



HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL



OPEN SPACES STRATEGY

**MAY
2011**

**Our vision is to
provide quality
open space that the
community wants
and is valued and
enjoyed by
everyone**

INTRODUCTION

This Open Space Strategy for the District of Harborough has been prepared following the completion the PPG 17 audit of open space provision across the District.

Consultation was undertaken during 2009 and 2010 on the draft strategy with elected members, Parish Councils, officers and other stake holders being given the opportunity to comment on the draft strategy. Comments received have been incorporated into the final draft.

The strategy is planned to be a working document and will be updated periodically to reflect the changing needs of the community, and differing pressure and priorities for open space including climate change and sustainability. The strategy is designed to guide management of open space in Harborough District until 2015

Harborough District Council aims to use the information captured in the PPG 17 audit to secure open space for the future and improve the quality of existing open spaces, ensuring they are well-used and sustainable amenities that are valued by residents and visitors alike.

This document is designed to be clear and concise and aims to set out:

A vision for open space in the future

The current picture – open space audit results

Policies and Proposals for management and development of open spaces

The action plan for achieving the vision and proposals

PPG 17 divides open space into 9 typologies which are indicated opposite This open spaces strategy aims to deal with the typologies in the same way, which will fit neatly with the document Provision for Open Space Sport and Recreation which is contained at **appendix 4**

HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL



Open Space Type
Parks and Gardens
Natural and Semi-natural areas
Green Corridors
Amenity Greenspace
Provision for Children and Young People
Outdoor Sports Facilities
Allotments and Community Gardens
Cemeteries and Churchyards
Civic Spaces

Harborough District Council has sought to produce its open spaces strategy in line with the good practice guide from CABI space and will look to use the strategy to assist the Council in addressing key issues relating to open space.

“A green space strategy sets out an authority’s vision for using its green space and the goals it wants to achieve, plus the resources, methods and time needed to meet these goals”

Green Space Strategies: A good practice guide (CABI Space, 2004)



OPEN SPACE IN HAR- BOROUGH DISTRICT

Background

Harborough District enjoys a central location within the country, covering some 250 square miles to the south and east of Leicestershire. It is a largely rural district with the towns of Market Harborough and Lutterworth providing the main shopping and business services. The larger villages include Broughton Astley, Great Glen, Fleckney, Kibworth and Thurnby and there are about 80 smaller villages. A plan of the district is shown at **appendix 1**.

Open space in towns and villag-

es is essential to health and well-being. Well-used and maintained spaces make a considerable contribution to the quality of life of residents and visitors and to sustainable communities. An Open Space Strategy offers an opportunity to plan for and manage open spaces strategically in order to fully realise their economic, social and environmental benefits and maximise the value of capital investment and revenue expenditure.

The Open Space Strategy will be one of a number of plans reflecting Harborough District Councils contribution to the Leicestershire Performance Framework (LPF) and also form part of the Local Development Framework. The Strategy will inform planning policy and enable the Council to make a ro-

bust defence of those open spaces that it wants to protect. It will also reflect the requirements of the LPF for open spaces, and highlight ways in which open spaces can help deliver this framework. The Strategy has been developed from work commissioned from PMP in 2004 to provide baseline information on the condition of the District's open spaces and provide the authority with standards it should be striving to achieve. The PPG 17 report has been used in preparation of this strategy and in addition guidance from ODPM and CABE space guidance outlined in *Green Space Strategies: A Good Practice Guide*.



The Benefits of Open Space.

Open space is an essential part of successful neighbourhoods and provides a wide range of social, economic and environmental benefits to local communities. There is huge national demand for better quality open spaces. Feedback from residents and visitors shows how much the public values them, while it has been widely shown how closely the quality of public spaces links to levels of health, crime and the quality of life in every neighbourhood.

The main reasons for developing an Open Space Strategy are:

- To improve the management and maximise the benefits of open spaces
- To take account of climate change and ensure public open space can meet environmental challenges in the future.
- To protect and enhance levels of biodiversity and ecological habitats
- To help create sustainable communities
- To co-ordinate action and develop partnership working
- To support national, regional and local policy objectives
- To contribute to wider Council objectives including health, biodiversity and education improvements
- To access more funding opportunities

ties

To promote open space investment as a priority policy

Harborough District Council open space include parks and public gardens, formal recreation facilities; children's play areas, teenage shelters and games areas, civic spaces, natural and semi-natural urban green spaces, amenity grassland, allotments, open space corridors, cemeteries and closed churchyards. Well-designed open space provides space for recreational activities improving physical health and fitness and mental health and well-being. Open spaces like allotments are also productive, yielding fresh fruit and vegetables that are essential to a healthy diet and also encourage sustainability.



Open space affords opportunities for social interaction between people of different communities, ages and backgrounds, fostering social inclusion and community development. It can often become a focus for community activity and involvement thereby helping to develop citizenship and local pride, and reducing anti-social behaviour and crime.

Open spaces provide opportunities for people to become involved in creative and cultural activities by supplying a venue for cultural events and festivals or public art installations. Open spaces can also contribute to heritage and culture by providing locations of collective



memory. For example, cemeteries can operate as a record of our communities containing important historical and cultural features that help identify our heritage.

Good quality open space contributes significantly to our urban regeneration and neighbourhood renewal projects by improving the image of the District and attracting investment. It improves investor and resident perception of the District by raising confidence in the area. Quality open space is known to have a significant positive impact on house prices, supporting the creation of stable housing markets.



Open space corridors provide visual interest along main roads and can improve drivers' perceptions of the District, encouraging tourism in the future. Open space helps create an attractive environment in which to live, work, visit and invest, thereby assisting economic growth in the District. A high quality public environment makes a positive contribution to the landscape and townscape.

Attractive parks, squares, gardens and other public spaces create a pleasant and varied townscape improving the setting of the built environment. In town centres, an attractive and well-maintained environment supports a healthy economy as it attracts new businesses and workers and increases the num-



ber of people visiting retail areas.

Open space provides a wealth of opportunities for outdoor play, which is known to have developmental and therapeutic benefits for children and young people. It is important for building social, emotional and life skills and can provide a means for children to learn about risk and develop confidence and independence. Open space helps children and young people to stay healthy and tackles problems of obesity by providing opportunities for exercising and fresh air. It can also provide essential diversionary activities for young people, helping to reduce juvenile nuisance. Spaces that are designed with young people's involvement also offer

a safe place for young people to meet, play and hang out.

Well-designed open space contributes towards ecological diversity, supports environmental sustainability and helps to counter pollution. Within urban open space, varied habitats help to relieve the monotony of the urban landscape with changes in colours and sounds and help to bring the countryside into our towns. As well as providing important visual amenity benefits in built up areas urban open space gives people the chance to experience nature and wildlife close to where they live.

Open space can function as an 'outdoor classroom' offering formal and informal learning opportunities for schools and com-

munities thereby contributing to lifelong learning and helping to improve educational attainment.

This strategy will provide a working document for users and managers to direct the protection, maintenance and development of open spaces and ensure that they continue to provide as many benefits as possible to residents and visitors to the District of Harborough. In conjunction with the Policies and Proposals document for open space, it will provide clear guidance for the public and officers about what they should expect from their open spaces in the future.

This document sets out mecha-



nisms and an action plan for addressing the main issues identified in the Open Space Audit Report in order to promote open spaces in the District and help them achieve their potential. It will provide a framework for achieving these objectives over a ten-year period. The recommendations contained within the Strategy are based on the findings of the Open Space Audit and consultation, and national, regional and local policy review. **Appendix 2** outlines the National and Regional policies which have influenced this strategy.

The Open Space Strategy will



exist alongside the Play Strategy for Harborough District, the Provision for Open Space, Sport & Recreation Plan, Wel-land Park Management Plan, Community Facilities Policy, Local Development Framework, Local Area Agreement and Leicestershire Performance Framework, Community Safety Plan, HDSA Action Plan, which together will produce an overall strategy and vision for the improvement of all areas of open space throughout the District. The Open Space Strategy is informed by the results of the PPG17 Open Space Audit as outlined in the Open Space Audit Report.

The Open Space Strategy will



incorporate and develop the results and recommendations from these other strategies in order to produce an action plan setting out an agreed activity programme with clear lines of responsibility, timescales, delivery agents and potential funding sources. This action plan can be the basis of an investment strategy for open space for the next ten years.

The Proposed Vision for Open Spaces Harborough District

Our vision is to provide quality open space that is what the community wants and is valued and enjoyed by everyone



THE CURRENT PICTURE - OPEN SPACE AUDIT RE- SULTS

What is the aim of the PPG17 open space, sport and recreation study?

The study aimed to provide a clear picture of existing and future needs for open space, sport and recreation in Harborough and the current ability to meet those needs in terms of quality, quantity and accessibility.

The study set local standards based on assessments of local needs, demographics and audits of existing open spaces. It is the basis for addressing quantitative and qualitative deficiencies through the planning process and

should form the basis of the development of an open space strategy for Harborough DC.

Scope of the open space and sport and recreation study

The study included all open space and recreation types identified within the Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (Planning for Open Space Sport and Recreation, July 2002) and its Companion Guide (September 2002). These included parks and gardens, natural and semi-natural areas, green corridors, amenity greenspace, provision for children and young people, outdoor sports facilities, allotments, cemeteries and churchyards and civic spaces. The study also considered the provision of sport

and indoor recreation facilities.

What is the need for the study of open space, sport and recreation?

A local assessment of open space and open space needs enables the Council to:

plan positively, creatively and effectively in identifying priority areas for improvement and to target appropriate types of open space required

ensure an adequate provision of high quality, accessible open space to meet the needs of community

ensure any accessible funding is invested in the right places where there is the most need



conduct S106 negotiations with developers from a position of knowledge with evidence to support.

Where no assessment exists, developers can undertake their own independent assessment to demonstrate that open space is surplus to requirements. It is therefore desirable for the Council to have robust data to protect and develop open space within the District.

Methodology of the assessment

The methodology and development of the study was undertaken in accordance with the guidance provided in Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (Planning for Open Space Sport and Recrea-



tion, July 2002) and its Companion Guide (September 2002).

The PPG 17 Companion Guide sets out a 5 step logical process for undertaking a local assessment of open space and recreation. This process was used in developing this study using the Consultants appropriate mechanisms that met the requirements of the council to plan, monitor and set targets for the existing and future provision of open space within the District.

The 5-step process is as follows:

- Step 1 – Identifying Local Needs
- Step 2 – Auditing Local Provision
- Step 3 – Setting Provision Standards
- Step 4 – Applying Provision Standards



Step 5 – Drafting Implementation and Action Plan.

Research, consultations, a detailed and comprehensive audit and analysis including quantity, quality, accessibility, usage and value culminated in the production of the study, report and recommendations.



Provision Standards

The local provision standards justified through the analysis are detailed below. The methodology for setting these standards has been followed in accordance with PPG17 and using both qualitative and quantitative information sources both from the audit and consultation. Standards have been developed in terms of both accessibility and quantity open space to meet the needs of community

Open Space Type	Suggested Quantity Provision Standard
Parks and Gardens	0.5 ha per 1000 population
Natural and Semi-natural areas	8.5 ha per 1,000 population (rural area) 1.5 ha per 1,000 population (urban area)
Green Corridors	PPG17 suggests quantity standard not required due to the nature of the typology. It states that “ <i>there is no sensible way of stating a provision standard</i> ”
Amenity Greenspace	0.9 ha per 1000 population
Provision for Children and Young People	0.3 ha per 1000 population
Outdoor Sports Facilities	1.8 (from provision for open space sport and recreation plan)
Allotments and Community Gardens	0.35 ha per 1000 population
Cemeteries and Churchyards	0.4 (from provision for open space sport and recreation plan)
Civic Spaces	No standard set. Usually provided on an opportunity basis rather than demand led.



In addition, the overall supply and demand of indoor sports and recreation provision, consisting of sports halls, swimming pools, health and fitness facilities and village halls have been assessed during 2010. This assessment concluded that:

Member agreement and a delivery plan for the study is finalised to achieve agreement between stakeholders on the proposed infrastructure requirements

Careful timing is required for rural centres to produce development or renovation costs during the pre-application stages to prevent public concerns or expectations being raised

Broughton Astley, Lutterworth, Leicester Urban Fringe and Market Harborough indoor facilities requirement from housing growth should be pro-

vided by extending or building new facilities. This is likely to be a Council led initiative. Further work is required to assess the various delivery options

Management of the new facilities needs to be carefully considered, either using social enterprise or working with partners such as SERCO through the Harborough Leisure Trust.

The charging mechanism for facility provision will need to be considered with S106 potentially being phased out in 2014.

Viability of developments must be considered when working with developers to deliver community facilities.

Where are we now? - Audit and Analysis

Prior to undertaking the study there was a general viewpoint that there is a relatively good quality of open space and recreation facilities within the District, however there is potential to develop additional open space through S106 agreements. The detailed and comprehensive audit and analysis undertaken reaffirmed the above viewpoint.

Quantity

When applying the quantity provision standards the following key points were extracted:

Parks & Gardens : there is a deficiency of parks and gardens within all areas of the District, the largest of which is in Kib-



worth, Fleckney and Great Glen. There are only a small number of parks and gardens within the District

Natural and Semi-Natural: as a result of the predominantly rural nature of natural and semi natural open space, and the vastly different levels of provision between the more urban areas of the District (Market Harborough and Lubenham, and Lutterworth and Broughton Astley) two standards were set. Overall, there is considered to be an oversupply of natural and semi natural open spaces, and only Market Harborough and Lubenham is perceived to have shortfalls in natural and semi natural provision

Amenity Greenspace: only the Market Harborough and Lubenham areas have a surplus of amenity greenspace, all other areas are currently considered to have a shortfall of provision

Provision for Children and Young People: there is a total deficiency of provision across the District equating to over 10 hectares of provision, and there is a deficiency in each of the analysis areas, the largest of which is in Market Harborough and Lubenham.

Allotments: there is an overall deficiency of allotments within the District, however there is a small oversupply of provision within the Peatling and Bosworth analysis area

Quality

There are many high quality open spaces provided within the District of Harborough with the majority of sites rated as average or above and more sites than any other rated as 'good' or 'very good'. Very few sites were considered to be poor or very poor.

The quality of cemeteries and churchyards, outdoor sports facilities and parks and gardens was considered to be particularly good. There was less overall satisfaction however with the quality of indoor sports provision.

The Council may expect a developer contribution to enhance the quality of existing open space in the area of development if there is sufficient provision of open space. It is the aspiration of the Council that all open space will



reach a quality rating of 'good'. The field assessment for determining quality of open space can be found at appendix 5.

Firstly, the Council will identify all areas of open space within the relevant distance thresholds of the new housing development that do not meet the 'quality standard'. The Council has set a 'quality standard' for each of the seven types of open space. The quality of all publicly accessible open space in the District will be assessed against the standard using the 'Green Flag' criteria and each area of open space will be given a 'quality score'. The Council's intention is that all of the District's public open spaces should eventually achieve the 'Good' quality standard. A developer contribution to enhance ex-



isting open space will be required when there is an area of open space within the relevant distance of the proposed development that does not meet this quality standard.

There may be more than one area of open space within the relevant distance threshold that does not meet the quality standard. In such cases, the developer contribution will automatically be allocated to enhance the quality of the open space that is closest to the development site.

The main quality issues within the District were perceived to be:

dog fouling
parking
toilets



In addition to making general comments and providing information, Parish clerks were asked to provide examples of good and bad practice. Using these examples, and the reasons highlighted for decisions made, the following quality vision was developed:

"a clean, litter and dog fouling free area that is well-lit and provides a level of varied vegetation and biodiversity, including well-kept grass and other natural features where suitable. The site should be regularly maintained and have suitable parking in close proximity where appropriate."

Accessibility



Open Space Type	Suggested Accessibility Provision Standard	
	Time	Distance
Parks and Gardens	10 mins (drive)	4km
Natural and Semi-natural areas	20 mins (walk)	1.6km
Green Corridors	20 mins (walk)	1.6km
Amenity Greenspace	10 mins (walk)	800m
Provision for Children and Young People	5-10 mins (walk)	400m – 800m
Outdoor Sports Facilities	10 mins (drive)	4km
Allotments and Community Gardens	10 mins (drive)	4km
Cemeteries and Churchyards	5 mins drive	2km
Civic Spaces	no standard set due to nature of typology	

Most open spaces within the District are accessible to the public, with the majority of sites considered to be good or very good in terms of accessibility. The main area of concern appears to be public transport links, which are felt to inhibit the usage of some sites.

The study allowed the development of accessibility standards. These are illustrated in table below.

Value & Site Specific Priorities



Most sites that have a high level of use would normally have a good or very good quality and accessibility rating. Most sites with a low level of use would have an average or poor quality and accessibility rating. This is because the factors are related and inter-linked. However there are deviations to this, which suggests that there are specific priority sites that would need some further analysis and investigation.

Given that such large numbers of sites have been audited within the District there are very few sites where it is questionable whether the primary purpose is the most beneficial, with the main issues being of quality or accessibility of the existing site.

Each type of open space has been assessed separately and

specific sites detailed within the appropriate sections. There are many sites of high quality and high accessibility that are very well-used within the district and these should be a high priority to protect. A summary of these results and the full PPG17 report can be found at [Appendix 6](#)

Planning Guidance

Through the analysis of existing open space guidance and the Provision of Open Space Sport and Recreation Plan, it can be concluded that:

all new housing developments over 5 units net should contribute towards open space provision; (dwelling developments with a single net in-

crease in units should contribute towards cemetery provision)

local standards should be set for different open space typologies

consideration should be given to the application of different local standards for urban and rural locations and between areas of over provision and under provision

consideration should be given to providing formulas and worked examples within the LDF and Core Strategy to show the scale of off-site financial contributions; (see Provision for Open Space, Sport & Recreation Plan shown at **appendix 4**)

if financial contributions are insuf-



ficient to provide new recreation space beyond the ability of individual developments, special area based open space funds should be considered to contribute towards District wide projects. This will be particularly relevant for cemeteries provision. A list of projects and estimated costs should be contained within the LDF and Core Strategy, which can be regularly updated, should be considered.

It is clear that Harborough has predominantly good quality and accessible open spaces. However there are some areas that have quantitative deficiencies as well as lying outside the recommended catchment areas although these tend to be pre-dominantly rural areas. Details of shortfalls by type of open space and area are detailed within sections 5-13 of the main report.

Very few areas have a surplus of provision particularly when undertaking a local area needs analysis not taking into account the larger District-wide provision.

THE WAY FORWARD - ACHIEVING THE VISION

"Once adopted, the strategy should become the reference point for all the Council's decisions in relation to the design, development, management and funding of open spaces. The strategy should also be considered as part of wider strategic planning, development and service delivery activities. Policies relating to development planning should be incorporated into statutory development plan documents and the strategy adopted as supplementary planning guidance"

Green Space Strategies: A good practice guide (CABE Space, 2004)

Summary



Open space issues affect and are affected by a number of different Council policies, and these are set out in this section. There are many ways of starting to achieve the vision for open space but in order to reflect the strategic picture in Harborough District; it is appropriate to also consider the wider vision of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) set out in the Leicestershire Performance Framework. This approach will enable open spaces to be considered both strategically and operationally within the District of Harborough, and the key priorities will support the Local Strategic Partnership and other Council objectives. The performance framework themes to which the provision of good quality, freely accessible open space contributes are given opposite.



Leicestershire Performance Framework Themes

1. *Improved Life Chances for Vulnerable People and Places*

1.2 Improved quality of life for those living in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods

1.5 Children in Leicestershire stay safe

2. *Stronger More Cohesive Communities*

2.1 Stronger communities, where people are involved in decision-making

2.4 Equality of access to life opportunities

2.6 Improved community cohesion through shared learning and recreation

2.7 Well-supported volunteer opportunities are provided within the community
2.8 Children and young people make a positive contribution
2.9 Older people are empowered to play an active part in the community.

3. *A Safe and Attractive Place to Live and Work*

3.1 People feel (and are) safe from violence

3.3 Increased resident satisfaction with the built environment and improved green infrastructure.

3.4 Quality employment sites are more widely available

3.8 New developments are built to higher design, security and environmental standards



4. A More Effective Response to Climate Change

- 4.1 Our contribution to climate change is reduced
- 4.2 An enhanced accessible natural environment with improved protection

5. A Prosperous Innovative and Dynamic Economy

- 5.2 An improved image for business and tourism and recognition as a centre for innovation
- 5.4 Children and young people enjoy and achieve

6. A Healthier Leicestershire

- 6.1 Improved physical health, well-being and community cohesion through enhanced access to sport recreation and cultural services.
- 6.5 Children and young people in Leicestershire are healthy.
- 6.6 The health and well-being of older people is increased
- 6.8 Improved mental health and well-being
- 6.9 More people are physically active at a level which makes them healthier
- 6.10 Obesity is reduced and there has been an increase in healthy eating in all age groups

7. More Efficient and Effective Service Delivery

- 7.1 Access to facilities and service is enhanced across the County
- 7.2 High quality and accessible service and facilities in rural areas
- 7.4 Public services are provided in the most efficient and effective way



The Leicestershire Performance Framework (LPF)

The Open Space Strategy will provide the opportunity to propose measures and develop actions based around the main themes of the Leicestershire Performance Framework. The effectiveness of provision of good quality freely available open space in helping deliver the main themes of the LPF are outlined below:

By providing well designed, appropriately located open space with new and existing housing developments, communities can be encouraged to 'take ownership' of their local open space

and have pride in its appearance and use. Open spaces can be places for many age groups to meet and interact, promoting social inclusion and cohesiveness. New open space will be given appropriate priority within the planning framework, to ensure that it is appropriate for the size of development, in a location that will be used by the community, and is delivered in a timely manner by developers.

Improvement and provision of Local Areas for Play (LAPs which are generally not provided with play equipment), Local

Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs) and Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs) are key in providing opportunities for young people and will be addressed in the section for Policies and Proposals. These will be provided at a local level based on the findings of the PPG17 Open Space Audit. Proposed measures in relation to equipped play provision will also be addressed in accordance with the Council's Play Strategy.

The open spaces strategy will give a framework by which local community groups can become involved in the manage-



ment and development of open spaces, and have a clear vision and guidance about how these spaces can be appropriately managed and developed. Methods of engaging the community will be explored within the Policies and Proposals section at the end of this strategy

It has been shown that feeling safe is one of the most important factors affecting people's use of open spaces, as under-used areas can create a perception that they are unsafe. More people using open spaces will add to perceptions of safety. Open spaces that pro-

vide facilities for all members of the community will be particularly highly valued, leading to increased use and therefore increased safety. As part of increasing use, there are also close links to the health and well being agenda, for example, by encouraging open space use as part of healthy walks.

Residents use open space for passive and active recreation. By providing areas for quiet contemplation mental health and well-being can be improved, and recuperation times for sick people can be reduced. By undertaking active recreation the physical health and

well being of all ages can be improved.

The Open Space Strategy will be informed by the Play Strategy, ensuring that this strategy is fully utilised in encouraging all young age groups to participate in healthy activities under an overarching strategy for open space in the District. It will also consider how older age groups can be encouraged to use open space for active recreation by promoting 'Green Gyms'.

Where housing development takes place that involves the provision of new areas of open space, careful design of both open



spaces and the development layout itself will ensure that areas are covered by natural surveillance and that safety is therefore 'built-in' to new open space provision.

Anti social crime such as graffiti and fly tipping can have a negative impact on the way in which open spaces are perceived in terms of their safety. Through the Open Space Strategy, Policy and Proposals, actions will be developed that aim to address such issues.

New housing development has traditionally involved the provision of on-site

open space. It is important to ensure that new housing is well connected to open spaces but not necessarily through the provision of new open space on site. In certain cases it may be more appropriate and beneficial to secure the enhancement of existing open space. The Councils new policy for Provision for Open Space, Sport & Recreation Plan gives a mechanism by which Section 106 agreements can be promoted with developers, and the most effective use of these contributions is made. The use of these contributions should correspond with

the proposed action plan of the open spaces strategy.

The ways in which open spaces are managed and maintained has an impact on site biodiversity, and assists with reporting against indicators within the LAA. Measures will be considered that ensure high quality maintenance regimes are appropriate to the character of the open space and take into account the varying nature of the sites and local conditions, whilst aiming to contribute to increased biodiversity. The Council should consider how to increase the number of Local Nature



Reserves (LNRs), either directly or through partnership with other organisations. The preparation of Management Plans for possible sites is an important factor in aiming to increase the number of LNRs in the District.

Open spaces have a major role to play in encouraging people to explore their local environment. Walking is a key activity for residents and visitors, and often results in money being spent locally, supporting the Town and village economies. It is therefore important that people have the information they need and are able to access sites



of interest. Tourists and visitors perception of the District will be enhanced by the provision of good quality well maintained open space, resulting in repeat visits and recommendations.

Connectivity between open spaces is an important factor in creating a green network with full public access. To support and promote this it should be considered how Harborough District Council could work with other agencies to promote walking or cycling maps.

Management of the grounds maintenance contract is of fundamental im-



portance to all types of open space. Without an effective grounds maintenance service, open spaces would quickly deteriorate and fail to give the public the high quality facilities they expect. The new grounds maintenance contract will commence on 1st April 2009 as part of the Integrated Contract delivery with Street Cleansing and Waste Management. The new contractor will be expected to adopt a flexible and partnership approach to the contract, giving better value for money but still maintaining a high standard of maintenance and service delivery.



LOCALITIES

During the PPG17 audit the District was split into 5 analysis areas. This was for the purposes of the audit to give localities that broadly have similar structure and characteristics. The locality model is indicated in the map opposite

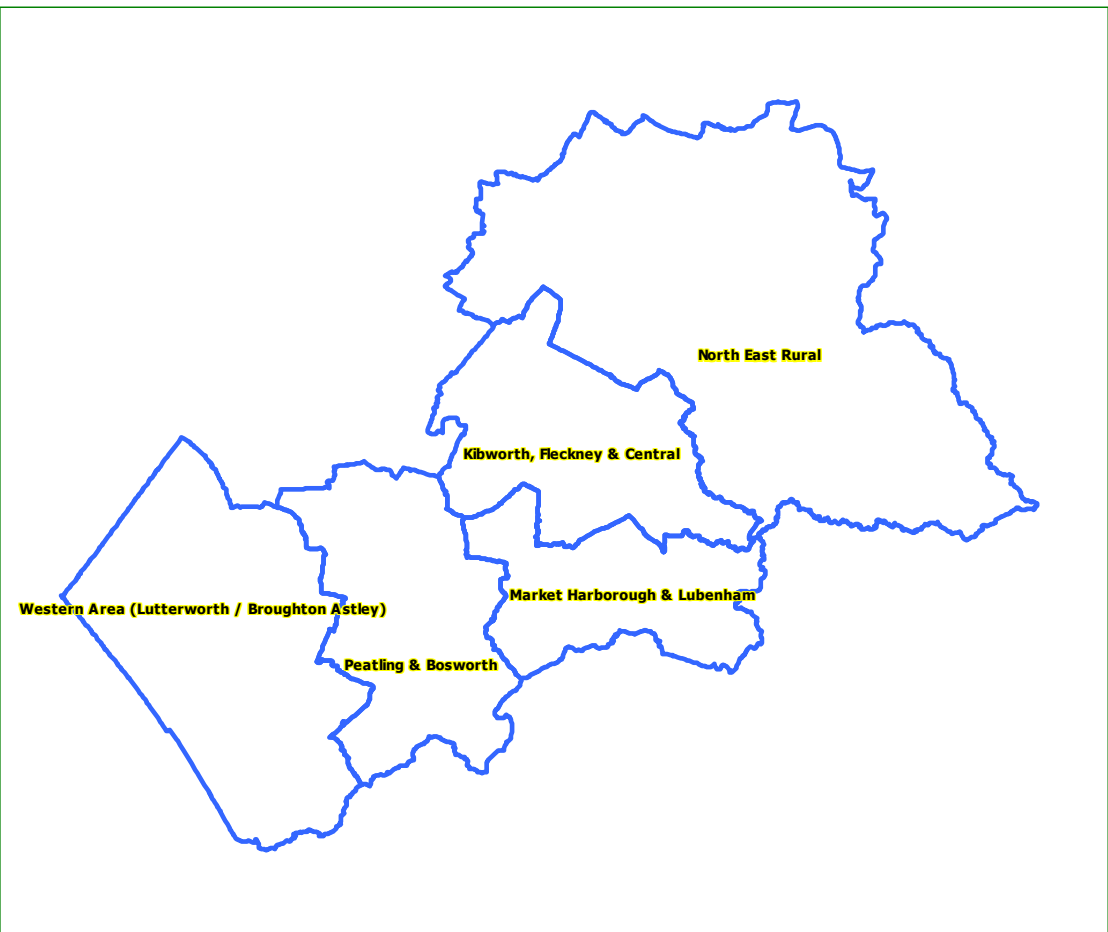
The key benefits of locality working are:

- Service providers engaging with communities at a local level

- Making services more tailored to what people in communities want

- Partners working together and agreeing local issues

- Identifying and fixing 'the little things' in a specific area (e.g. vandalism,





graffiti and eyesores)
Providing a voice for each locality
Strengthening communication/understanding and awareness

Actions in relation to open space have been developed to try and target each theme of the Leicestershire Performance Framework, based on the five localities. The Open Space Strategy will put in place the mechanisms for delivering actions around locality-based needs from information gathered as part of the Open Space Audit process. This will assist in making links in terms of local needs and the proposed delivery plan



Local Development Framework (LDF)

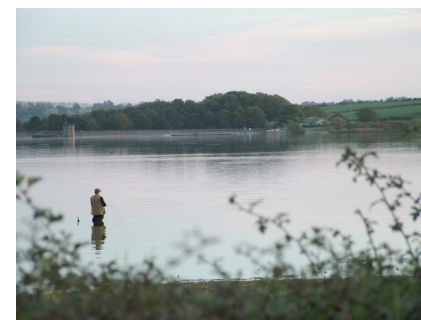
The Council will include detailed development policies within the LDF Core Strategy. The Core Strategy is a key component of the LDF and will set out the long-term vision, spatial objectives and core policies to guide the future development of the District. The Open Space Strategy will form part of the evidence base for developing policies through the LDF Core Strategy.

Existing Open Space Proposals

There are a number of key requirements for open space that will affect the Local Development Framework in the near future. These are predominantly cemetery and burial ground provision, and the provision of outdoor sports facilities to meet the



growing and changing need of sports provision in the future. The Local Plan proposals will be reviewed as part of the Local Development Framework and the Open Space Strategy will provide the opportunity to re-examine the need for, and suitability of any proposed sites. The work of the LDF task panel incorporated the consideration of future cemetery provision in 2009. Any potential new sites, that become available through development within the District, will be reviewed in conjunction with an evaluation of the need for new open space sites based on the needs assessment undertaken as part of the Open Space Audit.



Developer Contributions

Whilst locally determined provision standards can be used as a basis for planning conditions or obligations in appropriate circumstances, it is only through the application of these standards that what is appropriate, or otherwise, can be determined.

Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17) states that the need for either on site provision or developer contributions towards off-site provision requires the application of the adopted provision standards within the context of defined areas of accessibility, quality or quantity deficiency or surplus in order to determine the need for either additional provision or the enhancement of existing provision.

In principle, the Council will be justified in seeking either on-site provision or contributions towards new off-site provision or the enhancement of existing off-site provision, for the full range of open spaces, sport and recreation facilities for which they have adopted provision standards. The relative priority of different forms of provision should be informed by the assessment of local needs and this is the main objective of the PPG17 process. Contributions towards open space provision should be sought for developments of over 5 units. However the Open Spaces and Cemeteries task panel has determined that there is a need for three new strategic burial facilities so it is proposed that each single net gain in housing should contribute to-

wards burial facilities. Further details can be found in the Provision for Open Space, Sport & Recreation Plan at **appendix 4**.

For each open space typology, it is suggested the following process should be followed to discover where contributions are required: A more detailed analysis of this approach can be found within the Provision for Open Space, Sport & Recreation Plan.

Estimate the number of residents living in the proposed development (being explicit about assumed occupation rates)

Calculate the existing amount of open space within the agreed acces-



sibility threshold for each typology of open space for the new development. For example, there may be an existing quantitative undersupply of parks and gardens, provision for young people and children and allotments in the typologies catchments areas for the development site

Estimate the existing population within the relevant accessibility threshold and add this to the estimated population of the new development; and

Compare the existing amount of open space and the total population with the quantity stand-

ards developed for that typology in the Open Space Audit to decide if, following the development, there will be sufficient quantity within recommended distances of the development site to meet local needs.

If when assessed against the relevant PPG17 quantity standards, there is a sufficient amount of that type of open space in the local areas to meet the needs of the total population, the Council may properly expect developer contributions to enhance the quality of open spaces within that accessibility threshold. If there will not be sufficient open space, new provision will be required either on site or off site (dependant on the scale of the development

and any assumptions about minimum sizes of provision).

Where development is permitted, Section 106 agreements provide the mechanism for new open space provision and/or financial contributions for the improvement/enhancement of existing open spaces.



The Way Forward - Strategy Imple- mentation Sum- mary

The Open Space Strategy seeks to ensure that the provision of publicly accessible open space remains a priority for the Council. It also aims to co-ordinate stakeholder involvement throughout the District of Harborough to ensure that any improvement works contribute towards achieving the Council's vision for open space. This will be delivered through an effective action plan.

An Action Plan has therefore

been prepared that will form the basis of an Investment Strategy for open space through:

- Forming the basis for attracting external funding linked to the Leicestershire Performance Framework themes
- Providing the overarching mechanism for seeking contributions through Section 106 Agreements
- Providing open space policy guidance
- Linking to, and informing, relevant development control policies

The Action plan can be found at Appendix 3

Resourcing open space

There are always improvements, enhancements and new provisions that could be made to improve the network of open space across the district. However many would require additional funding.

Identified priorities can be resourced in a number of ways. It may be necessary to allocate funding from within existing budgets for open spaces. This funding will be used as match funding to support other sources of income that are available from external sources.

Potential sources of income identified within the PPG17 audit are outlined below:



Sale of Council land

Generating and reinvesting resources obtained from land which is surplus to requirements is a principle that has been successfully adopted in the London Borough of Bromley, and by Glasgow City Council (through its Parks and Opens Spaces Strategy).

This is, however, likely to be a long process, and ultimately may prove difficult to achieve

If considered feasible at some future stage, reinvestment would:

- secure political credibility for the sale of land

- provide sufficient funding to carry out significant rather than purely minor open space improvements. It should, how-

ever, be realised that the process may take many years to introduce, owing to planning, legal and other restrictions which could delay its introduction

also, this mechanism is likely to be create some public controversy and its potential success depends on how the process and sale of land is approached in terms of benefits and outcomes.

Section 106 planning agreements

Section 106 agreements can be used to achieve environmental improvements to offset the effects of new development. A Strategy framework has been proposed in the Provision for Open Space, sport and Recreation Plan, which gives robust evidence to developers to secure appropriate contributions for

open space that is required in specific locations. The process of obtaining these improvements will be enhanced because they can be used to achieve specific purposes, e.g:

- by opening linear route ways to connect green spaces

- providing walking and cycling routes

- obtaining open space in areas of deficiency

- funding open space improvements

- there are maintenance considerations to be taken into account; ie significant costs may arise, particularly if new open space is acquired.

- it will therefore be necessary to obtain an commuted sum for future maintenance wherever



possible to cover these ongoing costs.

it should of course be noted that such Agreements have to meet the test of Circular 1/97, and “Developers should not be expected to pay for facilities which are needed solely in order to resolve existing deficiencies”

Business funding/sponsorships

Sponsorship by local businesses could give improvements to quality at a local level.

Partnership arrangements with the voluntary sector

This could include the formation of further parks “Friends” groups. The Harborough in Bloom project has in the region of 30 volunteers

who support planting projects, and on-going maintenance. This is a good example of a sustainable project supported by the local community.

Lottery funding

This could include the Heritage Fund if works are carried out which are of outstanding interest and importance to the national heritage. Funding is provided for whole-park projects, the conservation of park features or park activities. Grants are available from £50,000 to £5 million for a period of up to five years. Projects must be designed to involve all stakeholders, must demonstrate sustainability, and must demonstrate the heritage value of the park in question. Any funding applied for from the National Lottery must be through a Community Group. The Open Space Strategy will, as previously

mentioned, identify how these groups can contribute towards development of open spaces.

Review of pricing

This needs to cover all charges where a significant income is obtained, including outdoor sports, allotments and burials. The review needs to consider:

- charges for similar provision in other local authorities
- the quality of provision
- whether the service can be improved to justify a price increase
- the extent to which the market will bear any future increase
- whether differential pricing can be used to encourage off-peak usage
- concessions for minority groups, or those which the Council



particularly wishes to encourage pricing at a level which does not deny access (Tennis for Free) lower and/or more favourable charges for Harborough District residents.

Parks for People

The "Parks for People" grant scheme covers schemes with a value of £250,000 to £5,000,000. The scheme is designed to improve local environments and peoples quality of life. The schemes long term vision is that every community should have access to a well designed and maintained public park with opportunities for enjoyment and recreation for all.



The Landfill Tax Credit Scheme

The Landfill Tax Credit Scheme was revised in April 2003, and allows registered landfill operators to contribute 6.5% of their annual landfill tax liability to environmental bodies approved by the organisation ENTRUST.

The scheme must be used for social, environmental and community based projects complying with specific "approved objects." These objects are the provision and maintenance of public amenity, and restoration and repair of buildings open to the public with historical or architectural significance.

The project must be within 10 miles of a landfill/extraction operation. Note however that District Councils cannot apply, but an application has recently (2008)



been submitted by Harborough Wheels Project for funding for a skate park replacement at Bellfields Recreation Ground.

Your Heritage

Your Heritage programme is designed to assist local communities in the preservation of their environment, landmarks and traditions including archaeological, natural, built and industrial heritage. It is specifically designed for voluntary and community groups and first time applicants. £3000 to £50,000 is funded.

Heritage Grants are available from the Heritage Lottery Fund, and are for projects of in excess of £50,000 in value.

English Heritage supports the Heritage Grant Fund for historic parks and gardens where there is



a significant risk of losing important landscape features.

Changing Spaces: Community Spaces

This scheme is run by Groundwork UK and started in 2008. It funds small, medium, large and flagship grants for community groups to improve local green spaces.

Others

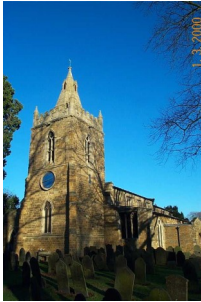
These could include other proactive mechanisms such as :

- increased income from events and activities
- grants from local charities or organisations
- improvements negotiated as “added value” from service providers

The degree of funding will define the scope and timescale over

which any developments could be implemented. It is therefore essential to carefully consider all possible sources of funding.

These should include Council capital and revenue funding, but should also include consideration of the release of existing funds; commercial opportunities such as the franchising of facilities such as catering outlets; the delegated management of facilities such as outdoor sports; commercial sponsorship (e.g. floral bedding); planning gain (e.g. through Section 106 agreements); volunteer support; reviews of fees and charges; and increased income from events and activities.



Resources

The Open Space Strategy vision can only be delivered through the provision of a high quality cost effective service that is able to focus on the continuous improvement of open spaces. This will involve partnership working between Harborough District Council employees, the grounds maintenance contractor, voluntary sector and others. Service responsibilities, roles and structure must be clearly defined in order for the vision to be realised. This has been developed in the delivery action plan contained at **Appendix 3**.

Monitoring and Review Procedures

The Strategy will be monitored and reviewed to ensure that it remains current and responsive to any District Council policy and priority changes.

Once the Open Space Strategy has been adopted, the following steps will be implemented to deliver the Strategy:

- Identify strategic options / delivery mechanisms / resources

- Implement, monitor and review the Action Plan

- Prepare annual prioritised Action Plans through the Service Delivery Plans and Team Plans.

Involve local communities and stakeholders, where practical, in decision making
Review the Strategy every three years.



Harborough District Council Open Space Strategy

Policies & proposals

Our policies and proposals are set out by open space type:

Parks and Gardens
Natural and Semi-natural Green Spaces
Outdoor Sports Facilities
Amenity Greenspace/ Green Corridors
Provision for Children and Young People
Allotments
Cemeteries and Closed Churchyards

The section is introduced by **general** policies on issues common to all types of open space.

i. General

Introduction

The policies and actions contained in

the Open Space Strategy and accompanying Action Plan will be implemented in the context of existing Council policy and practice, as follows:

Consultation

We will consult with local residents, portfolio holders, ward councillors, users and supporters' groups, where practicable, on proposals for new, and developments on existing, open space and recreation facilities.

The Council is committed to maintaining a dialogue with residents and users of all of its open spaces and recreation facilities and will continue to consult on all proposals for new and improved facilities through a variety of means.

Park Supporters' Groups and Sports Consultative Groups will continue to be supported and the establishment of new ones encouraged, representing the views of local people and helping guide

the future development of facilities. The views of the wider public towards open space and recreation provision will continue to be monitored through the Citizens' Panel and liaison with ward councillors; the results will be used to inform the direction of the strategy. Consultation will not be undertaken for day to day management operations or work that is required to meet legislative requirements or health and safety needs. Ward Councillors will be informed of proposed changes to open space and asked for comment. The District Council will present design proposals for consultation that are appropriate for the site and aspire to meet the needs of the community, taking into account the wider context of open space provision.

Partnership Working

We will continue to work in partnership with the public, private and voluntary



sectors to manage and enhance our parks and open spaces.

The Council has developed strong relationships with external organisations and its residents and works closely with these bodies and individuals to provide, develop and enhance services. It will continue to work with its partners to improve the Districts parks and open spaces, listening to what local users want, to adopting new ideas on their use, layout and management.

Quality Assessment

All Council-owned open spaces and recreation facilities will be subject to audit using the Open Space Quality Checklist based on the Green Flag criteria.

Quality is an essential element of open space and the Council aims to improve

standards for the benefit of users and visual amenity. A baseline record of the quality and fitness for purpose of all open spaces will be made using the Open Space Qualitative Field Assessment Checklist (see Appendix 5). The Checklist was devised to reflect the basic requirements of a Green Flag Award, the benchmark of quality that the Council aims to achieve for its main parks. The Quality audit will help to inform plans and proposals for individual sites, planning and disposal policy. It will be updated prior to reviews of the Open Space Strategy.

Management and Maintenance

We will review our open space management and maintenance specifications.

The Council reviewed the management and maintenance of all of its public facilities in the new contract awarded in April 2009. The review informed chang-

es to current specifications, principally with a view to using resources more efficiently and integrating the service with other service areas. The opportunity was also taken to consider whether the treatment was the most appropriate for the site and meets local requirements. The management of all open spaces will be reviewed periodically with the Grounds Maintenance contractor to ensure that quality is maintained and the community receives best value for money.

Signposting, Interpretation and promotion

We will ensure that appropriate marketing materials, signs and interpretation boards are in place for the parks and open spaces that need them.

The Districts parks and open spaces are an asset for local people and visitors to enjoy. Some of the smaller, very local facilities are intended only to be



used by residents in the immediate area and generally need no interpretation or publicity. However, others should serve a much larger catchment and should be promoted appropriately, with the relevant signs in place to ensure that appropriate information is given to users.

External funding

We will maximise External Funding opportunities to invest in our open spaces and recreation facilities.

Harborough District Council has secured funding from many external sources and will continue to work in partnership with Community Groups and other agencies to build on this success. This source of funding will help improve Harborough District Councils open spaces and recreation grounds

We will continue to seek contributions,



where appropriate, from developers to improve our parks and open spaces.

Section 106 agreements will continue to be sought with developers of new housing to make a contribution towards the recreational needs of the prospective residents in accordance with the Council's new minimum requirements as identified through the PPG17 Audit in 2004. These sums may be used for the provision and maintenance of a new site or the expansion/upgrade of an open space in the nearby area. If equipped play area are provided as part of the contribution, these will be for age groups appropriate for the site, and to meet the identified needs of the community. Any new open spaces adopted by the Authority will be subject to a commuted sum for maintenance as identified in the document 'Provision for Open Space, sport and Recreation'



Investment

The Council will establish baseline information about investment in parks and open spaces and monitor expenditure on an annual basis.

Comparisons will be made with benchmark authorities to ensure that expenditure leads to quality provision for the District. The Council will also meet its statutory requirements for issues such as unsafe trees and play equipment, investing appropriately to maintain an environment for all users that is as safe as it needs to be.

Under utilised land

We will identify areas of land and facilities that are under utilised.

The Quality Audit will help to identify areas of land and facilities that do not meet local needs or are in excess of requirements, e.g. spare land around



sports facilities. Such sites will be reviewed to establish whether they could be put to alternate uses.

Strategy review

The Open Space Strategy will be monitored and reviewed every 3 years although this could be more frequent to take account of changes in legislation.

To ensure the strategy and its action plan are kept up to date the documents will be monitored annually and reviewed every 3 years. Targets will be reported to the Portfolio Holder and on to Executive.

Actions:

- 1 Carry out quality audit of all public open spaces
- 2 Review management and maintenance of all public facilities
- 3 Establish baseline data about investment in parks and open space
- 4 Identify land and facilities whose

use could be enhanced ii. Parks and public gardens

Introduction

Throughout the District there is an overall deficit of Parks and Public Gardens in each of the analysis areas. Harborough District Council manages Welland Park and the Memorial Gardens as its primary sites in this category

Key Sites

Welland Park
Memorial Gardens

All parks and green spaces help to deliver wide and long-term social, economic and environmental benefits through a range of public policy priorities. These include:

Improving the quality of urban regeneration and neighbourhood renewal projects

Promoting healthy living and preventing illness by providing places for physical activities, fostering social inclusion and community development, citizenship and local pride

Supporting environmental sustainability by helping to counter pollution and providing habitats for wildlife

Contributing to heritage and culture by providing a source of collective memory and venues for local events

Harborough District Council has invested heavily in Welland Park and the Memorial Gardens, and these sites are identified as being of high quality and valued by the community. The District Council recognises that there are still issues to be tackled in these sites as indicated in the responses to the Welland Park consultation leaflet in 2005.



Vision

Communities in Harborough District are proud of their Parks and Public Gardens, use them regularly, look after them and enjoy them.

Objectives

- To raise the standards of District Council owned parks and gardens to meet the needs and demands of users and of local people
- To protect the historic and environmental context of the District's parks and gardens
- To involve local communities and partners to help manage and promote those areas

To improve access for all for communities to use, appreciate and to enjoy

Policies

1. We will sustainably maintain and manage our Parks and gardens.

As a District Council we aim to manage our Parks in a sustainable and efficient way, putting appropriate management regimes and strategies in place to conserve and enhance the sites.

2. We will review the on-site supervision of Parks.

The District Council has appointed a Parks Officer to increase the onsite presence at parks and open spaces. The officer is to liaise with the public, give reassurance and deal with any issues that arise on a day to day basis. The new integrated contract has allowed for the contractor to provide a mobile team to deal with issues on a seven day a week basis at parks and other open spaces

3. We will seek to maintain Green Flag status for Welland Park .

Green Flag status is an excellent way to assess the quality of a Park. It is nationally recognised and brings all managing

and user stakeholders together. It ensures that Management Plans are produced for a Park and considers maintenance, care, sustainability and community activity. Welland Park achieved Green Flag status in 2007 and 2008.

4. We will seek additional external and Council funds to invest in Park infrastructure.

The District Council has been successful in achieving Big Lottery Fund support for play area schemes, and also funding from local charities to support these projects. By building on the opportunities available to community groups, further funding can be achieved to raise the level of investment in parks and open spaces.

5. We will improve access to all Parks and Gardens.

Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 accessibility audits have been



carried out in all parks and parkland buildings in 2005. Whenever a change of policy or function is undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment is undertaken to allow the District Council to take account of minority groups and meet their needs.

6. We will encourage and support a 'Friends of' Group to continue to develop main parks.

Friend of groups can support and promote the role of parks as places where people can come together enjoy community life. Strong and effective groups provide invaluable information on the local community's view of existing provision, their expectations and vision for their park. The work of the Parks Officer will help set to promote the work of a Friend of group, offering support and guidance where needed.

Monitoring

Target	2011	2015
Number of Green Flags retained	1	1
No residents survey rating for Parks and Open Space (% satisfied)	50%	60%

iii. Formal outdoor recreation

Introduction

The District has several key sites for formal organised outdoor recreation, supplemented by more local provision, recreation grounds, education and voluntary sector provision.

Key sites are:

Key Sites are:

Northampton Road Sports Ground - Football (HDC and HTFC), Rugby (MHRFC) and synthetic pitch managed by HTFC
Symingtons Recreation Ground – football pitches
Little Bowden Recreation Ground – Cricket and football
Welland Park – Tennis and Bowls
Manor Field – football
Wadkins – Cricket and tennis

The District Council has 5 senior grass



football pitches available for community use, although the total number not owned by HDC in the District is:

Adult football	40
Junior Football	20
Mini football	12
Cricket	18
Rugby	12

There are 2 full-sized synthetic pitches available to the public. There are 7 public tennis courts and 2 public bowls greens. Voluntary sports clubs provide tennis, rugby, football, hockey, archery and bowls facilities. The private sector provides a range of facilities for golf, tennis and football. The recent audit and assessment of the District's public facilities, carried out by consultants in 2004, found that the quality and use of these pitches was generally good. (See Appendix 3) The community use of football pitches has shown that the District Councils own pitches are now at capacity, and increase in the number of

residents will put additional pressure on a limited resource.

Physical activity, through taking part in formal recreation, has many benefits. It:

- Improves health, both physical and mental, and well-being
 - Promotes community cohesion through meeting other teams in different areas
 - Encourages and strengthens the community through developing organisational skills and social networks
- Develops learning and education skills through learning to play and improving skills

Playing fields and recreation grounds therefore offer more than just enjoyment of sport or activity. The grounds themselves also contribute to visual amenity and an open townscape in an urban en-

vironment.

Vision

Our vision is of sufficient good quality publicly accessible facilities in the right locations, meeting the need for formal outdoor recreation and making a positive contribution to the visual amenity of the area.

Objectives

To provide all residents and others with access to quality formal outdoor recreation provision, playing facilities and changing accommodation, to ensure increased participation

To support a strong voluntary sector across different sports providing facilities and working with their local communities to ensure best use of resources



Policies

1. We will protect existing formal outdoor recreation facilities and seek to provide additional outdoor sports facilities where required irrespective of ownership.

The 1998 Town and Country Planning (Playing Fields) (England) Direction and Circular 3/99 aims to ensure that existing playing fields are protected unless new or improved facilities are provided. Sport England or other formal outdoor sports providers are to be consulted on any development that affects formal recreation provision.

Additional outdoor sports field provision will be required as the Districts population increases and part of Northampton Road Sports Ground is required to be taken for cemetery provision. The Cemeteries and Open spaces Task Panel has recommended that new

sports provision should be provided prior to any sports pitches being taken for cemetery provision.

2. We will ensure that school recreation facility provision, wherever feasible, will be developed, to be available to the community.

Harborough District Council is committed to encouraging community access and extended school status across the state sector. The Council will continue to work with users to identify local requirements, and with schools to assess their suitability for extended school status. Suitable sources of funding will need to be secured if access to school facilities for sport are to be available across the District

3. We will strive to ensure that there is continuous improvement in the standard of maintenance of our public pitches.

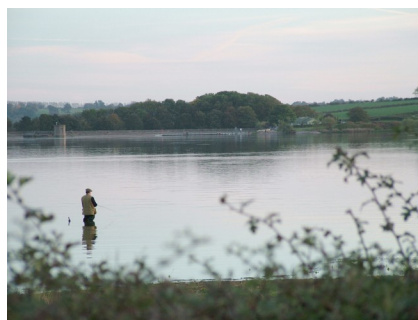
This will be achieved by a review of the

maintenance specifications especially within the new integrated contract, greater involvement of the contractor and the key user groups. Training and qualifications of contractor staff and District Council officers will be undertaken to improve pitch maintenance and quality. Cancelled matches will be recorded, with the reasons for cancellation so that improvements can be tracked.

4. We will continue to develop the Northampton Road User Group forum, and other sports groups for consultation to ensure that local people and interest groups are involved in formal recreation development and provision.

We will continue to ensure that sports other than just the rugby and football are given the opportunities they require for use of sports facilities.

5. We will support and encourage the



voluntary sector to meet the needs of local people and to increase participation across all communities.

Voluntary sector, in the form of sports clubs, is an important addition to formal recreation facilities provided by the public and private sectors. The District Council will endeavour to promote the availability of sports and recreation facilities offered by the voluntary sector.

6. We will endeavour to help source and provide capital and revenue funds to refurbish and maintain public facilities to a high standard.

The District Council will continue to support clubs and others in trying to achieve funding to improve sports provision across the District. Where a club is active and wants to improve facilities, they will be encouraged through the provision of leases, where appropriate, to secure external funding. There is also potential investment from

funds received through section 106 agreements with developers.

7. We will not tolerate anti-social behaviour on playing fields or recreation grounds.

Dog fouling is a nuisance on all unfenced playing fields and recreation grounds. Fencing all existing facilities is neither feasible nor desirable and therefore the emphasis is on prevention through signage and enforcement by the Council's Dog Wardens. Provision of suitably sited dog-waste bins will be made a priority on all sites that have sport played on them. Vandalism and motor bikes are also occasional problems and we will work with the police and others to repair vandalism and educate the public to minimise these incidents.



iv. Provision for children and young people

Introduction

The value and benefits of play are well known; outdoor play has developmental and therapeutic benefits for children and young people; it can be a tool to learning helps develop an awareness of risk and danger and is important for building social and life skills. Access to these facilities can also help children and young people to stay healthy and tackle problems of obesity by providing opportunities for exercising and fresh air. Formal leisure facility provision for children and young people in the District includes play areas, multi-use games areas (MUGAs - containing facilities for basketball, football and cricket), skateboard parks, teenage shelters and informal kick-about areas. Informal play is equally important and children use all kinds of

other open spaces for their games and social interaction. The Play Strategy written in 2007 deals with provision for children and young people and can be found on the District Council website. There are 20 equipped play areas owned by the District Council. These are at;

Northampton Road Sports Ground
Bellfields
Burford Green
Logan Street
Roman Way
The Headlands
Welland Park
Sherrard Road
Goodwood Close
Mill Grove
Moorbarns Lane
Mulberry Close
Devitt Way
Cottage Lane
Edward Road
Cromwell Road
Manor Field

Wadkins
Ashley Way
The Longlands
Mitchell Grove

In addition there is a skatepark at Farndon Road and a skate bowl at Bellfields.

These play area would all be classed as Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP), with Welland Park being a Destination Play area..

It is recommended that all areas are fenced where appropriate; possess signage, seating and litterbins. Dog waste bins should also be provided at equipped play areas. All newly installed play equipment should comply with current legislation (EN1176/1177)

The PPG17 audit of the Districts open spaces was completed in 2004 and this



included a quality and accessibility audit of all the play spaces to determine whether they meet current and future demand. The catchment areas in the above table were also determined by the PPG 17 audit. In addition the minimum provision expected for this typology of open space. (ie 0.3ha per 1000 population)

Vision

All children and young people living in Harborough District have access to play provision and teenage facilities that meet their needs in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility.

Objectives

- To provide, where appropriate, high quality local/neighbourhood play spaces and teenage facilities to encompass all needs within the local community
- To ensure that the equipment on these play spaces and facilities is inclusive, appropriate and stimulating for a



range of age groups and abilities and, wherever reasonable, accessible to all

- To provide a variety of safer surfacing that compliments the play equipment, and provides, where possible, additional play value

- To ensure that the children and young people have a continuous involvement in the design of play spaces and teenage facilities

To ensure that all play spaces and facilities are safe to use and maintained to the highest possible standard by well-trained, dedicated staff

Policies

1. We will use and update the Play Strategy for the District when determining play provision.

A comprehensive play strategy has been produced for the District covering all aspects of play. The PPG17 audit determined the quality of play spaces through-



out the District and this will be used to guide the decisions in determining which play area will be updated.

2. A play champion (elected member) has been identified for the Council

The Play Champion will ensure that all aspects of Play are viewed strategically and that with regard to formal equipped play spaces there is co-ordination and communication between organisations and the public. The position is essential to the ongoing success of the Play Area Strategy,

3. An HDC officer has been allocated responsibility for play by the Council. The officer is responsible for prioritising play equipment replacement and up-grading of play areas. The officer is responsible for procuring resources to implement the replacement and up-grading of equipment and ensuring that maintenance is of high



standard across the District.

4. We will involve children and young people in the design, and positioning of their local play area or teenage facility and take their views into account where possible.

It is important that those who are to benefit from the range of high quality, inclusive and accessible to all, dedicated play spaces, the children and young people, are involved in the consultation, design and location

5. We will instigate a preventative maintenance procedure and introduce an agreed programme of play area equipment renewal and a replacement and defects procedure.

Dedicated operatives through the Integrated Contract will be appropriately trained to undertake basic equipment repairs to a high safety level. Monitor-

ing and safety checks will be undertaken by suitably trained operatives on a daily basis. Budgets will continue to be made available for repair and maintenance items to keep play equipment in a safe and useable condition.

6. We will review existing play areas as part of the annual play area inspection by RoSPA or others, and undertake their recommendations for replacement or upgrading. Upgrades will include the installation of at least one piece of inclusive equipment.

The replacement of play equipment will meet the requirements of the DDA (2004) and will be inclusive for all persons. The District Council will not install items of equipment that are solely for use by those persons with disabilities.

The Annual Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) inspection reports will be used to determine the need for refurbishment. These

comprehensive reports cover the provision, type and condition of all elements of the play area, as well as environmental or other hazards, such as the proximity of adjacent roads. In addition, the play equipment and safety surfacing is assessed against European playground and surfacing standards.

7. We will install safety surfacing appropriate to the location of the play area taking into account the type of equipment and play value of the surfacing. All types of loosefill and rubberized surface will be considered when making the decision. A variety of surfacing will be preferred for each play area.

Loosefill surfacing will include: Sand, Enviromulch, wood chip/bark, washed and graded gravel

We will continue to use all types of loosefill, rubberized and grassmat safety surfacing assessed by officers who



are technically aware of the issues associated with their selection and suitability for the site and equipment.

Maintenance regimes will be put into place to keep the surfacing safe and free from deleterious material.

8. We will continue, where appropriate, to seek Section 106 agreements for the provision of open space or play provision in relation to new residential development.

Where new residential development cannot accommodate open space or play provision the Council will seek a commuted sum towards the cost of expanding or improving nearby provision to accommodate the increased pressure that the new development will place on the existing facilities.

Agreements negotiated as part of the planning permission will be subject to Council planning policy as currently set out in the Local Plan and Supplemen-

tary Planning Guidance.

Monitoring

Number of young people satisfied with equipped play areas in the District increases each year to 2015.

v. Natural and Semi-natural green spaces

Introduction

Within urban areas there are often natural or semi-natural green spaces such as woodlands, urban forestry, scrub, grasslands, wetlands, open and running water, wastelands and derelict open land and rock areas.

In Harborough District these areas include:

The River Welland and Welland Park conservation area

Green Lane open space

The Canal

Lutterworth Country Park

Fleckney Brook

River Sense/Bridgewater Drive open space

Simborough Way buffer zone

Broughton Lake



These areas are important because they:

- Are accessible green spaces close to where people live providing opportunities for recreation and exercise that can benefit health
- Provide areas, particularly for children, which can be used for informal play where they can learn and develop life skills
- Provide habitats for wildlife in urban areas
- Provide an opportunity for people to experience and learn about nature and wildlife close to where they live
- Offer visual amenity benefits in built-up urban areas

Vision

Our vision for the natural and semi-natural urban green spaces within the borough is to protect and manage these

se sites to provide accessible green spaces for people to enjoy for recreation, to experience and learn about nature close to where they live, and as important wildlife habitats.

Objectives

- To protect the Districts natural and semi-natural urban green spaces for the benefits they provide to the health and well being of residents
- To improve access for all to natural/semi-natural urban green spaces for communities to use and enjoy
- To protect the wildlife and biodiversity value of these Areas.
- To involve local communities and partners in the management and promotion of these areas.
- To provide work with partners to provide Local Nature Reserves at a level of 0.5 hectare per 1000 population

Policies

1. We will seek to protect existing natural and semi-natural green spaces and increase the number of these spaces through the planning process . The Local Development Framework gives guidance and designates these areas, offering protection for their long-term future. Through the planning process and by adoption of the new process for calculating Section 106 contributions we will look to increase the amount of natural and semi natural open space in line with the quantity provision standard as adopted in the Provision for Sport and Recreation Plan
 2. We will seek to work with partners improve access to natural and seminatural green spaces to enable all sections of the community to use and enjoy these areas.
- The Disability Discrimination Act 2004 (DDA) and increasing demands for bet-



ter access by many communities will require improvements to some areas of green space. In addition to access requirements to meet DDA standards we will look to increase, where appropriate, the amount of interpretation material available for District Council owned sites.

3. We will work with partners and local communities to manage these sites and raise awareness about them. The Council will look to work with groups such as Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust and British Trust for Conservation Volunteers to improve availability and awareness of sites in the District, and improve the provision of this typology in the future.

Monitoring

Number of accessible conservation areas in the District
Target 2 new ones by 2013

vii. Amenity greenspace

Introduction

Amenity grassland is the description given to many areas of open space owned by the District Council. It is land of many different sizes that is close mown and is easy although intensive to maintain. Consideration should be given to additional tree planting to break up the areas of amenity open space without impinging on the adjacent properties. Consideration should also be given to allowing areas of grassland to grow into uncut meadow where appropriate, as this will promote biodiversity.

Vision

Our Vision is of a more interesting and stimulating treatment of urban open spaces while still maintaining amenity open space for its primary purpose of recreation.

Objectives

- To create more stimulating and useful open spaces for local people by adopting different planting and management regimes where appropriate
- To seek new ways of maintaining amenity greenspace that are environmentally friendly and promote biodiversity.

Policies

1. We will research the possibility of using meadowland margins on large areas of amenity greenspace. The possibility of using long grass areas at the margins of larger amenity open spaces must be researched to prevent the areas being seen as an unkempt perimeter. Use of wild flower planting, and bulb planting may be possible but it will be important to work with community groups to achieve a level of understanding in the communi-



ty.

2. We will assess our existing amenity grasslands with a view to identifying sites further tree planting could be undertaken to promote biodiversity and amenity value.

Sites that are able to support additional tree planting will be sought, and planting will be undertaken to be sympathetic to neighbours and other amenity space users. Mature specimens will be used in preference with underground anchors to help combat vandalism.

3. We will work with volunteer groups and local residents to identify opportunities to improve amenity greenspace for the local community.

Residents in the local community are the primary users of greenspace and know the requirements of the sites. All consultation and suggestions must be viewed in the light of the District Councils ultimate objectives of providing

spaces for the majority of the community, promoting biodiversity and the requirement to maintain the amenity greenspace in a cost effective way into the future.

Monitoring

Number of recreation grounds with informal meadowland or wildflower margins

Target 4 by 2013

Number of recreation grounds with new tree planting

Target 2 per year from 2013 to 2015

viii. Allotments

Introduction

Like other open spaces allotments provide for leisure, recreation, relaxation, healthy exercise and social contact.

They can also be havens for wildlife and a visual amenity for the local area.

Allotments are of course also productive areas, yielding seasonal fresh fruit and vegetables. A revival of interest in food growing has resulted in increased demand for allotment plots, particularly in densely developed areas where gardens are very small. There are over 190 plots on five sites across Harborough District that are owned and managed by the District Council.

These are:

Little Bowden

Welland Park Road

Douglass Drive

Great Bowden

Saddington

Additional sites are owned by Parish



Councils or are privately owned. The District Council plots all have water and generally have parking and/or hard standing areas. The Parish plots are in mixed conditions, with some being very well tended and others being very overgrown.

Vision

Our Vision is well-cultivated and productive plots on secure and well-serviced sites that are in high demand in the District's towns and villages.

Objectives

- To improve the standard of allotment site offered to residents
 - To meet demand for allotment plots across the District
 - To investigate setting up of allotments associations to run the District Council owned allotments sites
- To offer advice and support to Parish

Councils and others who wish to set up allotments

Policies

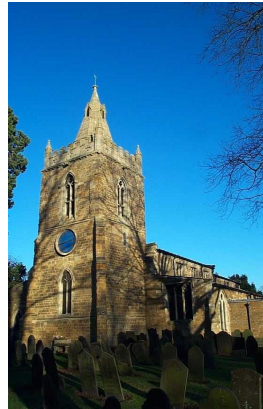
1. We will continue to employ an Officer to co-ordinate the allotments management and improvement programme. The District Council owned sites are currently managed by the Landscape Officer as part of that post's role. A database is held of all tenants and a waiting list maintained. Any work required to maintain the sites in a satisfactory condition for the use by the tenants is organised by this officer.

2. A programme of works will be implemented to improve the range and standard of facilities available on allotment sites and to upgrade security. There is currently no provision made for gardening by those people with disabilities, and no sites have washing or toilet facilities. While recognising that it may

not be possible to provide these facilities at all sites owned by the District Council the officer responsible for allotments will investigate the possibilities. Consideration will be given to issues such as access and facilities to ensure that these do not present obstacles to disabled plot holders.

3. We will re let plots, where sites have a waiting list, within 3 months, of notice being received from the existing tenant.

Plots that are vacant for a long period give sites an air of dereliction but also require a great deal of work to bring them back into cultivation and this can often deter tenants from taking over the tenancy. Where plots are so badly overgrown as to require machinery to clear them the Council will carry out the work, providing there is a tenant waiting to manage the plot. The decision as to whether a plot will be cultivated will



be at the discretion of the Allotment Officer or his/her manager. We will only provide this service where resources allow.

4. We investigate the possibility of setting up Allotment Associations on District Council owned sites to help manage and maintain sites and promote the benefits of allotment gardening. The Council's currently manages all its own sites, but there may be additional funding opportunities for allotment associations to improve the sites. The existing tenants will be canvassed to determine whether there is enough support for such a policy and whether the benefits are sufficient to justify pursuing the possibility.

5. We will subdivide allotment plots where appropriate to provide additional opportunities for allotment gardening.

The Council has received comments from allotment gardeners that a full sized plot is too large for them to manage. By listening to these comments and changing the way in which allotments are sized we are able to meet the community need.

Monitoring

Number of plots let
Target 95%

Number of sites with improved facilities and/or security
Target 3 by 2013

x. Cemeteries and Closed Churchyards

Introduction

Harborough District Council has six cemeteries. These are:

Northampton Road Cemetery
Great Bowden Cemetery
Saddington
Great Easton
Foxton
Blaston

Closed Churchyard for which the District Council has responsibility are:

Little Bowden
Great Bowden
Foxton
Mowsley
Theddingworth
Husbands Bosworth
Swinford
Catthorpe
Bitteswell



Claybrooke Parva
Leire
Broughton Astley
Fleckney
Saddington
Kibworth
Great Glen
Thurnby
Billesdon
Brighthurst

In addition to their primary use as burial grounds they provide:

- an accessible resource for people to use for their spiritual and recreation needs
- an opportunity for people to experience nature and wildlife close to where they live
- visual amenity benefits
- important historical and cultural features that help identify our communities' heritage



Each site presents its own challenges in terms of management of the monuments and headstones. These can be a serious health and safety issue that has to be addressed to enable the cemeteries to be used by the public.

Vision

Our vision for the cemeteries within the District is to ensure they are protected and managed as places for burial and spiritual reflection and for their importance for heritage, nature conservation and biodiversity.

Objectives

- To protect the Districts cemeteries from inappropriate development and safeguard those areas with important nature conservation, heritage or archaeological features
- To improve accessibility to the cemeteries as places for spiritual well-being



and recreation for both residents and visitors

To work with partners and local communities to manage these areas and to maintain and enhance their value

To ensure that sufficient burial space is available to the community in the future

Policies

1. We will seek to ensure that sufficient sites are allocated through the Planning system.

The Task Panel for open spaces and cemeteries recommended that three strategic sites be sought to maintain the level of burial provision within the District. These three locations were in the north, west and around Market Harborough. The Local Development Framework will seek to identify sites suitable for burial provision, and in addition the District Council will seek to



maximise burial space on cemeteries that it already owns. Cemetery extension are planned for Foxton and Great Bowden in 2010/11, and additional sites throughout the District can be assessed as opportunities arise. The LDF task panel is considering land allocations for burial ground usage in 2010.

2. We will maintain and improve accessibility to cemeteries and burial grounds where appropriate.
Cemeteries should be accessible to those wanting to use them, but it should be recognised that it is not possible to construct a path to each grave, and at certain times of the year there may be graves that are inaccessible. The District Council will seek to improve drainage of surface water where possible, but it may not always be feasible to remove all surface water entirely during certain times of the year.

3. We will work with partners and local communities to manage our cemeteries appropriately.

The Council will continue working with partners such as Parish Councils who wish to maintain their own closed churchyards. Monitoring of local demographics will take place to ensure that the provision of suitable burial space meets the local need.

4. We will continue to undertake surveys of memorials to ascertain their safety and undertake remedial action where necessary.

It will continue to look for appropriate solutions to the issue of unsafe monuments and headstones to improve the appearance of the cemeteries whilst ensuring public safety.

Monitoring

Number of memorials safety tested each year

Target 25% each year

Number of Sites audited for accessibility

Target 100% by end 2012

Number of sites with DDA compliant access (where identified possible in the audit)

100% by end 2013



xii. Action Plan

An action plan for implementation of the proposals is most important and the Open Spaces Strategy will only be a success by delivery of the action plan. It is proposed that the plan will have a lifespan of three years at which time it will be reviewed for relevance to the ever changing demands of open space.

The document will be assessed annually to monitor progress against targets, to set new goals and to move the proposed improvement programme forward. The Action Plan (appendix 3) has been produced as a separate document for ease of review.

Appendices

- 1. Map of District**
- 2. National and Regional Policies**
- 3. Action Plan**
- 4. Provision for Open Space Sport and Recreation**
- 5. Play Strategy**
- 6. PPG 17 report**



This Open Spaces Strategy has been produced by the Grounds Maintenance Team, Part of Community Services, Harborough District Council.

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