge but had areas for improvement around managing strategic partnerships and relationships. Also, as is the case with so many local authority parks services it was felt that more could be done to recognise achievements and celebrate successes.

#### Policy & Strategy

The council's approach to the development of the strategy has shown a key commitment to considering the future direction of the service and for green space in general. Key areas for improvement are around defining targets and establishing processes for monitoring and evaluating such targets.

#### Community Engagement

The council has invested in developing its relationship with the community and has promoted a "culture of collaboration" and regularly consults with a wide range of specialist groups. Overall there is a need for a structured approach to community consultation and engagement which would include ensuring that all voices are heard rather than just the loudest or most persistent, celebrating successes with the community, sharing good practice and lessons learned.

In the stakeholder workshop people were asked to consider the degree of involvement of community based organisations on a ladder of participation. Most groups were placed in the lower rungs of information and consultation however some friends groups consider that they had developed more of a partnership approach to working with the authority. There was a clear message that many groups wanted to see progress up the ladder into more meaningful levels of participation and partnership working. This desire was expressed across a range of groups from allotment groups to youth football, from friends groups to environmental organisations and is a key area for the authority to address.

#### Partnership Working

As set out above, the service is keen to work in partnership with other authorities, services, and organisations across the voluntary and community sectors. As with community involvement there are areas that can be improved around evaluating partnership working, celebrating successes and setting out clear roles, responsibilities and objectives.

The Council will work with the County Council to ensure that the design of new streets and the redesign of existing streets follow the best traditions of Cheltenham's street design and fully integrates tree and landscape design. This approach is also endorsed by Manual for Streets which addresses the beneficial impact of landscape design in streets in terms of placemaking and traffic calming. Furthermore, the Council will work with the County Council to ensure that new spaces delivered through Civic Pride and other regeneration projects follow these Cheltenham traditions.

## **Use of Resources**

The service has been effective in managing its resources and in securing external funding but changing local authority circumstances will drive a need to become more efficient through the use of new technology and instilling systematic reviews of efficiency. There are also opportunities to be explored around alternative forms of service delivery linked to partnership working and community involvement. Funds accessible to the voluntary and community sectors need to be explored further to maximise the input of council resources.

The brief review of demand information showed that there is a need establish a clearer system for recording information so that trend analysis can be carried out. Also it showed that the issue of events in parks needs reviewing to look at both the financial impacts and the potential community benefits.

## **People Management**

The service has a strong team and has held Investors in People for 14 years and staff make a significant contribution to improving services. Some improvements identified focused on investing in new technology, looking at more flexible working patterns and recognising staff contributions.

## **Standards of Service**

Whilst the service has a commitment to its end users and has achieved national quality awards such as Green Flag there is no overall process in place to review existing and develop new standards.

## **Performance Measurement & Learning**

Whilst some monitoring is carried out, as has been commented on above there is room for improvement here in terms of establishing performance targets, measures and recording systems. Once targets are met there is also a need to celebrate successes and spread the word through the authority and the wider community.

## **Recommendations**

The service should look at not only its policy and strategy but also its working practices to identify targets and performance measures that contribute to an overall system of performance management.

Re-align resources and ensure the correct skill sets are in place to achieve strategic objectives.

The service needs to find mechanisms to celebrate successes and share good practice

Encourage the formation of a Parks Friends Forum encompassing the whole borough. The Forum being an umbrella organisation for all the individual Friends of Parks organisations

There is a need for a more structured approach to community consultation and engagement

The service needs to invest resources in developing partnership working so that individuals and groups can realise their potential

The service should actively target non users and under represented groups to better understand their views and aspirations for green space

The authority needs to look at how it can invest in new technology to support improvements to the service and greater efficiencies

The service needs to engage residents and service users in the setting and monitoring of standards

The service needs to develop meaningful benchmarking of the service in terms of usage, satisfaction and quality

The authority should look into other possible sites for events and activities to reduce the impact on currently used sites.

The authority should review its scale of fees and charges for use of green spaces

The authority should encourage greater community use of green space

### Quality Standards

The issue of the development of local standards is dealt with under strategic planning below. This section looks at one key aspect, that of quality of green space. Overall within any system of standards surrounding quality there will be elements of design of space which are outside the scope of this strategy, elements of service delivery (referred to in resources above) and also objectives measures of the quality of space and user experience which is what this section focuses on.

Overall the quality of green space in the borough was found to be higher than many other parts of the country and the authority also has a good track record in achieving the Green Flag Award. The repeat quality audits carried out as part of the production of the strategy have shown that the authority has also improved quality on non Green Flag sites and indeed has done so for spaces that serve most of the boroughs more deprived areas.

The quality audit showed that overall the sites of borough wide significance were of higher quality.

Level	Number of sites	Range	Average
Borough	12	38 – 73	56
Neighbourhood	57	19 – 72	47
Local	50	21 – 79	49

The borough level sites would typically be those that would be aiming at the Green Flag Award standard.

Simply looking at the quality audit scores the following sites already achieve or have the potential to achieve the Green Flag Award

- Montpellier Gardens (existing winner)
- Naunton Park (existing winner)
- Hatherley Park (existing winner)
- Hesters Way Park

- Pittville Park
- Sandford Park
- Clyde Crescent

There are a range of green spaces across the borough that could be developed in partnership with the community to Green Flag standard. These include the following

- Springfield Park
- Leckhampton Hill
- Benhall Open space
- Winston Churchill Memorial Gardens
- Cox's Meadow
- Beeches Playing Field

There needs to be a careful consideration of any future programme of application to the award programme which should include an assessment of what investment would be required not only in physical terms on site but also in developing the other aspects of the space such as community involvement, marketing and management planning. It may be that the authority sets itself a target of a number of award winners but that it manages a number of key spaces to the principles of the award.

The accessibility hierarchy developed as part of the green space audit along with the household survey showed that those spaces at the upper levels had a catchment of 1200m or around 20 minutes. The authority could easily set a standard that everyone in the borough will live within a 1200m of a Green Flag (standard) green space.

Either way over the next 15 years the authority should develop a planned approach to raising the standard in terms of quality.

<b>Recommendations</b>
The service needs to undertake a review of its approach to quality standards for green space and produce a realistic plan of how to go about raising the standard
The authority should set a quality standard linking catchment to a recognised national quality measure
The authority should repeat the quality audit on a regular basis to measure change

## Strategic Planning Issues and Opportunities

There has been a conscious effort throughout the process of this document to tie the green space strategy into strategic land use planning not only so that it can inform the development of the joint core strategy but also so that green space is developed within a wider context.

The follow on work around not only the joint core strategy but also the emerging work on green infrastructure will take many areas of this strategy further. Key areas will be

- the continuation of exploring the significance and potential of water courses, green corridors and the land in proximity to them,
- the further development of how green space will be provided within the proposed new urban extensions,
- the consideration of how private green space or space with limited accessibility is protected from inappropriate development
- the development of local standards for green space provision,
- reviewing the way section 106 contributions are calculated and utilised,

### Recommendations

The authority needs to continue the analysis work in relation to water courses and green corridors

The authority should look at how new recreational links can be created

The council will assess accessibility in terms of the quality of links between residential areas and green space and discuss with the County Highways Authority opportunities for prioritising appropriate improvements.

Water courses throughout the borough should be protected and where possible enhanced

Green spaces along or adjacent to water courses are potentially valuable sites for biodiversity and recreation and inappropriate development should not be allowed

The presence of water courses and the implications of flooding need careful management considerations

The proposed North West Extension includes a key water course and the design of any recreational green space needs to take this into consideration

Current planning policy in relation to green space along or in proximity to green corridors needs to be reviewed as part of the Joint Core Strategy and Green Infrastructure work.

Green space in proximity to water courses that the borough council manage should be enhanced for biodiversity.

The emerging Green Infrastructure work needs to look at how the green corridors extend across local authority boundaries.

Private land / garden land in proximity to corridors – need to carefully consider the

potential value of these spaces and ensure they are not developed in an inappropriate way.

The proposed increases in population will create additional demand on strategic level sites and sites in proximity to development. Pressure on strategic sites could not be accommodated within current s106 arrangements but a new Joint Core Strategy policy could address this.

**Recommendations**

The authority should develop a more strategic approach to the use of s106 contributions and should seek to allocate a percentage of all funds to strategic level sites.

**Quality and Value**

As referred to earlier, the companion guide to PPG17 sets out a method for combining the quality assessment scores and value scores to allow local authorities to objectively identify actions for the future of their open spaces. The matrix provides a method for determining the most appropriate action for each individual open space.

Detailed analysis has been done in relation to each of the sites that fall into the four quadrants of the matrix and this is summarised in the table below. Where the site value is low we have considered changing its primary purpose where possible. Some sites identified as low quality and low value are churchyards and thus the primary purpose cannot be changed but their quality can be enhanced.

<b>High Quality / Low Value</b>	<b>High Quality / High Value</b>
<p><i>Site Options</i> - Maintain the quality. Undertake further assessment on the value with the aim of enhancing its present primary purpose. Consider if it would be of high value if converted to other primary purpose. Change of use is only acceptable if the options above are not achievable</p>	<p><i>Site Options</i> - Maintain the quality. Target sites for Green Flag Award. Protect the site through planning process</p>
<b>Low Quality / Low Value</b>	<b>High Value / Low Quality</b>
<p><i>Site Options</i> – consider alternative uses to focus on 3 key areas          Local food production          Enhancing biodiversity          Natural Play Provision</p>	<p><i>Site Options</i> - Raise the site quality to meet the required standard. Protect the site through the planning process</p>

The above options have also been explored alongside other pieces of work being carried out by the authority such as the asset review being carried out by property services and the comparative site assessment being carried out by planning services. This ensures that we have fully considered the policy considerations and also the authority’s views on land disposal.

In addition to this the stakeholder survey and stakeholder workshop explored people's views on changing primary purpose and land use and found many positive suggestions and ideas on ways forward. There is wide support for a fresh look at how lower quality land can be used and this includes options such as local food production, enhancing biodiversity and creating natural play for children.

<b>Recommendations</b>
The authority should continue to review the policy options available for each green space
The authority should begin a programme of local consultation about the change of use of low value sites
Where sites are identified for a change of primary purpose then the authority should work with the community and stakeholders to secure external funding to implement the necessary changes

### **Private land**

Whilst the green space audit focussed its attention on the green space that is publicly accessible the green space strategy has also considered the contribution made by land that it is not accessible. This includes private sports provision, garden land, private green space, schools and educational institutions land. Such space is important in its contribution to the overall character and amenities of the borough and in enhancing biodiversity. This work also links to the recent Supplementary Planning Document on garden land and the conservation area appraisals for the borough.

<b>Recommendations</b>
The authority should ensure that the contribution of private green space is recognised for its amenity and biodiversity contribution.

### **Local standards**

It is a requirement that local authorities develop local standards for green space provision, PPG17 sets out some key guidance on this in that it suggest standards should include:

- a quantitative element, to assess how much new provision may be required;
- a qualitative component to assess whether existing facilities may be enhanced; and
- an accessibility measure.

The follow up guidance "Assessing Needs and Opportunities" sets out Five key attributes underpin all open space and recreational facilities;

- Accessibility – if an area is not accessible it will be of no value to those who wish to use it. However, the guidance acknowledges the importance inaccessible open space can make to the appearance and environmental quality of an area.
- Quality – the guidance points out that quality relates to fitness for purpose and this requires clarity as to what the purpose is.



- Multi functional – many open spaces are used for a variety of activities and thus the guidance suggests that this can cause problems when undertaking audits.
- Primary purpose –it is suggested that each open space is identified once in an audit and its primary function recorded.
- Quantity – usually measured as amount of provision; although the guidance advises that it may be possible to address a deficiency in open space provision by improving the quality or specification of existing facilities.

The Guidance advises that although accessibility and quantity are delivered and protected by planning; and quality, multi functionality and primary purpose are initially delivered through good design, all five attributes are sustained by good management and maintenance.

National standards have been over relied upon in the past and, whilst developers have not often challenged them they do have a number of key faults as set out below.

- They lack an empirical basis – i.e. it is not clear what the theory is behind them
- It's not clear how the standards have been derived
- The standards are often misinterpreted –*outdoor playing space is not the same as public open space; ... it is a significant component* – the use of the NPFA standard for all green space provision is clearly a mistake
- The above comment links to their limited scope in that they focus on aspects or types of green space provision
- They are what they say on the tin – national and not local – “*national standards cannot cater for local circumstances*”
- They focus too much on quantity at the expense of quality

Our work towards the development of this strategy has shown that national standards such as ANGSt and elements of the Six Acre Standard will be extremely difficult if not impossible for us to achieve. The stakeholder consultation has also shown that people consider quality and accessibility more important than quantity.

<b>Recommendations</b>
The authority needs to explore and develop local standards for green space provision

## Heritage Issues and Opportunities

Cheltenham has been described as a “town within a park”. It is vital that the town’s historic parks, gardens and green landscape are preserved for future generations. The challenge is doing so in the context of climate change and scarce resources. There are however opportunities to preserve and improve the town’s green heritage through grant funding and the Civic Pride project

### Recommendations

The cabinet member Sustainability, continue in the role of Park’s Champion and that the shadow cabinet member is fully briefed on all green space and heritage issues.

Appreciate, value and protect all the Borough’s historic green spaces.

Manage and care for the two Parks in Cheltenham on the English Heritage “Register of Listed Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in England”, in accordance with the legislation covering them and in consultation with English Heritage’s Historic Landscape advisors (i.e. Pittville Park and Bouncer’s Lane Cemetery)

Ensure that the principles of restoration, and maintenance as set out in the recently prepared Conservation Plan for Pittville Park are considered in full , when restoration or maintenance works are undertaken to the Park.

Ensure that all future maintenance and planting plans for Montpellier Park are in accordance with the aims of the Restoration Masterplan, as undertaken during the recent restoration.

Consider the establishment of an Index of Locally Listed Parks/ Public Green Spaces in Cheltenham

**13. Action plan / Implementation plan**

The table below takes forward all of the recommendations from the analysis section above and sets them into an overall framework that identifies the timescale for action, who will lead on the task, how we will know when we have done it and what the resource implications are.

Recommendation	Timetable	Lead service / organisation	Partners	Performance Measure	Resource Implication
Continue to map areas of natural and semi natural green space that form components of other types of green space.	2009/10	CBC Parks Service		All natural green space within the borough captured and revised analysis against national standards completed	Staff time
Extend the size limit of 2 hectares downwards to see what sites below this threshold could contribute to meeting the 300m accessibility standard.	2009/10	CBC Parks Service		See above	Staff time
Consider potential for change of use of low quality low value green spaces	2010/11	CBC Parks Service	Planning, wider stakeholders	Options appraisal completed for all LQLV sites	Staff time
Address deficiencies through the proposed North West Extension housing development.	Likely timetable to be determined	Planning	CBC Parks Service	Natural green space created as part of development	Staff time
Deliver opportunities for additional Local Nature Reserves within the proposed urban extensions	Likely timetable to be determined	Planning	CBC Parks Service	Natural green space created as part of development	Staff time
Investigate the possibility of county wildlife sites to the west of the town becoming Local Nature Reserves.	2012/13	CBC Parks Service	Planning, wider stakeholders	Appraisal of sites, ownership, accessibility and LNR potential completed	May require external support

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Timetable</b>	<b>Lead service / organisation</b>	<b>Partners</b>	<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Resource Implication</b>
Develop an action plan to translate the recommendations of the biodiversity audit into clear measures to improve biodiversity across the borough	2010/11	CBC Parks Service	Planning	Action plan produced that informs all site management	Staff time
Increase people's access to natural green space through changing management regimes	2010/11	CBC Parks Service	Friends groups, wider stakeholders	Potential sites identified and management interventions prioritised	May require external support
Adopt more sustainable management practices on council land using evidence from the biodiversity audit	2009/10	CBC Parks Service	Friends groups, wider stakeholders	Develop pilot sites	May require investment
Implement existing action plans such as the Leckhampton Hill, and develop additional plans for LNRs and other key sites	2010/11	CBC Parks Service	Friends groups, wider stakeholders	Action plans reviewed and updated. New management plans produced	May require external support
Consider the recommendations of the biodiversity audit and the opportunities to address climate change when considering site specific or generic management plans.	2009/10	CBC Parks Service		Green Flag winning sites to be a priority	Management planning may require external support
Ensure that the contribution of private green space is recognised for its amenity, biodiversity and accessibility contribution.	Likely timetable to be determined	Planning		SPD for garden land produced. Planning policy for private green space reviewed as part of joint core strategy	

Recommendation	Timetable	Lead service / organisation	Partners	Performance Measure	Resource Implication
Protected and enhance the natural environment of the borough through sustainable management practices and planning policy	Likely timetable to be determined	Planning CBC Parks Service		Planning policy in place. Action plan for developing sustainable management practices in place.	
Ensure all development opportunities respect biodiversity principles and are planned for nature conservation benefits	Likely timetable to be determined	Planning		Planning policy in place.	
Ensure that the wide range of opportunities to address climate change are fully considered in strategic planning, land management and service delivery	2009/10	CBC Parks Service			Capital investment required
Protect allotment land from the pressures of development, neglect and vandalism	All years	CBC Parks Service	Planning	No allotment land lost to development, all sites appropriately managed.	Ongoing revenue
Identify opportunities to increase provision of new allotments or land for local food production.	All years	CBC Parks Service	Planning	Number of new local food production sites. Length of waiting list. Number of new community organisations involved	Capital investment required
Promote and facilitate local food production with the local community	All years	CBC Parks Service	Vision 21 University	Number of residents more aware of opportunities to grow food.	Revenue investment
Establish wider community links to support local food production and promote sustainable approaches to land management	All years	CBC Parks Service	Vision 21 University	As previous 2 above	

Recommendation	Timetable	Lead service / organisation	Partners	Performance Measure	Resource Implication
Identify opportunities to reflect sustainability issues and climate change resilience	All years	CBC Parks Service		Number of new initiatives introduced. Improved performance against base line	May require initial investment
Improve the provision of cycle parking and access for people with disabilities at allotment sites	All years	CBC Parks Service			May require capital investment
Adopt the 10 design principles for successful play spaces in the creation of all new play areas and the refurbishment of existing provision.	All years	CBC Parks Service		All new / refurbished play areas to met the 10 principles	Capital investment will be required for all new or refurbished play areas
Address issues of children's play, working with developers and other agencies to consider innovative street design solutions to local play provision and safe access to play	All years	Urban design			
Address any gaps in current play provision through the creation of natural play.	All years	CBC Parks Service			Capital investment required
Increase tree resources to reflect the borough's ageing tree population	2009/10	CBC Parks Service	Gloucestershire Country Council		
Invest in a computerised system for recording the tree stock and link this to its GIS mapping systems		CBC Parks Service			
Make the Tree Preservation Order database available to the general public					

Recommendation	Timetable	Lead service / organisation	Partners	Performance Measure	Resource Implication
Develop a more consistent approach to the management of highway trees with Gloucester Highways		CBC Parks Service	Gloucestershire Country Council		
Clarify land ownership and management responsibility		CBC Parks Service			
Review working practices and identify targets and performance measures that contribute to an overall system of performance management and deliver policy and strategic objectives.	2010/11	CBC Parks Service		Performance management system established. Base line figures, recording system and monitoring systems in place.	May require external support
Identify and introduce mechanisms to celebrate success and share good practice	2011/12	CBC Parks Service	CBC Marketing and communications team	Press coverage received. Good practice case studies produced.	
Re-align resources and ensure the correct skill sets are in place to achieve strategic objectives.	2009/10	CBC Parks Service	HR Trade Unions	Fit for purpose management structure.	
Introduce a more structured approach to community consultation and engagement	2010/11	CBC Parks Service		Review undertaken. Evaluation of partnership working completed. Consultation and engagement plan produced.	May require external support
Invest resources in developing partnership working so that individuals and groups can realise their potential	2011/12	CBC Parks Service		New resource invested.	Revenue investment required



Recommendation	Timetable	Lead service / organisation	Partners	Performance Measure	Resource Implication
Target non users and under represented groups to better understand their views and aspirations for green space	2010/11 then all years	CBC Parks Service		User and non users surveys established for key sites. Annual evaluation report produced.	Revenue investment required / may require external support
Invest in new technology to support improvements to the service and greater efficiencies	2009/10				Capital investment required
Engage residents and service users in the setting and monitoring of standards	2011/12	CBC Parks Service	Friends groups, stakeholders, residents	New service standards produced	
Develop meaningful benchmarking of the service in terms of usage, satisfaction and quality	2011/12	CBC Parks Service		Benchmarks produced, linked to performance management	
Identify other possible sites for events and activities to reduce the impact on currently used sites.	2013/14	CBC Parks Service	Festivals and events team	Review completed, options appraisal reported.	
Review its scale of fees and charges for use of green spaces	2010/11	CBC Parks Service		Review completed	
Encourage greater community use of green space	2011/12	CBC Parks Service	Friends groups, stakeholders, residents	Increase in usage quantified	Revenue investment required
Review the approach to quality standards for green space and produce a realistic plan of how to raise standards.	2011/12	CBC Parks Service		Report and action plan produced. Cost and resource implications assessed. Targets agreed.	May require external support

Recommendation	Timetable	Lead service / organisation	Partners	Performance Measure	Resource Implication
Set a quality standard linking catchment to a recognised national quality measure	2010/11	CBC Parks Service	Planning	Standard drafted and consulted upon. Standard agreed.	
Repeat the quality audit on a regular basis to measure change	2011/12 and then every three years.	CBC Parks Service		Report produced. Trend analysis carried out.	May require external support
Continue to review the policy options available for each green space	Every year	CBC Parks Service	Planning	All CBC owned and managed sites to have been reviewed on a priority basis.	
Commence a programme of local consultation about the change of use of low value sites	On a site by site basis	CBC Parks Service	Friends groups, stakeholders, residents. Planning	Establish list of sites that may be considered. Review at least one site per year.	May require external support
Where sites are identified for a change of primary purpose, work with the community and stakeholders to secure external funding to implement the necessary changes	2011/12	CBC Parks Service	Friends groups, stakeholders, residents	Number of sites improved. Increase in local food production. Increase in amount of children's play. Increase in biodiversity / natural sites.	May require capital investment
Ensure that the contribution of private green space is recognised for its amenity and biodiversity contribution.	2009/10	Planning		Policy within Joint Core Strategy produced	
Explore and develop local standards for green space provision	2009/10	Planning	CBC Parks Service	Draft standards produced, consultation completed and standards finalised.	May require external support

Recommendation	Timetable	Lead service / organisation	Partners	Performance Measure	Resource Implication
Develop a more strategic approach to the use of s106 contributions and should seek to allocate a percentage of all funds to strategic level sites.	2010-2011	CBC Park service			
Manage and care for the two Parks in Cheltenham (i.e. Pittville Park and Bouncer's Lane Cemetery) on the English Heritage "Register of Listed Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in England", in accordance with the legislation covering them and in consultation with English Heritage's Historic Landscape advisors.	Ongoing	CBC Parks	Friends of Pittville/PARA English Heritage	Maintained to standards set by English Heritage	Staff time
Ensure that the principles of restoration, and maintenance as set out in the recently prepared Conservation Plan for Pittville Park are implemented, when restoration or maintenance works are undertaken to the Park.	2010/11	CBC Parks	Friends of Pittville/PARA English Heritage	Improved level of care and maintenance. Resourced action plan to deliver historic park objectives	Staff time
Ensure that all future maintenance and planting plans for Montpellier Park are in accordance with the aims of the Restoration Masterplan, as undertaken during the recent restoration.	Ongoing	CBC Parks		Submit a positive annual return to the Heritage Lottery Fund	Staff time

Recommendation	Timetable	Lead service / organisation	Partners	Performance Measure	Resource Implication
Consider the establishment of an Index of Locally Listed Parks/ Public Green Spaces in Cheltenham.	Ongoing				

## **14. Monitoring and review**

- 14.1** The strategy sets out Cheltenham Borough Council's vision for the provision and use of green space and specific objectives.
- 14.2** A rolling action plan will be prepared to implement the strategy and will feature annual milestones. These milestones will be included in the council's business plan or the divisional service plans, with each milestone having an identified lead officer who will be responsible to reporting progress.
- 14.3** Performance indicators and targets will be developed, against which progress can be assessed.
- 14.4** Performance monitoring of indicators and milestones will be via the council's electronic performance management system with quarterly reports to the Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny and Board of Directors.
- 14.5** An annual monitoring and review report will be produced for the cabinet and the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This will measure performance against objectives and targets will provide an opportunity to update the strategy in response to social, economic, technological and environmental change. A fundamental review of the strategy will be undertaken every 5 years.
- 14.6** Financial reporting will be through the council's budget management and monitoring system.