

Chesterfield

Parks and Open Spaces Strategy

2015–2024



Foreword

Chesterfield, distinct by its famous crooked spire and known as the eastern gate way to the Peak District, is a dynamic and developing market town. It is a relatively densely populated Borough that has diverse communities. Although benefiting from key developments and growth in recent years, the legacy of declining industries have contributed to areas of comparative deprivation where health and other issues remain. The green spaces in the Borough have an essential part to play, particularly to contribute to improving health and the quality of life for all our communities. They are a key element in helping to tackle the legacies and ongoing issues arising from urban and semi-urban communities. Good quality, accessible open spaces provide sporting and recreational facilities, green lungs for communities to breathe and contribute to a vibrant economy, encouraging higher quality and more sustainable economic development.

Whilst close to the Peak District National Park, biodiversity and sustainable landscapes remain crucial to the Borough. The strategy seeks to improve the biodiversity and develop opportunities to promote a sustainable environment.

For our open space network to be fully utilised, it is important to recognise our community's needs. Key to the success of this strategy will be improving the quality, ensuring adequate provision and access for all communities, and maximising the use of what we have by engaging communities to an extent where they will feel an ownership of their space.

This strategy seeks to develop the core strands of Prioritising investment, Effective and sustainable use of resources, Increasing use and Working effectively with the community and partners by providing a framework of strategic actions to maximise the benefits of our Parks and open spaces.

Add photo/signature Chris Ludlow

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WHERE ARE WE NOW

Previous Strategic Achievements

The first Parks and Open Spaces Strategy for Chesterfield was launched in 2003. It had the key aim of maximising the social, environmental and economic benefits of green space provision.

The strategy has been a catalyst for realising a wide range of improvements in terms of quantity and quality of parks and open spaces over the last ten years.

- **Over that time, more than £8.25 million of capital has been invested to improve the Council's parks and open spaces and 70 per cent of this was from external sources.**
- **Since the launch of the strategy, over 20 Friends of Parks groups have established and played a significant role in attracting external funding to drive improvements and attracting more people to use their local park.**
- **We now have master plans and management plans for our main parks and hold four prestigious Green Flag awards.**
- **Brearley Wetlands, Norbriggs Flash and Blue Bank Pools have been declared as Local Nature Reserves and large tracts of woodland are now being actively managed and made more accessible.**
- **A range of challenging and innovative play equipment and outdoor gyms, multi-use games areas and skate parks have sprung up across the Borough.**

Other notable achievements include:

- **An eco-friendly Caravan Club site at Pools Brook Country Park**
- **Multi-user routes e.g. Somersall**
- **Chesterfield Canal restoration and the Trans Pennine Trail link**
- **Establishment of Chesterfield In Bloom**
- **Silver gilt award in East Midlands in Bloom**
- **Grade 2* Heritage listing for Queen's Park**

In the light of all these improvements and achievements, public satisfaction with local parks and open spaces has risen over the life of the strategy from around 55 per cent to 73 per cent at the last survey.

Reviewing the Strategy

Notwithstanding the above achievements, the original strategy was very broad in focus and possibly overambitious.

It identified gaps in parks and open space provision, but many of these still remain, largely because of insufficient funding and/or the lack of available space to develop facilities.

With the exception of Holmebrook Valley Park, Queen's Park and Eastwood Park, the quality of outdoor sports pitch provision has declined.

Public awareness and expectations are growing and although the range and quantity of provision has increased in an attempt to keep up with demand, there has been a significant decline in revenue funding, which is presenting real challenges. It will be key to ensure that all funding is directed and utilised to maximum efficiency.

The number of play areas has steadily increased along with our overall land holding, but unfortunately the Council's budget for parks and open spaces in real terms has decreased by over £650,000 in ten years. We are now at a crossroads and need to refocus on key priorities.

As a statutory consultee on any planning applications that involve potential loss of playing fields, Sport England has identified a significant deficiency in terms of our strategy being out of date and cited the need for one that is based on analysis of current needs and projected trends.

The Council's Local Plan Core Strategy has recently been developed and a refreshed Parks and Open Spaces Strategy is needed to inform this in order to resist inappropriate pressure to develop on designated playing fields, and to maximise and direct investment in green spaces to support new development.

Thus, there is a pressing need to refresh the strategy to provide the context, vision and strategic direction for the provision, management and improvement of green spaces across the Borough

A wide range of consultation underpins the development of this strategy.

This includes a review of the findings of recent consultation exercises for example;

- Eastwood Park Heritage Scheme
- Green flag surveys at Queen's Park, Pools Brook Country park and Holmebrook Valley Park
- The Place Survey

Action plan continued

- King George the Fifth Playing Field Masterplan
- Stand Road Park
- Thistle Park
- Sites and Boundaries studies (Planning)

Various workshops have also been undertaken as follows;

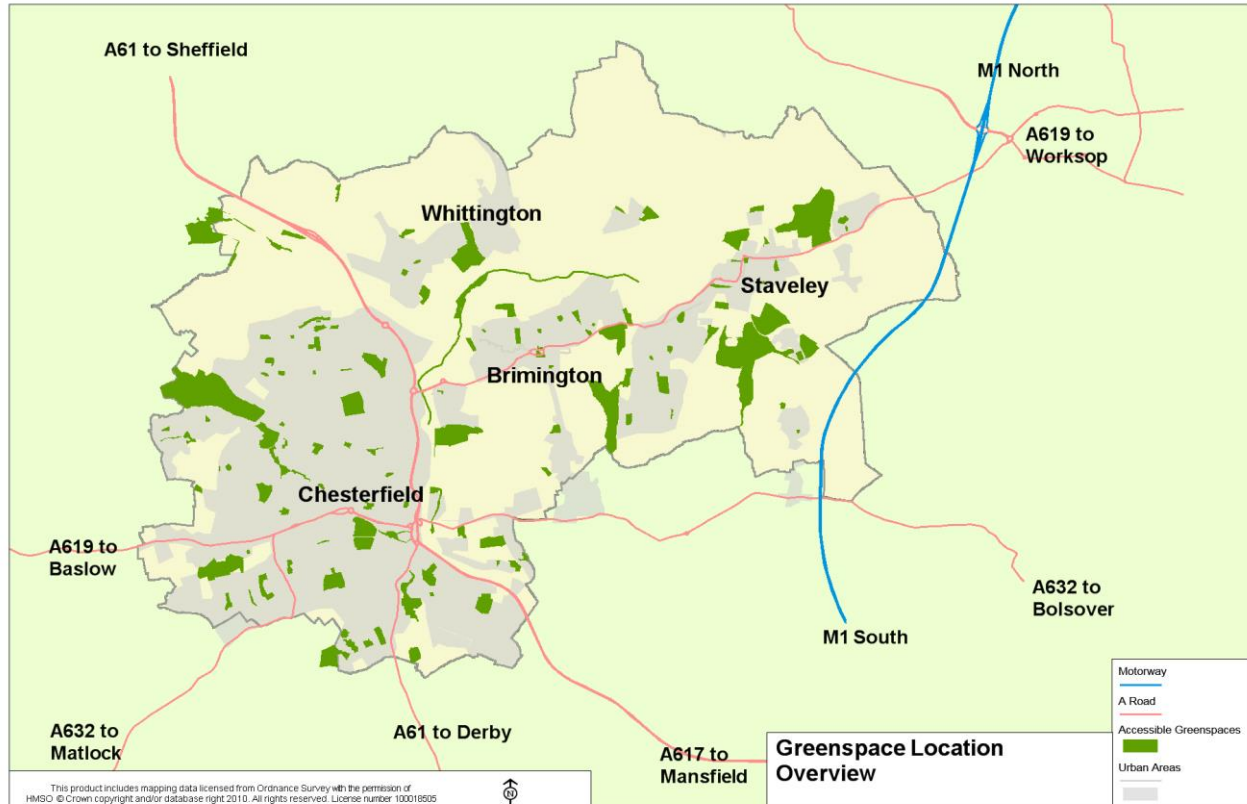
- Key partners June 2014
- Officers June 2014
- Friends Groups August 2014
- Members September 2014

Further consultation exercises included;

- Chesterfield Equality and Diversity Forum (11th June 2014)
- Web questionnaire (July 2014)
- Community Assemblies newsletter (July 2014)
- Community Assemblies presentations (September 2014)
- Scrutiny Project review (October 2014)

Strategic Context

Below is a map of our open space network to demonstrate the extent and distribution within the Borough.



Action plan continued

The Council's Vision

The strategy is designed to contribute to meeting the aims of the Council's vision.

The Council's vision of **Putting our communities first** is expressed in its Corporate Plan. Whilst it is recognised that this will change over the period of this strategy, similar principles are likely to remain. The priorities within it are summarised below.

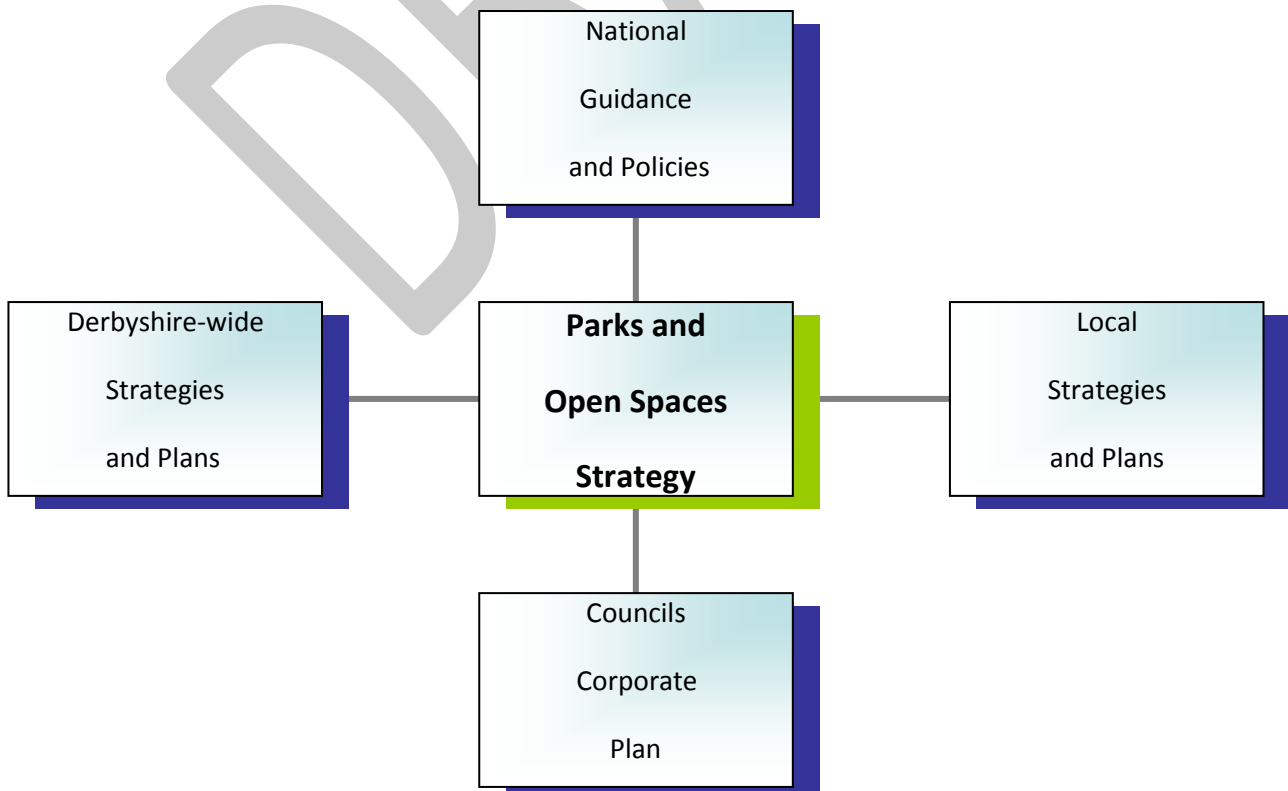
- Making Chesterfield a thriving Borough
- Improving the quality of life for local people
- Providing value-for-money services

This strategy contributes to these priorities because of the following links:

- Quality, sustainable economic growth, and the quality of the environment and the open space network
- The contribution to healthy and better quality lifestyles through sports and recreational activities, and spaces to breathe and interact with others
- By directing and prioritising resources to achieve strategic objectives

The Strategy in Context

Links to other key documents are shown below:



Strategies and plans that underpin this strategy

Other service specific strategies relating to the Borough contribute to this wider overarching strategy as follows:

Playing Pitch Strategy

Allotments Strategy

Greenprint for Biodiversity

Play Strategy

Health Improvement plan

Socio-economic context

Since the last census in 2001, the population of the borough has grown by 3 per cent and now stands at 103,780. It is projected to rise to 110,300 by 2031. Overall, the population of Chesterfield is quite similar to that of Derbyshire as a whole. There are a greater proportion of people in their twenties and early thirties, and of older women, but also fewer people in middle age.

The Borough has a higher proportion of residents from minority ethnic backgrounds than in Derbyshire, with the main populations in St Leonards, St Helen's, Holmebrook and Brockwell. In 2001, 98.1 per cent of the Chesterfield Borough's population were White British compared to 94.9 per cent in 2011. Deprivation is higher than average and about 3,800 (21.4%) children live in poverty.

The health of people in Chesterfield is varied compared with the England average and there are some significant issues.

- Life expectancy is 10 years lower for men and 7.6 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Chesterfield than in the least deprived areas.
- In Year six, 20 % of children are classified as obese, which is the highest in Derbyshire. In 2012, 26.5% of adults were classed as obese which is worse than the England average.
- Levels of alcohol-specific hospital stays among those under 18, breastfeeding and smoking in pregnancy are worse than the England average.
- Rates of smoking-related deaths and hospital stays for alcohol-related harm are worse than the England average.

Overall, the Borough is relatively deprived and has areas of significant deprivation. The 2010 Index of Multiple Deprivation indicated that 5 of Chesterfield's 68 lower super output areas were within the 10 per cent of the most deprived in England and a further 12 fall within the 20 per cent most deprived in England.

The worst areas of deprivation are to the east around Staveley and in areas surrounding Chesterfield town centre. In-between, there are areas of lower deprivation and this also applies to the west of the Borough.

There is an ageing population and by 2033 it is projected that over 27 per cent of the population will be over 65 years old.

There are dense, built areas with limited access to parks and green space. Some of the wards which border the town centre, i.e. Rother, Holmebrook and Brockwell, have the highest population density.

A plan showing relative deprivation across the Borough can be seen at Appendix A.

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Quality, Quantity and Accessibility Audits

Quality

Parks in the Borough which currently hold the national Green Flag award are considered to have exceeded the local standard which has been based on basic Green Flag criteria. The local standard has been applied to a range of other parks and open spaces to act as a quality benchmark.

80 green spaces were assessed and it was found that 53 per cent just met the standard, 14 per cent were above the standard and 33 per cent failed to meet the standard.

The key findings were that many of the smaller sites lacked basic signage indicating ownership, entrance and boundary structures required refurbishment, access route surfaces required minor repairs and the recreational value/use of some sites was limited or unclear.

Community involvement in the management of the vast majority of smaller green spaces was notably absent.

The larger community parks and destination parks were found to be well maintained, with active Friends and user groups, were directed by management plans and some of these held the Green Flag award.

A table showing the quality assessment of green spaces is shown in Appendix B.

Outdoor playing pitch provision across the Borough has been assessed for quantity, quality and distribution as part of a separate exercise to inform the Playing Pitch Strategy.

Arising from this, it is evident that there is an over provision of adult football pitches in terms of quantity, but a shortage of junior facilities. Generally, Council facilities are of relatively poor quality and maintenance has been assessed as being below par. Poor drainage is also a limiting factor.

With regard to cricket, there is a decline in participation and there has been a corresponding loss of facilities. Quality of the remaining facilities is an issue rather than quantity.

Tennis has the potential for expansion in terms of casual use and the most cost-effective way to achieve this would be to find a way of making school facilities more accessible rather than investing in additional facilities on parks.

There is a more than adequate provision of outdoor bowls greens across the Borough. There may be scope to encourage club mergers and greater involvement in facility management to ensure their viability.

Action plan continued

Recent investment in refurbishing the sand-filled artificial turf pitch (ATP) at St Mary's School should satisfy the needs of hockey clubs over the life of this Strategy. An additional rubber crumb ATP is thought to be required to meet the needs of local football clubs.

Quantity

Parks and open space provision has been audited to establish the current quantity and the results are shown in the table below.

Area of freely accessible parks and open spaces

Category	Hectares	Hectares per 1000 population
Parks	222.58	2.16
Amenity/local space	77.93	0.75
Semi-natural	149.65	1.45
Outdoor sports	53.85	0.52
Closed churchyards	5.74	0.05
Totals	509.7	4.95

Note: Childrens' play areas are not included specifically in the above because most either are counted as part of the parks measure or excluded due to being less than the 0.3 h/a threshold for individual sites

A plan of primary land use categories and accompanying schedule of unique sites by ward can be found at Appendices C1 and C2.

When considering this generally, the Borough has a more than adequate provision of publicly accessible parks and open spaces in relation to the size of its population. However, provision is unevenly distributed with some wards containing well above average and others falling significantly short.

The most notable additions since the last review are the increase in semi natural space due to the creation of the 40 ha Norbriggs Flash LNR , various adoptions through new housing development, the transfer of Whitebank sports ground and areas previously excluded such as Chesterfield Canal, Gorse Knowe and Cobnar wood.

Overall, this has resulted in an increase of 90 hectares of accessible green space which equates to 21 per cent extra since last measured in 2002. However, this is not necessarily in areas that were deficient in open space. Given the situation with decreasing revenue funding any future adoption of open space must be carefully considered by way of a balanced assessment of need.

Action plan continued

A significant proportion of the measure for parks can be classed as semi-natural using the secondary typology. A further 92.53 hectares could therefore be added, making a total of 218.92 hectares of semi-natural green space for the purpose of establishing how much of this land is within reach of the population.

It is estimated that at least half of the land classified as amenity or local open space is available for informal play use, and this equates to 40 hectares.

The outdoor sports figure doesn't include provision that lies within parks where many of the pitches have a dual use for recreation and sport. It should also be noted that some private/education provision could qualify towards fulfilling requirements for pitch/court space.

Accessibility

Total provision has been broken down to show how green space is distributed within wards to demonstrate accessibility.

Ward	Population (2012)	Hectares	Ha per 1000
Barrow Hill and New Whittington	5,903	21.36	3.62
Lowgates and Woodthorpe	4,637	61.36	13.23
Brimington North	4,149	26.97	6.5
Middlecroft and Poolsbrook	4,892	83.49	17.06
Brimington South	6,042	24.21	4
Moor	4,359	7.65	1.75
Brockwell	6,206	6.1	0.98
Old Whittington	4,181	28.85	6.9
Dunston	6,303	12.68	2.01
Rother	6,410	22.85	3.56

Action plan continued

Ward	Population (2012)	Hectares	Ha per 1000
Hasland	6,615	18.95	2.86
Loundsley Green	3,915	12.67	3.24
St Helen's	4,563	11.85	2.6
Hollingwood and Inkersall	7,693	48.99	6.37
St Leonard's	7,654	32.17	4.2
Holmebrook	4,377	1.57	0.35
Walton	5,668	22.82	4.02
Linacre	4,077	58.52	14.35
West	6,144	6.69	1.08
	Total 103,788	Total 509.7	Average 4.95

NB. Figures are rounded and ward totals differ due to some open space being cross boundary.

The table shows that the distribution of open space across the Borough is uneven.

It is also acknowledged that in some cases access is restricted by physical barriers such as busy roads and rivers.

Cross-boundary provision

Linacre Reservoirs – close to the west of Chesterfield in the district of North East Derbyshire (NED) – is a popular venue with Chesterfield residents as a site for recreation. Similarly Grassmoor Country Park, also in NED, serves some of our residents in the south-east of the Borough.

There are other sites close to the Borough boundaries that also impact positively upon community access to open space.

Community Engagement

We currently engage our communities in the following ways:

- Via friends groups, where we now have more than 20 groups with varying levels of involvement
- Via community projects such as planting, spring cleaning and habitat improvements
- Through our Chesterfield in Bloom Campaign, with initiatives such as community projects, a gardening and painting competition and events
- Consultation through surveys and project specific activities
- Through events in our parks ranging from the large scale annual fireworks to more localised ones
- We encourage activity in our open space network by promoting what is offered on our website, through leaflets and other material

Research has clearly shown that the benefits of open space may be maximised through effective community engagement, even when quality or quantity limitations are a restrictive factor.

This strategy seeks to develop community engagement further to maximise the use and benefits our network and facilities offer.

Sustainable Landscapes

For a relatively urban borough, an extensive area of semi-natural green space can be found throughout Chesterfield's country parks, nature reserves and woodland.

Some 44.53 hectares of species rich grassland, 5.97 hectare of wetland and 11.58 hectares of scrub are being managed or restored under a Natural England higher-level Environmental Stewardship grant scheme.

Chesterfield Borough Council owns and manages a 300-acre mixed woodland estate consisting of ancient semi-natural woodland, broad leaf and conifer plantations.

Thinning of developing plantations is beginning to yield marketable timber, whilst operations on some sites are funded through Forestry Commission woodland grants.

Three Local Nature Reserves are located within the Borough, two of which are owned and managed by Chesterfield Borough Council and one by Derbyshire County Council.

Action plan continued

Semi-natural green spaces within the Borough feature nationally-scarce habitats and are home to a variety of rare plant and animal species.

The maintenance regimes of formal parks and amenity green space are being reviewed. A reduction in mowing frequencies is being adopted in certain areas to create grass swards of higher wildlife value.

The Chesterfield Canal, along with the Rivers Rother, Doe Lea and Hipper, form important riparian “wildlife corridors” linking the rural and urban areas of the Borough.

Numerous publicly and privately owned lakes and ponds are located on the tributaries of the main rivers including the council-owned Markham, Ringwood and Holmebrook lakes. These water bodies are managed as both fisheries and wildlife reserves.

Partnership Working and Active Chesterfield

We currently work with a variety of partners such as public health and housing to improve opportunities for local people through the active use and development of our parks and open space network.

Active Chesterfield is a recently formed local partnership that aims to encourage more people of all ages and abilities to become more active more often. Parks and open spaces have a key part to play in this as they are free to use and within easy reach of most people. They bring opportunity for a wide range of healthy outdoor activities such as walking, running, cycling, ball games and tai-chi.

Key issues

While Chesterfield Borough Council and public sector partners are facing severe economic challenges, recent surveys show how highly local people and visitors value our green spaces.

As well as the legacy of poor health resulting from the industrial era and work related disabilities, there are more recent impacts on health in the Borough such as obesity, teenage pregnancy, and low levels of physical activity, poor diet and excessive alcohol use. Helping to make the lifestyles of our residents more healthy, particularly through encouraging walking, cycling and active use of green space, is a key issue for the Borough Council.

One of the Borough’s best assets – its rivers and canal – is also part of one of the biggest challenges, flood risk. Not all sources of flooding are fluvial. Run-off from rain water (pluvial flooding) is also an issue and can affect localised areas outside flood zones across the Borough. Our river and canal corridors are a major asset to the Borough, and have multiple benefits including biodiversity, tourism, walking and cycling networks and recreation.

Action plan continued

A government sponsored study, Turning the Tide of Inactivity (a report by UK Active Report, Jan 2014), concluded that there is no significant relationship between the volume of open space in an area and the level of inactivity. It found that the promotion and use of green space rather than the extent of provision are main contributory factors in reducing levels of physical inactivity. It also concluded that areas with the highest levels of physical activity have the lowest premature death rates.

Our analysis of various sources of research and consultation has identified the following key issues:

- Despite significant increases in the volume, there are pockets of inadequate provision of some categories of open space.
- Whilst quality has been improved at many sites, there remains issues with quality that need to be balanced with reducing revenue budgets and the need for limited new provision.
- Particularly given the research that demonstrates activity levels do not necessarily relate to quantity, there is a need to better promote and further engage our communities to maximise benefits.
- Our funding is reducing at the same time as commitments are increasing, external funding is more difficult to obtain and we need to protect, prioritise the use of and where possible increase income.
- We have over provision of some categories of open space in some areas, that utilises valuable resources and in some cases activities are heavily subsidised.
- We are not promoting our open spaces to their maximum potential.
- Biodiversity whilst good is not as good as it could be and there is an under achievement in relation to this being a source of education.
- There are other areas where we could achieve more, subject to resources and priorities.
- We need to better understand the needs of partners to deliver shared objectives.
- Anti-social behaviour is an issue at various sites.
- We are not yet maximising the opportunities to encourage healthy activity in our open space network.
- Some of our sites are less accessible and are not linked to each other or the countryside.

Action plan continued

- Community engagement whilst good can be improved to maximise its benefits.
- We do not currently realise the full benefits that green spaces can contribute to the regeneration agenda.

WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE

Scope and Purpose of Strategy

The purpose of this strategy is:

To direct and prioritise resources to gain maximum benefits for all of our communities through the provision of quality, accessible green space.

Scope

This strategy is primarily concerned with the management and development of publicly accessible green space within the Borough of Chesterfield that has recreational value. It, therefore, includes:

- Parks and public gardens
- Natural or semi-natural green space
- Amenity green space
- Provision for children and young people
- Outdoor sports facilities
- Green corridors including the canal
- Closed churchyards

The following categories do not fall within the scope of this strategy:

- Rights of way across private land
- Street trees
- Allotments, community gardens and smallholdings
- School grounds
- Council grazing land
- Farmland

Action plan continued

- Highway verges, traffic islands
- Operational cemeteries
- Woodlands and wildlife sites in private ownership
- Civic spaces
- Green space of less than 0.3ha in extent

To set the Strategy in context this is the Vision for the next decade.

Chesterfield's Vision for Parks and Open Spaces 2015–2024

To ensure that Chesterfield has an accessible network of high quality parks and open spaces which puts good health and an excellent quality of life within reach of everyone who lives in and visits Chesterfield.

Strategic Objectives

To achieve this vision for Chesterfield's parks and open spaces we will:

- **Prioritise investment in Parks and Open Spaces**
- **Use resources effectively and sustainably**
- **Increase the use of Parks and Open Spaces**
- **Effectively engage with our communities and partners**

Green Space Categories

In order to determine our priorities and direct resources we have identified the following primary categories for our public open space network within the Borough.

Parks and public gardens

Includes formal urban parks, country parks (as a whole), suburban parks, recreation grounds and memorial gardens

Semi natural green spaces

Woodland, nature reserves, species – rich grassland, scrub, wetland, informal canal/river environments, semi-natural components of country parks

Action plan continued

Amenity green space

Areas of designed open green space within housing estates or other urban and suburban environments under a maintenance regime, but without any obvious formal recreational use

Closed churchyards

Complete churchyards or sections where burials have ceased and the management of grounds has passed to a local authority

Outdoor sports facilities

Sites where the principal activity is formal sport. For example, football pitches and cricket pitches.

Provision for play and young people

Play areas within parks and housing estates, multi-use games areas, kick-about areas and skate parks

Green corridors

Linear off-road multi-user routes that link other green spaces and reach out into the wider countryside

Inevitably some sites fall within two or more categories. Where this is the case, the main use of the site should be considered the primary type and other features listed as secondary types.

Local Open Space Standards

Categorisation

For the purpose of defining local open space standards, these have been split into five separate categories.

Destination parks

Destination parks are defined as those parks which attract large numbers of visitors from within and outside the Borough. They are of substantial size and/or historic importance and provide a wide range of attractions and facilities. Destination parks will also act as community parks for people living nearby.

The following three parks are considered as Destination parks

Holmebrook Valley Park Pools Brook Country Park Queen's Park and Annexe

Action plan continued

A plan showing the location of destination parks with their 3.2km catchments can be found at Appendix D.

Community parks

Community parks are defined as those parks which serve more of a local need but which are of sufficient size to accommodate a reasonable range of attractions and facilities.

The following 18 sites are considered as Community parks or have the potential to be Community parks.

Brearley Park	Eastwood Park
Hady Playing Field	Highfield Park
Loundsley Green	Rother Rec
Stand Rd Park	Tapton Park
Wasps Nest (aka The Inkerman)	Ringwood Park
Whitecotes Playing Field	Badger Recreation Ground
Eastwood Rec (aka Thistle Park)	Inkersall Green Playing Field
King George V Playing Field	Langer Lane Recreation Ground
Manor Road Recreation Ground	
Station Road Recreation Ground (a.k.a. Barrow Hill)	

A plan showing the location and distribution of Community parks with their catchments areas of 480m (10-minute walk) is shown in Appendix E.

Children's play space

This includes spaces equipped with formal play equipment, multi-use games courts and also grassed or natural play areas which are used by children for informal play.

A plan showing the location of local equipped areas for play and multi-use games courts plus their 480 metre catchments is shown at Appendix F.

Natural/Semi-natural green space

These are defined as sites that are primarily 'natural' in appearance, of significant size, listed in the DWT register of sites of importance for nature conservation and managed for wildlife but accessible for informal recreation.

Westwood

Phipps Open Holes

Action plan continued

Cobnar Wood

Troughbrook Wood

Brearley Wetland LNR

Wheeldon Mill Plantation

Norbriggs Flash LNR

Blue Bank Pool LNR

McGregors Pond

There are also significant tracts of semi-natural green space within the following parks and open spaces.

Chesterfield Canal

Holmebrook Valley Park

Pools Brook Country Park

Ringwood Park

Rother Wetland

Somersall Park

Tapton Park

The most notable semi-natural sites lying close to the Borough in neighbouring authorities are listed below:

Grassmoor Country Park

Linacre Reservoirs

A plan showing all areas of natural/semi-natural green space and their catchments is attached at Appendix G.

Amenity or Local Open Space

This can be defined as all other open space within the Borough which has recreational value to the communities they serve. A significant proportion of this is used by children and young people for informal play and recreation.

Standards

The revised standards for parks and open spaces are summarised in the table below.

<u>Parks and Open Space Standards</u>			
<u>Category</u>	<u>Quantity standard</u>	<u>Accessibility standard</u>	<u>Quality standard</u>
Parks	0.5h/a of park space per 1,000 population	Destination parks 3.2km	Meets local standard based on Green Flag
		Community parks 480m	
Children's play	0.8 h/a of informal	Local equipped	Locally applied

Action plan continued

	and formal play space per 1,000 population	facilities –480m	standard based on safety and play value
Outdoor sports	1.6 h/a of informal and formal sports space per 1000 population	Standard set within the playing pitch strategy	Safe and fit for purpose in accordance with sport governing body requirements
Natural green space	1.0 h/a per 1,000 population	Maximum of 720m from a site	Derbyshire Local Wildlife Site or potential site
Amenity or local open space	No quantity standard	No standard	Safe and fit for purpose

*Every 240m represents an average 5-minute walk.

Overall, a total of 3.9 hectares of parks and open space per 1000 population, incorporating a range of provision should be adopted as a Borough standard.

Parks

Destination Parks have the largest catchments areas of all our open spaces. As their name suggests, they attract visitors from further afield and are visited by people from outside the area as well as locals. A distance of 3.2 kilometres from homes is considered appropriate as indicative catchments around each one and this represents a 6 minute car journey.

Community Parks generally have more local catchments although some contain unique facilities (e.g. the BMX track at Ringwood) which attract users from a wider area. A distance of 480 metres is considered appropriate as an indicative catchment around each park which represents an average 10 minute walk.

The quantity standard of 0.5 h/a of park provision per 1000 population is derived from the original strategy and is felt to be a reasonable measure to adopt in a largely urban Borough.

Children's play

Although there is no nationally accepted standard for quantity of play space provision, we have given due regard to the Fields in Trust standard in applying 0.8ha of play space per 1,000 population. The accessibility standard of an equipped play space (minimum LEAP or equivalent) within 480 metres of all homes is proposed as a local standard.

Action plan continued

Outdoor Sport

1.6 hectares of formal and informal outdoor sports provision per 1000 population is based on the Fields in Trust 6 acre standard. Much of this lies within parks and recreation grounds and has a dual purpose.

Natural/semi-natural green spaces

These serve people living up to 720 metres away and in some cases can have wider catchments. They are listed on Derbyshire Wildlife Trusts register as being of local importance for wildlife, or are sites that have the potential to be placed on this register. 1.0 h/a of natural green space per 1000 population is considered to be a reasonable local benchmark and is based on the Natural England ANGSt standards.

Amenity or local open space

There is no nationally recognised quantity standard for provision of amenity open space. All provision should be maintained appropriately and be safe and fit for purpose.

Applying the Standards/Needs assessment

Green space is distributed unevenly across the Borough. Our two country parks, with a combined area of 133.77 hectares, account for 26 per cent of total provision. The following demonstrates the application of the new standards in relation to needs and adequacy of provision.

Destination parks

Even though the Whittington area falls just outside the catchments of our three destination parks, there are no proposals to create a Destination park in the north of the Borough. This does however highlight the importance of looking to improve the quality of other park provision in that area, such as Brearley Park.

Community parks

In order to fulfil their potential, many of our Community parks are in need of further investment. There are gaps in provision in a number of wards. Unless the opportunity arises through significant new housing development, it is unlikely that any gaps in Community park provision will be satisfied during the life of this strategy. Instead, it is proposed that existing parks on the fringes of these areas and local open spaces within, should where possible be invested in to make them more attractive to wider catchments.

Action plan continued

It is noticeable that in Dunston, Old Whittington, St Helens and Duckmanton there is a combination of generally low quality open space, multiple deprivation, the absence of a community park and a lack of accessible natural green space. A plan illustrating this is attached at Appendix H.

Accessible Natural/semi-natural green space is unevenly distributed across the Borough and there are noticeable gaps. In order to address this, it is proposed that maintenance regimes in parks and open spaces should be adjusted where appropriate to increase biodiversity and improve access to nature. Given the relatively compact nature of the Borough, many of our communities will have some access to the wider countryside and this could be strengthened through developing greenway links in partnership with Derbyshire County Council.

Children's play

When you apply the standards across the Borough, there are clearly areas of deficiency.

Other areas, however, are over-provided for leading to the need to rationalise in order to concentrate resources where they are most effective.

Around 50 per cent of the land classed as amenity/local open space can reasonably be counted as children's play space. This totals 40 hectares which equates to 0.38 hectares per 1,000 population. Children's play space can also be found within parks, but it is difficult to assess the proportion of park land which could be reasonably defined as children's play space, however whilst average provision could be assumed to be in the region of the 0.8-hectare threshold, the distribution of formal and informal play space is uneven, with some areas clearly lacking and others over provided for, particularly in terms of formal equipped areas.

This further underlines that provision of equipped play spaces needs to be rationalised in order to more evenly distribute provision. The purpose and play value of local areas for play (LAPs) also needs to be critically examined.

Outdoor Sport

On the face of it, the average provision of 0.5 hectares per 1000 population appears to fall well short of the 1.6 hectare threshold in the proposed quantity standards. In reality a high proportion of the land which has a primary designation as Parks is also set out and used for sport. Although distribution across the Borough may be uneven, the Playing Pitch Strategy has concluded that there is an adequate supply of land for outdoor sports and the most critical issue is the generally poor quality of pitches and lack of suitable ancillary facilities.

General

Areas of the Borough have been identified as housing growth zones within the Local Plan Core Strategy and these will generate their own needs regarding open space provision. Population growth based on 2011 census population figures has been projected up until 2031. Based on these predictions there will be a need for an additional 25 hectares of new parks and open spaces to cater for the 6,500 increase in population, assuming 3.9 hectares for each 1,000 population.

In addition to site specific provision of green space to support areas of significant housing growth, there will be a need for investment utilising such as the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to rectify identified deficiencies in provision.

Investment Priorities relating to CIL

Given the findings regarding open space deficiencies, together with the potential need for new open spaces in population growth areas to ensure that new deficiencies are not created, the following priorities for the use of CIL are:

1. Provision of new open space in residential developments of a scale that justify this need (where without new open space a new deficiency would be created or an existing deficiency be exacerbated).
2. Provision of new off-site open space where the locality demonstrates both a deficiency in open space combined with multiple deprivations.
3. Where 1 or 2 do not apply, investment be utilised to enable improvements to access and linking open spaces that maximise the benefits of existing provision.
4. Where 1, 2 or 3 do not apply, that investment be utilised to enable quality improvements to existing provision.
5. Where 1 to 4 are not appropriate, that investment be utilised to provide new open space in other areas that are deficient in open space.

It is acknowledged that with most developments, conditions 1 and 2 may not apply and thus the expected results of the above policy will be more improvements to access and quality than the provision of new open space.

Given the financial restrictions that are expected to continue for at least the majority of the timescale of this strategy, where new open space is required within a development we adopt a policy of the developer setting up a management company in order to ensure the future maintenance of new provision and that any open space whilst managed in this manner will be fully accessible to the wider community.

Action plan continued

As a short-term action, a priority investment list will be compiled to direct access and quality investments to the areas of greatest need.

The highest priority wards for targeting of resources, based on indices of multiple deprivation are Middlecroft and Poolsbrook and Rother followed by Hollingwood and Inkersall, Dunston, St Helens and Loundsley Green. Old Whittington also needs to be highlighted here due to falling outside the catchment of our Destination parks and lacking a Community park.

Whilst this is intended to focus limited resources; windfall opportunities to improve provision elsewhere across the Borough will be taken as and when appropriate.

Priorities underpinning Strategic Objectives

Based on consultation with communities, partners and friends groups to identify our key issues, our main priorities are as follows:

Prioritise Investment in Parks and Open Spaces

- **Identify key investment priorities**
- **Improve the quality of parks and open spaces at key sites**
- **Adopt a re-investment mechanism for Capital receipts from recreational land sales and CIL**
- **Implement policies for adoption of new open space arising from residential development**

Use Resources Effectively and Sustainably

- **Rationalise equipped play area provision**
- **Maximise income and external funding opportunities**
- **Explore the potential to dispose of or make alternative use of low-value green space in areas of over-provision.**
- **Review parks management and maintenance regimes to realise efficiencies and improve biodiversity**

Increase the use of Parks and Open Spaces

- **Develop a diverse and attractive programme of events and healthy activities in partnership**
- **Promote open space benefits for health, learning and wildlife**
- **Encourage responsible use of sites and take effective action with partners to combat anti-social behaviour**

Effectively engage with our Communities and Partners

- **Identify and engage with key partners, community and user groups.**
- **Develop volunteering opportunities in parks**
- **Support the promotion and development of a local river and lakes stewardship scheme in partnership.**
- **Support sports clubs and other groups to move to self-management of facilities**

We aim to deliver our short-term priorities within the first two years of this strategy, with medium-term priorities delivered within years three to five, and longer-term priorities to be delivered within the timeframe of the strategy.

Monitoring and review mechanisms

Key to the success of our strategy will be the effective monitoring and review of both the specific action plan and how it is achieving our objectives and overall vision.

This will be completed with an annual review that will determine if the action plan is continuing to meet our objectives and, if required revise this to reflect changes that have occurred.

A review of the strategy will be undertaken in five years. An action plan can be found overleaf.

Action Plan

Objective 1: Prioritise Investment in Parks and Open Spaces

Strategic Recommendations	Actions	Outcomes /Outputs	Time-scale	Lead/Support
Identify and agree key investment priorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment priorities identified and prioritised according to community needs and known deficiencies. • Consult at local level to develop details of priority schemes (capital and revenue) 	Priorities agreed	S Yr 1, Q2 S M L	AP/MH +GS team
Improve the quality of Parks and Open Spaces at key sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt and deliver a prioritised rolling programme of site improvements • Retain existing Green Flag standards and extend these to prioritised parks 	Programme adopted First key development project commenced on site 5 green flag awards	S M L Yr1, Q3 Yr2, Q2 S M L Yr1, Q2	AP/GS team
Adopt a re-investment mechanism for Capital receipts from recreational land sales and CIL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree and apply a reinvestment mechanism 	Mechanism adopted	S Yr1, Q1	AP
Implement policies for adoption of new open space arising from residential development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priorities delivered in accordance with policy 		M	

Action plan continued

Objective 2: Use Resources Effectively and Sustainably

Strategic Recommendations	Actions	Outcomes /Outputs	Time - scale	Lead/ Support
Rationalise equipped play area provision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise the Play Strategy • Identify over-provision and remove surplus facilities • Develop quality, accessible facilities at hub sites 	Adopt revised strategy Removal plan commenced Play areas improved	S Yr1,Q4 S Yr2,Q1 M L	AP/JR, JB
Maximise income and external funding opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt a more commercial approach to marketing and business planning as appropriate • Seek to maximise external funding through grants, sponsorship and partnerships 	Business plan adopted Roundabout sponsorship contract Walking/Cycling for health partnership project commenced	S Yr1,Q1 S M L Yr1, Q1 Yr2, Q2	MH/AP
Explore the potential to dispose of or make alternative use of low-value green space in areas of over-provision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify surplus green spaces for potential change of use or disposal • Generate capital receipts to reinvest in parks and open spaces 	Agree list Approval to commence marketing	S Yr1,Q1 Yr1, Q3 M L	AP/WT
Review parks management and maintenance regimes to realise efficiencies and improve biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re- organise the green space team, including rangers, to align with revised priorities • Produce and refine site management plans for main parks • Introduce a programme of sustainable changes to maintenance regimes 	Complete review and adopt new roles Revised management plans for Green Flag parks	S Yr1, Q4 S M L Yr1, Q4 S M L	MH/AP

Objective 3: Increase the Use of Parks and Open Spaces

Strategic Recommendations	Actions	Outcomes /Outputs	Time-scale	Lead/Support
Develop a diverse and attractive programme of events and activities in partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research, design and develop an innovative, community focussed, events and activities programme • Actively engage with community groups and partners to deliver the programme. • Produce and deliver targeted health improvement projects to complement the activity programme 		S M M L	
Promote open space benefits for health, learning and wildlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop key messages through interpretation and promotional materials. • Improve our website • Seek to engage with schools and college. • Promote green space health benefits via GP's and other referral agencies 		M S M M	
Encourage responsible use of sites and take effective action with partners to combat anti-social behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce public space protection orders for parks where significant issues are identified. • Develop a Park Watch scheme • Apply Safe by Design principles to new or refurbishment projects 		M L S S M L	

Action plan continued

Objective 4: Effectively engage with our Communities and Partners

Strategic Recommendations	Actions	Outcomes /Outputs	Time-scale	Lead/Support
Identify and engage with key partners, community and user groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold engagement workshops and action planning sessions with key groups Identify and act on shared objectives 		S S M L	
Develop volunteering opportunities in parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt a volunteer campaign plan Launch and implement the plan. 		M	
Support the promotion and development of a local river and lakes stewardship scheme in partnership.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt a shared scheme which involves community groups in improving the quality of watercourses 		M L	
Support sports clubs to move to self-management of facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with Sports clubs to transfer management of facilities where appropriate 	Engage with clubs Agreement reached with 2 clubs Agreement reached with remaining clubs	S M Yr1 Q1 Yr1 Q2 Yr2 Q1	MH/AP

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- Cheshire East Green Space Strategy 2013
- Oxford City Council Green Spaces Strategy 2013 – 24
- University of Exeter Research Paper– *Lasting benefits of Green Space on mental health 2014*
- Southwark open space strategy 2013

List of Appendices

- A: Multiple deprivation 2010 by lower super output area**

- B: Quality assessment against basic Green Flag criteria**

- C1: Plan of primary land use categories**
- C2: Schedule of unique sites by ward**

- D: Destination parks - catchment areas**

- E: Community parks - catchment areas**

- F: Children's formal play space - catchment areas**

- G: Semi-natural green space - catchment areas**

- H: Map of combined multiple deprivations, low quality and deficiency of open space**