

Bracknell Forest Parks and Open Spaces Strategy (2012)

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1.1 Introduction

This Strategy is about the management and development of recreational green space, particularly in the context of contributing to quality of life.

This fits within a series of policy documents. Of greatest significance are the Bracknell Forest Sustainable Community Strategy and the Bracknell Forest Local Development Framework. Also of direct relevance are the Rights of Way Improvement Plan, Biodiversity Action Plan, Cultural Strategy, and Play Strategy (reference diagram 1). The intention is to expand on key issues and actions of relevance to parks and open spaces but not duplicate this other work.

This document has been produced by Bracknell Forest Council and primarily provides guidance in relation to the management and development of parks and open spaces over the next 5 years. However, green space cuts across many organisations and so this Strategy also provides an important reference in support of activities led by other bodies such as Parish and Town Councils.

This follows on from the Parks & Open Spaces Strategy published by Bracknell Forest Borough Council in February 2002, the main principles of which are still considered valid (reference Appendix 1).

1.2 Vision

The over-arching vision for Bracknell Forest Council is:

- *“To make Bracknell Forest a place where all people can thrive; living, learning and working in a clean, safe and healthy environment.”*

This closely reflects the vision set out within the Sustainable Community Strategy:

- *“Bracknell Forest will have a reputation for its distinguished green landscape and contemporary, vibrant town centre. Contributing to this unique identity will be many neighbourhoods offering accessible facilities to meet individuals’ needs. Local communities will be strengthened with people feeling safe and getting on well together. Ensuring everyone has similar opportunities and is included in public life will enhance confidence in public services. Preserving our green heritage will be key to the future development of the area, integrating environmental concerns into all activities. The Borough will have a prosperous and diverse economy, offering local jobs, personalised public services and a range of ways to spend leisure time. This is a bold vision for all of us which will be achieved through nurturing future and existing generations. A supportive and welcoming borough will help everybody to live happy, independent and successful lives”.*

An accessible, high quality environment is of central importance.

With regards to parks and open spaces, provision was assessed as part of the Bracknell Forest Borough Study of open space, sports, recreational and leisure facilities (Planning Policy Guidance Note 17) October 2006. The resulting vision set out in this study is:

- *“A high quality, accessible network of clean, safe and attractive green spaces and facilities which allow people to improve their health and well-being through recreation and sport now and in the future.”*

1.3 Themes and Objectives

There are 3 key themes that run through this Strategy:

- i. Quantity
- ii. Quality
- iii. Use

This includes:

- Standards of provision
- Activities and functions
- Community involvement

The key objectives are:

A. Provision:

Protect and establish public open space for recreation, play, sport, health, biodiversity, heritage and climate change adaption that is appropriate to need; strategically located; and adaptable to future requirements

B. Maintenance:

Provide safe and welcoming public open space; attain and improve quality standards

C. Use and Enjoyment:

Make sure public open space supports well-being; encourages participation; and facilitates social inclusion

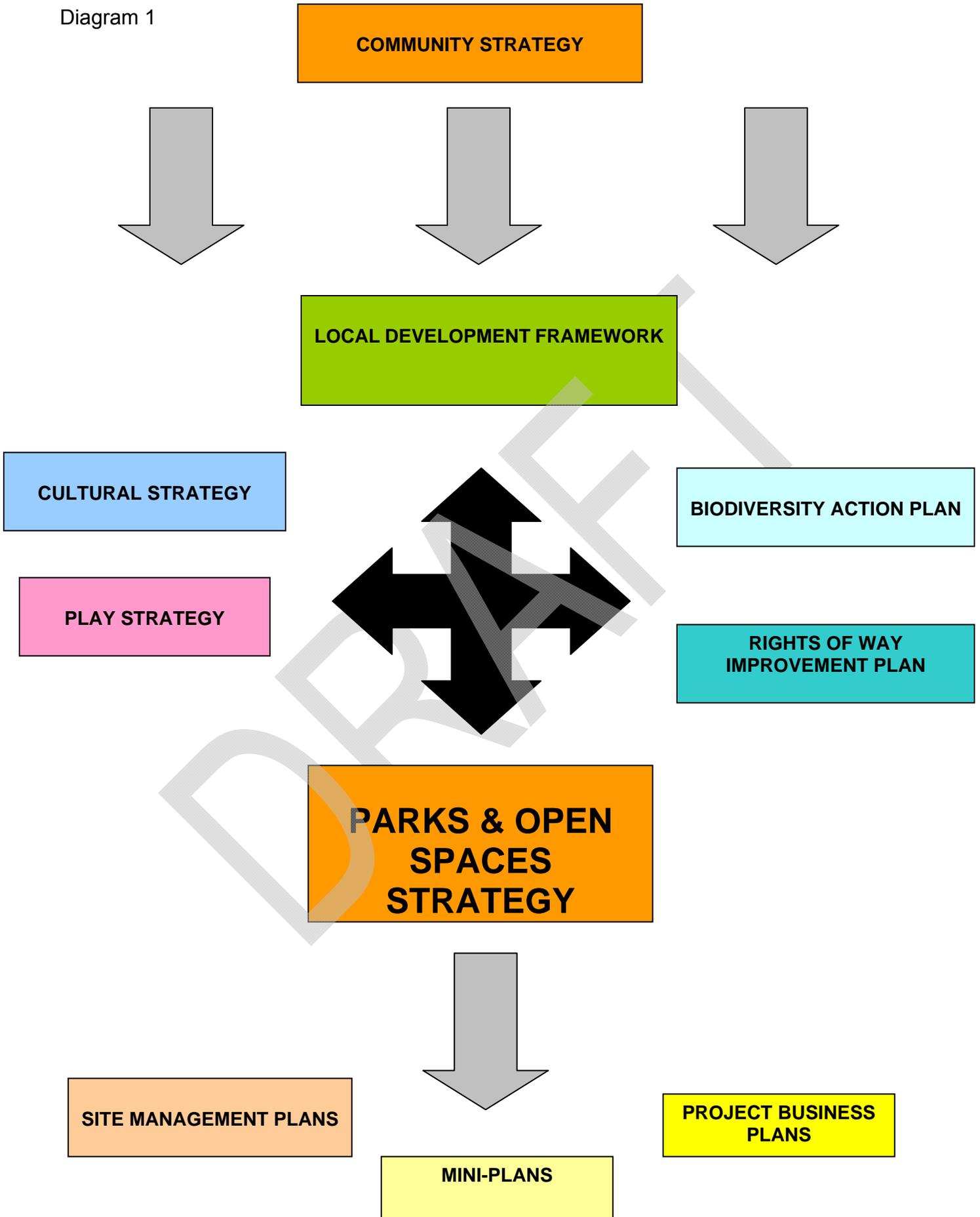
1.4 Priorities

In delivering this Strategy, the focus is on actions relating to:

- Size
- Function
- Distribution
- Access
- Community
- Marketing and Promotion
- Enjoyment and Understanding
- Management

Of greatest importance is sustaining and raising quality standards, together with the provision of parks and open spaces that are of a sufficient size to meet the recreational demands of a growing residential population. This needs to be achieved in the context of increasing pressure to reduce public expenditure, alongside encouraging greater community ownership and involvement.

Diagram 1



2.1 Historic Context

Bracknell Forest has a rich and varied history. The relationship between people and their environment has been a constant theme throughout the last 10,000 years:

- The earliest archaeological finds date from the Mesolithic period (10,000 – 4,000 BC), when the landscape would have been densely wooded, with people living in small groups and thriving by hunting and gathering
- A more settled lifestyle evolved in Neolithic (4,000 – 2,500 BC) and Bronze Age (2,500 BC – 1,000 BC) periods, with people developing agricultural systems and participating in cultural activities. Evidence of this is identifiable within the landscape; particularly at places such as Wildmoor and at Bill Hill
- The Iron Age (1,000 BC to 43 AD) and subsequent arrival of the Romans (to c.410 AD) saw increasing built infrastructure, including features that remain within Swinley Forest such as an Iron Age Hill Fort (today known as Caesar's Camp) and part of the Roman road connecting settlements at London and Reading (today known as the Devil's Highway)

It is from Norman times onwards that Bracknell Forest has been most evidently shaped. After taking the throne of England from the Saxons in 1066, William of Normandy established Windsor as a Royal Hunting Forest. This protected the land from settlement up until the 16th Century when the Crown granted estates to important courtiers (as evident today in places such as South Hill Park).

The period following World War II has had the most visible impact on Bracknell Forest. Extensive bomb and fire damage during World War II (1939 – 1945) created acute housing shortages within big cities such as London. The New Towns Act 1946 was passed in response and enabled the setting up Development Corporations to plan and create new towns. One of these was Bracknell New Town.

A Development Corporation was set up with the aim to “*develop a total community*” and the motto of “*Home, Industry, Leisure*”

2.2 Natural Environment

Bracknell Forest is of great importance for biodiversity and landscape:

- More than 12% of Bracknell Forest is within a designated Special Protection Area (1333 hectares)
- 330 hectares of the borough are within a Special Area of Conservation
- There are 9 designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (1825 hectares)
- 62 Local Wildlife Sites designated by the Berkshire Nature Conservation Forum (228 hectares)
- 10 Local Nature Reserves (87 hectares)
- Approximately 35% of Bracknell Forest is identified as Green Belt

The Bracknell Forest Biodiversity Action Plan sets out key actions for priority habitats and species.

Of particular significance is the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. This is a network of heathland sites designated for their ability to provide a habitat for the internationally important bird species of woodlark, nightjar and Dartford warbler. This area is protected at the highest level, through European legislation under the EU Birds Directive.

2.3 Strategic Significance

Provision of and access to public open space is recognised as being a key contributor to well-being and quality of life. This includes being central to:

- Character of the built environment
- Social functions; especially health, recreation and play, social inclusion, and community development
- Environmental quality
- Economic vitality
- Sustainability

The importance is such that creation, protection and management of public open space is recognised within a broad legislative framework (reference Appendix 2) and is also imbedded within key policy documents (reference Appendix 3).

Medium Term Objective 3 for Bracknell Forest Council is to *Keep Bracknell Forest clean and green, including work to:*

- *maintain our open spaces to a high standard*
- *complete the transformation of the grounds at South Hill Park*
- *increase the amount of green space that is accessible to residents*

Medium Term Objective 6 is to *Support opportunities for health and well being:*

- *support sports activities and facilities within the Borough*

2.4 Localism and the Big Society

The current Coalition Government is committed to decentralisation; shifting responsibility and power to local communities. As part of The Localism Act 2011, six actions of decentralisation have been identified:

1. Lift the burden of bureaucracy
2. Empower communities to do things their way
3. Increase local control of public finance
4. Diversify the supply of public services
5. Open up Government to public scrutiny
6. Strengthen accountability to local people

Underlying concepts include:

- i) Where services are enjoyed collectively, they should be delivered by accountable community groups.
- ii) Where the scale is too large or those using a service are too dispersed, they should be delivered by local institutions, subject to democratic checks and balances, enabled by full transparency.

2.5 Customer Research and Community Feedback

Local residents place a high value on the contribution that parks and open spaces make to living in Bracknell Forest.

There are an estimated 1.89 million annual visits to BFC managed parks and open spaces (this is a conservative estimate calculated using visitor data from a number of representative sites. The actual number likely to be significantly higher. Resident surveys carried out over the last 5 years indicate that more than 80% of residents use parks and open spaces, with just under half at least weekly.

As set out by the Audit Commission in the Bracknell Forest Area Assessment (9 December 2009) under the heading *Desirable Place*:

- *The 2008 Place Survey found 78.8 per cent of residents were satisfied with parks and open spaces, well above the national and regional averages.*

A Joint Neighbourhood Survey in 2009 (carried out in partnership with Thames Valley Police as part of a neighbourhood consultation undertaken by the Neighbourhood Action Groups in autumn 2009 and involving more than 6,600 residents) highlighted

- *That parks and open spaces were for many residents the best aspect of living in Bracknell Forest, closely followed by access to nature and then health services; while 84 per cent of people were satisfied with their local area as a place to live.*

This does not mean that complacency can occur. Based on the Household Survey undertaken in 2005, the indication is that up to 17.7% of respondents do not use parks and open spaces (6.12% in the BFC Satisfaction Survey carried out in 2006).

Issues highlighted within the Household Survey (Strategic Leisure Ltd, 2005) include:

- Lack of time
- Age and / or ability
- Distance
- Safety and anti-social behaviour

2.6 Bracknell Forest Council

Bracknell Forest Council directly manages publicly accessible land providing for outdoor recreation, biodiversity and landscape amenity. This includes urban parks, sports pitches, woodland and heathland; comprising more than 80 sites, managed as a portfolio of approximately 70 recreational green spaces, totalling 315 hectares.

The majority of these assets have been provided as part of the building of Bracknell New Town and associated growth of the borough of Bracknell Forest. Land has been acquired by the Council as essential infrastructure forming part of major residential developments by the New Town Corporation (and subsequent bodies); and more recently through the private sector.

With regards to spatial planning policy, quantity standards for Open Space of Public Value (OSPV) have been extensively audited in line with previous Government policy (PPG17). Requirements have been set by the Council at a level considered appropriate to facilitate

sustainable development and support delivery of quality of life. The standard is set at 4.3ha per 1000 residents and comprises:

- Active OSPV (for example, tennis and other courts, sports pitches, kick-about areas, children's play areas and allotments)
- Passive OSPV (for example, country parks, natural and semi-natural open space, green corridors, amenity open space, woodlands and recreational paths/trails)

In addition to this OSPV, green space provision is required as part of the council's strategy for avoiding and mitigating the impact of development upon the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. In consultation with Natural England and other effected local authorities, a calculation has been made of the required amount, size, location and nature, of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGSs) that would be appropriate for residential development in the Borough. This is set at 8ha per 1000 residents.

Whilst the provision of land management services is generally considered to be a discretionary activity, there are a number of significant statutory powers and duties that apply to BFC. This includes powers to acquire land for recreation (Open Spaces Act 1906); powers to create nature reserves (The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949); a duty to conserve natural beauty and amenity in the exercise of functions relating to land (The Countryside Act 1968); a duty to manage land so that account is taken of its wildlife interest (the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981); establishment of Local Access Forums to advise on access to land for all types of outdoor recreation (Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000); and a duty to safeguard and enhance biodiversity (Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2005).

BFC has a rich history in supporting and utilising local volunteers in the management and maintenance of public open space, with high levels of satisfaction and use. This ranges from leasing of land to local conservation groups through to individuals undertaking practical tasks. Notable success has included local groups identifying projects and raising funds to improve parks and open spaces.

The Council is nationally recognised as managing recreational green spaces well; as evident through achieving Green Flag Awards and success in securing external investment from organisations including The Heritage Lottery Fund and Natural England. As a land owner and manager, Bracknell Forest Council has been able to utilise this asset base at a strategic level. A key example of this is the provision of SANGs (as referenced above) to ensure avoidance and mitigation of negative impacts on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area; enabling the release of land for new housing.

Current policies (and related legal agreements) include extending this asset base; particularly linked to the provision of public open space as part of major developments such as the Parks, Wykery Copse and Jennett's Park. Transfer of land includes payment to the Council of commuted sums to fund the first few years of management and maintenance. Added to this; new legislation (Flood and Water Management Act 2010) places responsibilities onto BFC to adopt and maintain Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) which serve more than one property. Initially, this is to be funded centrally (for the first 5 years). For larger housing developments (as set out in the emerging Site Allocations Supplementary Planning Document), SUDS are likely to be integrated within public open space (e.g. Amen Corner, Broadmoor Farm).

3.1 Green Infrastructure

“Green infrastructure is the physical environment within and between our cities, towns and villages. It is a network of multi-functional open spaces, including formal parks, gardens, woodlands, green corridors, waterways, street trees and open countryside. It comprises all environmental resources, and thus a green infrastructure approach also contributes towards sustainable resource management.” (As summarised within the Green Infrastructure Planning guide developed through a collaboration of regional and national organisations by researchers and practitioners based at North East Community Forests, University of Newcastle upon Tyne and Northumbria University, 2006)

Natural England defines Green Infrastructure as *“a strategically planned and delivered network of high quality green spaces and other environmental features. It should be designed and managed as a multifunctional resource capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities. Green Infrastructure includes parks, open spaces, playing fields, woodlands, allotments and private gardens.”*

Green infrastructure can also be identified according to the primary functions being served:

Function	Characteristics
Play	Spaces providing opportunities targeted towards children and young people. This is becoming increasingly significant in relation to encouraging healthy, active lifestyles and enabling social development. Provision can range from specific, equipped play areas; to less formal places allowing for and encouraging unstructured, imaginative play and / or socialising
Sport	Sites supporting sport and leisure activities such as outdoor ball games and keep fit
Formal	Designed, landscaped areas specifically laid out as publicly accessible green space. This includes parks and gardens. In addition (especially within urban settings), formal green space encompasses civic spaces such as squares, public art, planted borders and flower beds
Informal	This can encompass semi-natural land with low key or 'defacto' public access
Natural	Biodiversity rich spaces including heathland, meadows, river corridors, ponds and woodlands
Linear	Public Rights of Way, Cycle Tracks and trails
Buffer	Highway verges, embankments and boundaries
Climate Change	A relatively new concept, this recognises the vital role that green infrastructure plays in mitigating the environmental impacts from increasing development pressure and associated pollution. Examples include land drainage features such as balancing ponds

3.2 Green Spaces

As set out by Greenspace Scotland; *“Green spaces are the 'green lungs' of our towns and cities contributing to improving people's physical and mental health by providing places for informal recreation - walking, cycling, sitting, socialising and children's play - and 'breathing spaces' to take time out from the stresses of modern life. They bring the countryside into our towns and cities, and make it accessible from our 'backdoors'.”*

Under the ‘Cleaner Safer Greener Communities’ initiative (How to...Create Quality Parks and Open Spaces), the term ‘green space’ is used to cover a range of managed and more natural spaces which are publicly accessible.

Planning Policy Guidance Note 17: Sport and Recreation sets out a typology for defining open spaces.

- *Parks and gardens, including urban parks, country parks and formal gardens*
- *Natural and semi-natural urban green spaces, including woodlands, urban forestry, scrub, grasslands, wetlands, open and running water, wastelands and derelict open land*
- *Green corridors, including river and canal banks, cycleways, and rights of way*
- *Outdoor sports facilities – owned publicly or privately, and with natural or artificial surfaces – including tennis courts, bowling greens, sports pitches, golf courses, athletics tracks, and playing fields*
- *Amenity green space – often around housing – including formal recreation spaces, domestic gardens and village greens*
- *Provision for children and teenagers, including play areas, skateboard parks, outdoor basketball hoops, and informal ‘hanging out’ areas and teenage shelters*
- *Allotments, community gardens and urban farms*
- *Cemeteries and churchyards*
- *Accessible countryside in urban fringe areas*
- *Civic spaces, including civic and market squares, and other hardsurfaced areas designed for pedestrians.*

3.3 Open Space of Public Value

This strategy is guided by research set out within Bracknell Forest Borough Study of open space, sports, recreational and leisure facilities (PPG17) Final Report October 2006; which assessed 324 sites, covering 2,473 hectares.

The PPG17 Study focused on Open Space of Public Value (OSPV) which is defined as:

i) Public open space which is land available for satisfying the recreational needs of the local community, such as pitches, play areas or country parks and is usually maintained by the Borough or Parishes

ii) Private open space which is land that serves a similar purpose but may have very limited public access, such as golf courses and horse riding centres operated by organisations or trusts; or no public access as with Ministry of Defence land.

Specific classifications used are:

- *Parks & Gardens (A)*
- *Amenity Greenspace (B)*
- *Incidental Open Space and Highways Verge (C)*
- *Natural and Semi-Natural Open Space (D)*
- *Urban Woodlands (E)*
- *Green Corridors (F)*
- *Provision for Children & Young People (G)*
- *Outdoor Sports Facilities (H)*
- *School Playing Fields (I)*
- *Civic Spaces (J)*
- *Allotments (K)*
- *Cemeteries and Churchyards (L)*

3.4 Parks and Open Spaces

This Parks and Open Spaces Strategy relates most directly to recreational green spaces, as managed by Bracknell Forest Council Parks & Countryside service. This currently comprises:

- 83 sites; equating to 70 recreational green spaces totalling 315 hectares which includes;
 - 18 play areas (of which 3 sites have more than one play area)
 - 2 skate parks
 - 8 tennis courts
 - 10 soccer pitches
 - 1 baseball diamond
 - 1 sports pavilion

Added to this, BFC also has powers and duties relating to:

- 50 miles of Public Rights of Way (153 separate paths)
- 244 hectares of Open Access Land

As evident from the definitions highlighted above, parks and open spaces are significant components within Green Space, which in turn forms an essential part of Green Infrastructure. However, this document is not a Green Infrastructure Strategy. A notable exclusion is incidental green space providing for features such as landscaping, screening and buffering within and between developments. Whilst many of the principles and actions set out within this document are applicable, this Strategy does not specifically encompass green space which has little or no direct recreational value. Outside of the provision of designed features such as Local Areas for Play, this Strategy focuses on sites of approximately 0.4 hectares and above.

4.1 Strategy Process

The main purpose of this Strategy is to influence, guide and support work by Bracknell Forest Council and other organisations in the provision and management of parks and open spaces throughout the borough. This includes the development of new provision alongside maintenance and improvement of existing facilities.

The process for producing this strategy is based on considering:
Priority ➡ Objective ➡ Action

Key issues relating to green space are identified through a range of sources. Of particular relevance are:

- Review and analysis of existing documentation, strategies and policies
- Research and survey work
- Observation and liaison with stakeholders

Various tools have been utilised including a PEST (Political, Economic, Social and Technological) analysis, SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis and Risk Assessment.

4.2 Example Issues

The table below summarises issues that are considered pertinent to the management and development of parks and open spaces across Bracknell Forest. These issues have been identified and assessed as part of the strategy production process and subsequently inform the key objectives and actions.

Issue	Summary
Supply:	
Land availability	Bracknell Forest is in an area of high development pressure. In addition to creating competing demands on available space, intensity of development has a significant impact on land values. The demand for residential development creates increasing need for green infrastructure / green space, set against escalating costs to enable appropriate provision.
Design:	
Location and scale	<p>In striving to maximise economic return, the risk is that green infrastructure is of secondary concern. This can result in green spaces on land which is perceived to have the lowest value, leading to provision adjacent to major transport corridors; concealed spaces to the rear of buildings ('backland' sites); poor quality drainage; small and / or fragmented sites and creation of 'dead' space. When this occurs, the result is often poorly used sites which are subject to misuse such as fly-tipping and vandalism.</p> <p>Additionally, where development such as housing is immediately adjacent to open space without the inclusion of a buffer, this can lead to future issues such as increased risk of subsidence; particularly if the original building is extended through permitted development. This risk is highest where there is a combination of clay soil and trees.</p>
Specification and delivery of works	Developers may look to use materials and planting which is low cost, readily available, easy to use and quick to establish. This can be inappropriate to biodiversity and landscape character; have a short life span; and / or require extensive maintenance. The issue is further compounded where poor quality construction is evident.
Regulation, standards and adoption	<p>Design can be constrained or compromised through regulatory issues (e.g. Highway requirements). Whilst it is important to ensure safe spaces, this should not act as a barrier to innovation, character and quality.</p> <p>Linked to this, factors relating to adoption and future revenue costs can have a negative influence on use of materials, planting and layout. The opposite can also occur, whereby adoption and maintenance are not properly considered. If adequate resources are not factored and secured, the result can be unmanageable spaces, rapid deterioration, and neglect.</p>
Function:	
Audience	<p>Changing population patterns can have a major effect on the suitability of facilities provided within green space.</p> <p>In establishing the New Town, a priority was placed on the provision of numerous, small play areas adjacent to housing. In some instances, the legacy is provision of low quality facilities targeted for toddlers within a location no longer characterised by families with young children. These sites can become ad-hoc (albeit much needed) meeting places for teenagers, with associated issues relating to noise and disturbance.</p> <p>The popularity of different activities varies over time; particularly with the advent of</p>

	<p>new influences. Less traditional sports and activities can have a relatively high profile (e.g. baseball and cheer leading). Wheeled sports facilities (skate boarding, roller blades and BMX cycles) are currently very popular with young people.</p> <p>Play space provision is of high importance. A growing body of evidence demonstrates clear links between social development and access to play. A particular concern is that children are growing up risk averse due to imbalanced perceptions of the dangers associated with accidents and contact with strangers.</p> <p>In addition to the physical health benefits of an active lifestyle, interaction with nature is recognised as a valuable tool in helping to manage conditions such as Attention Deficit Disorder. Fewer than 10% of children play in wild places compared with 50% a generation ago (30 years) and the roaming radius for children has declined by 90% (source; Natural Childhood, Tom Walker 2012).</p>
Biodiversity	<p>Under European and national legislation, organisations such as Bracknell Forest Council have a duty to assess whether there is a risk of any plan or proposal having a significant impact on the integrity of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA). As a relevant body, the Council is legally required to not undertake activities which will have a negative impact.</p> <p>Natural England has identified a link between residential development, recreation and bird populations within the SPA. The provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs) is pivotal in ensuring that development proposals do not cause harm to the special qualities of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. Accessible, well managed green spaces, with high natural characteristics are essential in providing for recreation outside of the designated SPA.</p> <p>Bracknell Forest has diverse habitats and is home to a number of rare and protected species. This is reflected in designations such as Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Local Wildlife Sites (LWS). Buffer zones and wildlife corridors are increasingly important in minimising impact from development.</p>
Management:	
Roles / and responsibility	<p>Co-ordination within and between agencies can be disjointed. Opportunities for identifying and delivering efficiencies, including best use of available expertise are not necessarily in place. Duplication of effort can occur, with separate bodies having similar (or even conflicting) management responsibilities within a particular location. The opposite can also occur, whereby no organisation is tasked with; acknowledges; and / or adopts management responsibility for an area or activity.</p> <p>At a national level, the Localism Agenda (and Localism Act 2011), promotes greater decentralisation including mechanisms for local communities to challenge and bid for assets. The Big Society is central to this agenda, with central government looking to devolve power, money and knowledge to elected local representatives, frontline public service professionals, social enterprises, charities, co-ops, community groups, neighbourhoods and individuals.</p> <p>Within the borough, there are some excellent examples of partnership working between agencies, services and community groups. These provide valuable models, demonstrating the benefits that can be achieved through closer liaison and sharing of resources.</p>
Funding	<p>Effective site presence is widely recognised as being of high value in generating confidence within the public to best utilise green spaces. In addition to addressing concerns about anti-social behaviour, site presence enables more pro-active maintenance including grass cutting, litter picking, tending to planting and borders, scrub management, interpretation and information provision. This includes</p>

	<p>encouraging and supporting volunteers. Revenue budgets are under increasing pressure and without high levels of funding, it is extremely difficult to provide extensive, visible presence across the borough.</p> <p>Green spaces are often established through capital programmes; through public sector funding and / or linked to private sector developments. Effective maintenance maximises durability and longevity; however, deterioration does occur. The age and condition of many facilities is such that they need to be updated and / or renewed.</p>
Entrances, boundaries and encroachment	<p>Maintenance is often focused on key features within a site, resulting in limited management of entrances and boundaries. This can lead to residents and visitors having a negative first impression, which subsequently informs the overall experience. This is further compounded if land adjoining neighbouring properties is perceived as a 'buffer' zone and so subject to minimal intervention. Lack of active management is a contributory factor in land encroachment, creation of unauthorised entrances, and dumping of waste.</p>
Community:	
Participation	<p>Whilst satisfaction ratings and levels of use are high, the indication is that there are residents who do not use parks and open spaces. This is in part due to choice and amount of free time; however, action is needed to address actual and perceived barriers to participation.</p>
Engagement	<p>Significant added value is achieved by actively involving local residents in the management and development of green spaces. In addition to ensuring accountability, local communities provide an excellent resource base to strengthen management.</p> <p>Within Bracknell Forest Council, the Take Pride initiative has been set up to help mobilise public interest. This links well to a long history of community volunteering in conservation.</p>
Behaviour	<p>Although at a relatively low scale, misuse of green spaces is evident. Inappropriate activities include dog fouling, litter, fly-tipping, vandalism and illegal use of motorised vehicles. The perception of the scale of these activities is often more pronounced than the reality; however, the issue is such that it acts as a barrier to participation and enjoyment.</p> <p>Partnership working is essential in addressing these issues and considerable success is being achieved through joint working between different public services Rangers and Police Community Support Officers provide a strong, visible site presence. The Bracknell Forest Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) has responsibility for planning and delivering solutions that will continue to ensure that Bracknell Forest remains one of the safest places to live and work in Berkshire.</p> <p>A key focus is placed on education and awareness. In order to fully address misuse of green space, Bracknell Forest Borough Council and partners also need to utilise enforcement powers.</p>

4.3 SWOT Analysis

The table below outlines an analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats pertinent to the provision and management of parks and open spaces within Bracknell Forest.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and distribution of green spaces • Range of activities and facilities provided • Landscape, biodiversity and heritage value <p>Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of organisations involved • Ability to secure and allocate resources • Expertise within a wide range of service areas and 'specialism' • Liaison with key stakeholders • Joint working <p>Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High levels of public use and satisfaction • Local groups and volunteers - invaluable resource • Stakeholder liaison • Events and activities – wide range across the borough <p>Political</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong political and corporate support 	<p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land availability – especially to provide larger sites • Limited funding, staffing and related support services to address the wide variety of facilities and responsibilities <p>Social Inclusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public perceptions of safety and behaviour • Awareness of facilities and responsible bodies • Identifying and meeting the needs of under-represented audiences <p>Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interaction within and between agencies – clarity on roles and responsibilities; inconsistent culture and capacity • Bureaucracy, processes and procedures <p>Political</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imbalance between activities competing for resources
Opportunities	Threats
<p>Strategic Approach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'National Agendas' - Healthy Living, Green Infrastructure, Social Inclusion • Delivery of key plans, policies and objectives • Political and Corporate support <p>Infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of new facilities and improvements linked to housing developments <p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population growth and associated development enabling allocation of private sector funding (through legal agreements) <p>Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership working <p>Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public awareness / profile • Increasing community participation, including under-represented groups • Initiatives such as Extended Schools 	<p>Political</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing governments and agendas • Emphasis on initiatives and not the essential supporting infrastructure <p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial pressures, including increasing demands on revenue budgets • Potential down-grading of discretionary activity <p>Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide range of agencies and roles • Potential lack of focus and / or disproportionate influence • Expectations <p>Infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing development pressures on public open space • Escalating land values and competing uses

4.4 Principles

Key factors relating to parks and open spaces include:

- Size, location, function and distribution: ensuring that the right facility is in the best place and is fit for purpose
- Quality and management: identifying and securing resources to enable year on year improvements, including the production and delivery of management plans and partnership working to optimise the use of skills and expertise
- Community engagement: active involvement of local people, alongside addressing barriers to participation, including perceptions and behaviour

Following on from this are 3 key themes:

- Quantity
- Quality
- Use

These encompass:

- Access to green space
- Standards of provision
- The range of activities and functions facilitated
- Community engagement
- Management and maintenance

4.5 Objectives

The above issues, priorities and themes translate into the 3 key objectives which underpin this strategy:

A. Provision:

Protect and establish public open space for recreation, play, sport, health, biodiversity, heritage and climate change adaption that is appropriate to need; strategically located; and adaptable to future requirements

B. Maintenance:

Provide safe and welcoming public open space; attain and improve quality standards

C. Use and Enjoyment:

Make sure public open space supports well-being; encourages participation; and facilitates social inclusion

4.6 Actions

The management and maintenance of public open space by Bracknell Forest Council is prioritised with greater resource allocated towards the most strategic, highest profile sites. In providing land management services, the emphasis is on:

- a) Recreational open spaces providing mitigation and infrastructure to enable the Council to deliver sustainable development / growth e.g. Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs)
- b) Historic parkland and heritage sites e.g. Registered Park of Special Historic Interest and Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- c) Safeguarding and enhancing biodiversity, natural beauty, landscape quality and amenity e.g. Local Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves, woodlands / heathlands
- d) Access land / strategic recreational corridors e.g. heathland, way-marked trails, bridleway networks
- e) Empowering and involving local communities e.g. Doorstep Greens / Breathing Spaces
- f) Healthy Active Lifestyles e.g. outdoor sports pitches / play areas

Most sites managed by BFC are multi-functional; delivering more than one of the above priorities.

The action plan for this Strategy is set out in Section 6. This includes activities relating to function, distribution, access, community, marketing and promotion, enjoyment and understanding, and management. Of greatest importance is sustaining and raising quality standards, alongside the provision of parks and open spaces that are of a sufficient size to meet the recreational demands of a growing residential population.

5.1 Quantity

The Six Acre Standard

Recommended national standards for outdoor playing space are promoted by Fields in Trust.

This body, formerly known as the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA), was founded in 1925 to *'help ensure that every man, woman and child in Great Britain and Northern Ireland would have the opportunity of participating in outdoor recreational activity within a reasonable distance of home during their leisure hours.'*

As set out within The Six Acre Standard (2001 edition):

The suggested minimum national standard for outdoor playing space that should be adopted by all local planning authorities is 2.4 hectares (6 acres) per 1000 persons.

Component parts to this are:

Outdoor playing space for sport:

- A minimum standard of 1.6 ha (4 acres) per 1000 people for outdoor sport
- An important element of the above recommendations is a specific allocation of 1.2 ha (3 acres) for pitch sports

Outdoor playing space for children:

- A minimum standard of outdoor space for children's play of 0.8 ha (2 acres) per 1000 people

This recommendation for playing space is based on total population figures and not on the number of children. The guidance refers to two elements:

1. Designated areas for children and young people containing a range of facilities and an environment that has been designed to provide focussed opportunities for outdoor play
2. Casual or informal playing space within housing areas

Playing space is defined as *'space that is accessible and available to the general public, and of a suitable size and nature, for sport, active recreation or children's play.'*

This is not the same as open space which includes outdoor playing space as an important component but also encompasses other types and uses of land.

The Standard recommends a hierarchical approach, identifying the need for the location of children's play areas to be based on accessibility related to time rather than distance.

Generally, children's play areas should be accessible without having to cross main roads, railways or waterways.

Summary of Characteristics of Children's Play Areas						
Facility	Walking Time	Walking Distance	Radial (straight line distance)	Minimum size Activity Zone	Nearest Dwelling	Characteristic
LAP Local Area of Play	1 min	100m	60m	100 m ²	5m from Activity Zone	Small low key games area (may include demonstrative play features) Provision is for young children (to age 6)
LEAP Local Equipped Area for Play	5 min	400m	240m	400 m ²	10m from Activity Zone	5 types of play equipment, small games area Targeted towards children of early school age (4 -8)
NEAP Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play	15 min	1,000m	600m	1,000 m ²	30m from Activity Zone	8 types of play equipment, opportunities for ball games or wheeled activities Focus on older children, with some provision for younger ages

The Six Acre Standard also recommends:

- A travelling time of approximately 20 minutes by motor transport to synthetic pitches or athletic tracks
- 10-15 minutes cycle ride or walk to local facilities
- Local playing fields should be available within 1.2 kilometres of all dwellings

In 2008, Fields in Trust published 'Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play' as an update to the Six Acre Standard. This publication identifies benchmark standards for Outdoor Sport and Outdoor Play based on survey returns from organisations across England.

Benchmark Standard Recommendations for Outdoor Sport

Playing Pitches (such as football, cricket or lacrosse, including training areas):

Type of Local Authority	Benchmark Standard (hectares per 1000 population)
Urban	1.15
Rural	1.72
Overall	1.20

All Outdoor Sport (including bowls, athletics and tennis):

Type of Local Authority	Benchmark Standard (hectares per 1000 population)
Urban	1.60
Rural	1.76
Overall	1.60

All Playing Space:

Type of Local Authority	Benchmark Standard (hectares per 1000 population)
Designated Equipped Playing Space	0.25
Informal Playing Space	0.55
Children's	0.80

Whilst the Six Acre Standard provides a valuable reference, a quantitative approach does not necessarily result in the most effective level of provision.

The recommendation set out in the Bracknell Forest Borough Study of open space, sports, recreational and leisure facilities (PPG17) October 2006 is that provision of equipped play areas should be based on accessibility rather than per head of population and planned for at a local level on a site by site basis.

National standards do however provide a valuable tool to help determine local standards, and to assess this against other areas.

Sports Pitches

Sport England provides a range of guidance on providing for sports pitches and associated facilities.

Their recommended approach for the strategic provision of playing pitches is based on analysis of supply and demand (as set out within Towards a Level Playing Field):

Stage 1	Identify teams
Stage 2	Calculate the number of home games per team
Stage 3	Assess the total number of home games per week
Stage 4	Establish demand for games at different times
Stage 5	Define pitch requirements used / required on each day
Stage 6	Establish pitch availability
Stage 7	Assess findings
Stage 8	Identify policy options and solutions

Whilst this provides a useful tool, it is of limited value when assessing needs for new communities. In areas such as Bracknell Forest, pressure for new residential development is high and so the number of teams currently in existence (Stage 1) may fall short of what is needed and / or likely to be created.

The recommended local standard for Bracknell Forest is to maintain the existing level of playing pitch provision and to seek pro-rata increase commensurate with population increases.

Standards for Accessible Natural Greenspace – ANGSt (Natural England)

As set out on the Natural England website; “Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt) provides a set of benchmarks for ensuring access to places near to where people live. These standards recommend that people living in towns and cities should have:

- an accessible natural greenspace of at least 2 hectares in size, no more than 300 metres (5 minutes walk) from home
- at least one accessible 20 hectare site within two kilometres of home
- one accessible 100 hectare site within five kilometres of home
- one accessible 500 hectare site within ten kilometres of home
- one hectare of statutory Local Nature Reserves per thousand population”

ANGSt is based on three principles:

- a) Improving access
- b) Improving naturalness
- c) Improving connectivity

5.2 The Bracknell Forest Quantity Standard

Local quantity standards for open space provision in Bracknell Forest reflect the distinctive features of the Borough (as summarised in Section 2); creating and sustaining an environmental character which is highly valued by local residents. This draws on guidance (as summarised above), with national recommendations being considered as a default minimum should it not always be possible to secure new provision in line with the defined local standards.

The local quantity standards are set out in policy; specifically the Bracknell Forest Local Plan 2002, and the Bracknell Forest Borough Limiting the Impact of Development Supplementary Planning Document 2007 (forming part of the Local Development Framework).

Provision has been audited and needs assessed, in accordance with national policy and guidance, as set out within the Bracknell Forest Borough Study of open space, sports, recreational and leisure facilities (PPG17) October 2006.

The minimum recommended standard of open space provision:

- 4.3 hectares of Open Space of Public Value per 1000 persons

This standard comprises:

- Active open space at 2 hectares per 1000 persons
- Passive open space at 2.3 hectares per 1000 persons

Added to this:

Open space standard to mitigate development impacts on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area:

- 8 hectares per 1000 new population

A summary of open space quantities (as assessed) is set out in Appendix 7. Generally, Bracknell Forest is well served. The Study of open space, sports, recreational and leisure facilities (PPG17) indicates some 324 sites; totalling 2,473 hectares.

This indicates an average site size of 7.6 hectares. This figure is somewhat misleading as it includes 3 significant parcels of land owned and managed by The Crown Estate and Forestry Commission (two of which comprise significant parts of the designated Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area).

Outside of the SPA, the provision of parks and open spaces is characterised by numerous small sites located close to residential areas; with an average site size of 4.4 hectares.

5.3 Quality

Extensive guidance is available to help identify and deliver high quality standards in both the design and maintenance of parks and open spaces. This ranges from organisations such as the Design Council (incorporating CABI) and sport governing bodies (e.g. the FA); through to the British Standards Institute.

With regards to this strategy, particular attention is placed on the following;

Fields in Trust

Community safety is identified as central to the design of outdoor playing space. Issues such as vandalism, graffiti, litter and dog fouling are all contributing factors that can result in public dissatisfaction, and even exclusion.

Much can be achieved through good design that recognises how the environment can influence behaviour.

For Children's Play Areas, as a matter of general practice, they should be:

- Sited in open welcoming locations and not be tucked away on backland sites with access via narrow alleys or paths enclosed by high fences
- Separated from major vehicle movements and accessible from pedestrian routes
- Located sufficiently far away from dwellings to reduce the impact of noise and disturbance
- Overlooked from dwellings or well used pedestrian routes
- Provided with seating for parents and carers
- Fitted with play equipment that has been designed, manufactured, installed and maintained in full accordance with EN1176, EN1177 and BS7188

Soft landscaping is of high importance. In addition to supporting landscape character, biodiversity, and safety; the use of planting and natural features enhances experience of the user, particularly through sensory stimulation (colour, smell, shade and light). Management and maintenance are also recognised as being of fundamental importance.

Play England

10 principles for designing successful play spaces are summarised within Design for Play, A guide to creating successful play spaces (2008). Successful play spaces:

- are 'bespoke'
- are well located
- make use of natural elements
- provide a wide range of play experiences
- are accessible to both disabled and non-disabled children
- meet community needs
- allow children of different ages to play together
- build in opportunities to experience risk and challenge
- are sustainable and appropriately maintained
- allow for change and evolution

Play England has also published guidance on quality assessments for play areas.

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)

RoSPA runs a play quality award scheme. Play Value is assessed against:

1. Site overall
2. Ambience
3. Categories for which the site has been designed (e.g. toddlers, juniors, teenagers)

Sport England

Active Design is an initiative commissioned by Sport England to promote new environments that offer opportunities for communities to be naturally active as part of their daily life. Priorities are based on 3 'A's':

- Improving Accessibility
- Enhancing Amenity
- Increasing Awareness

Sport England also provides guidance on design of features such as Multi Use Games Areas (MUGA) and pavilions.

Secured by Design

This is an initiative led by the Police. Under the scheme, awards are given in recognition of best practice in crime prevention through environmental design. An associated checklist provides useful guidance on design and management issues which should be addressed.

Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, local authorities have a duty to consider crime prevention and community safety within decision making.

Natural England

The document, 'Nature Nearby' Accessible Natural Greenspace Guidance (2010) sets out quality criteria as part of Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGst). This includes ways in which habitat improvement can be achieved in greenspace areas that are not rich in biodiversity e.g. opening culverts, naturalising streams, creating meadow areas on slopes, wild flower planting, and differential mowing around the edges of open spaces.

Reference is made to encouraging local ownership and the value of involving local people and schools in improving the wildlife value of open spaces and how this helps to meet the Biodiversity Duty for Local Authorities (NERC Act, Section 40) and achieve National Indicator targets (NI197) for local sites.

Specific reference is made to quality in management of Local Nature Reserves and measures to make them visitor destinations secure local ownership and encourage active volunteering. This includes:

- An active local community / friends' group that supports the reserve
- Junior management groups

- Ongoing support to volunteers from the local authority or responsible management authority in training volunteers across a wide range of skills, e.g. guided walks and play schemes, practical conservation tasks, visitor information and interpretation, publicity, fundraising, species and habitat monitoring, arts and culture projects
- A visitor travel plan to secure sustainable access to the LNR
- An access plan that considers the overall physical accessibility of the site for all users
- A visitor and education access plan that considers the diversity of its local community and potential visitor audience

Green Flag Award Standards

The Green Flag Award is the benchmark national standard for parks and green spaces in the UK.

Since 2009, the Green Flag Award scheme has been managed by a new consortium, comprising:

- Keep Britain Tidy - an environmental charity and the anti-litter campaign for England. Keep Britain Tidy also run programmes such as Eco-Schools, Blue Flag and Quality Coast Awards for beaches
- British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) - an environmental conservation charity which supports and promotes volunteering throughout the UK
- GreenSpace - a registered charity which works to improve parks and green spaces by raising awareness, involving communities and creating skilled professionals.

Known collectively as the Green Flag Plus Partnership, the consortium manages the scheme in England on behalf of Communities and Local Government.

In 2011, 4 parks in Bracknell Forest successfully achieved Green Flag Awards (3 of the awards including sites managed by Bracknell Forest Council).

Summary of Green Flag Award Criteria:

1. **A welcoming place:** When approaching or entering the park/green space, the overall impression for any member of the community regardless of the purpose of their visit should be positive and inviting. There should be:

- Good and safe access
- Good signage to and in the park/green space
- Equal access for all members of the community

2. **Healthy, safe and secure:** The park/green space must be a healthy, safe and secure place for all members of the community to use. Any issues that have come to light must be addressed in the management plan and implemented on the ground. New issues that arise must be addressed promptly and appropriately.

- Equipment and facilities must be safe to use
- It must be a secure place for all members of the community to use or traverse
- Dog fouling must be adequately addressed
- Health and safety policies should be in place, in practice and regularly reviewed
- Toilets, drinking water, first aid, public telephones and emergency equipment where relevant (e.g. life belts by water) should be available in or near the park/green space, and be clearly signposted.

3. **Clean and well maintained:** For aesthetic as well as health and safety reasons, issues of cleanliness and maintenance must be adequately addressed, in particular:

Litter and other waste management

The maintenance of grounds, buildings, equipment and other features

A policy on litter, vandalism and maintenance should be in place, in practice and regularly reviewed.

4. **Sustainability:** Methods used in maintaining the park/green space and its facilities should be environmentally sound, relying on best practices available according to current knowledge. Management should be aware of the range of techniques available to them, and demonstrate that informed choices have been made and are regularly reviewed.

Parks/green spaces should:

- Have an environmental policy or charter and management strategy in place, which is in practice and regularly reviewed
- Minimise and justify pesticide use
- Eliminate horticultural peat use
- Recycle waste plant material
- Demonstrate high horticultural and arboricultural standards
- Have energy conservation, pollution reduction, waste recycling, and resource conservation measures

5. **Conservation and heritage:** Particular attention should be paid to the conservation and appropriate management of:

- Natural features, wildlife and fauna
- Landscapes
- Buildings and structural features
- These should serve their function well without placing undue pressure on the surrounding environment

6. **Community involvement:** The park/green space management should actively pursue the involvement of members of the community who represent as many park/green space user groups as possible. The following should be demonstrated:

- Knowledge of user community and levels and patterns of use
- Evidence of community involvement in management and/or developments and results achieved
- Appropriate levels of provision of recreational facilities for all sectors of the community

7. **Marketing:** A marketing strategy should be in place, which is in practice and regularly reviewed

- There should be good provision of information to users, e.g. about management strategies, activities, features, ways to get involved
- The park/green space should be promoted as a community resource

8. **Management:** A management plan or strategy should be in place which reflects the aspirations of Local Agenda 21

- This should clearly and adequately address all of the above criteria and any other relevant aspects of the park/green space's management
- The plan must be actively implemented and regularly reviewed
- A financially sound management of the park/green space must also be demonstrated

Litter

Grades of cleanliness are defined in the Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse issued under section 89(7) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (as published by Defra).

For litter and refuse: Grade A: No litter or refuse Grade B: Predominately free of litter and refuse apart from some small items Grade C: Widespread distribution of litter and/or refuse with minor accumulations Grade D: Heavily affected by litter and/or refuse with significant accumulations

Although the nature and characteristics of land may vary, the principles on which the litter, refuse and detritus are graded remain the same.

The specified target for Bracknell Forest Borough Council is Grade B.

The aspiration within high profile sites such as play areas should be Grade A.

5.4 The Bracknell Forest Quality Standard

Open Spaces of Public Value across the borough have been quality inspected as part of the production of the Bracknell Forest Borough Study of open space, sports, recreational and leisure facilities (PPG17) Final Report October 2006.

Typology	Average Score	Average Rating
A. Parks & Gardens	70%	Very Good
B. Amenity Greenspace	61%	Very Good
C. Incidental Open Space and Highways Verge	Not quality rated	
D. Natural & Semi-Natural Greenspace	64%	Good
E. Urban Woodlands	44%	Average
F. Green Corridors	52%	Good
G. Provision for Children & Young People	48%	Good
H. Outdoor Sports Facilities	66%	Very Good
I. School Playing Fields	Not quality rated	
J. Civic spaces	Not quality rated	
K. Allotments	Quality rated anecdotally	
L. Cemeteries, Churchyards	66%	Very Good

The inspection provides a score which equates to point on a 'quality value line'. This translates to a rating of either Very Poor; Poor; Average; Good; Very Good; or Excellent

This provides a base line from which to measure and monitor success.

Public perception of quality has also been assessed alongside the on-site inspections. This was carried out as part of Door to Door Surveys (Strategic Leisure Ltd). The rating average was Satisfactory to Very Good.

The subsequent aspiration is to deliver the 'Plus One Principle'; whereby the quality score for every site is improved, with 'Good' as the minimum quality standard to be achieved.

PPG17 study - open space quality category	Plus One improvement in quality
Very poor, poor or average quality	Good quality
Good quality	Very good quality
Very good quality	Excellent
Excellent	Maintain excellent

Summary of Bracknell Forest Quality Criteria:

Quality assessment is based on criteria similar to Green Flag Award, encompassing all the critical elements advocated within Planning Policy Guidance 17 (Reference Appendix 6).

Linked to this, there are basic criteria which should be considered as standard.

- All sites should have a well defined entrance with good visibility into the site. Features such as gates should be easy to use and well maintained. The site name should be shown, to include management contact details. Access within the site should be readily identifiable with good sight lines. Paths should be easy to use, well drained and clear of overhanging vegetation.
- Where applicable, notice boards should be well located, clean, with any information up to date. Other furniture such as litter bins and seating should be easy to use, in good condition and appropriately located.

Core quality criteria should encompass:

Entrances:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tidy • Well-signed • Obvious • Unobstructed • Welcoming • Ease of Use (disabled access, inclusive design)
Signage:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent • Provision of basic information to include site name; who manages the site; relevant contact details • Erected at a consistent and appropriate height • Positioned so clearly visible
Boundaries: (e.g. hedges, fences, ditches)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defined • Well maintained • Good state of repair • Appropriate design and materials
Access:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defined paths • Surface condition • Good drainage • Clear of vegetation
Soft Landscaping / Planting / Grass / Meadows:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas defined • Formal planting well maintained • Natural planting managed positively for wildlife • Management of invasive scrub • Appropriate grass/hay/meadow cutting regime
Trees:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good condition (no deadwood overhanging entrances, paths, boundaries) • Under-storey management • Trees managed positively for wildlife • New planting well maintained
Furniture: (e.g. seats, benches, bins, notice boards)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent styles in keeping with site use i.e. <i>formal</i> or <i>informal</i> • Well maintained • Well located • Easy to use • Information up-to-date
Cleanliness:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little or no litter • Minimal dog fouling • Graffiti free – no offensive graffiti • Vandalism not evident
Safe and secure:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the site feel safe • Good lines of sight to entrances and exits

Equipped Play Areas

- Fencing can reduce the risk of dogs fouling within a play area and can be a positive safety consideration for parents / guardians with younger children. Fencing can also help to define the formal play space. However, fencing (and surfacing) account for more than a third of total expenditure in the play area sector. Significant additional play value opportunities can potentially be achieved if fencing is not required. Added to this, maintenance requirements can be reduced. If considered necessary, the preference is for black bow top steel fencing. The specification for this should factor in likelihood of vandalism and other damage.
- Two pedestrian entrances / exits are recommended along with service access (although the service gate can be combined with an access gate). Pedestrian access gates should open outwards, have no latch and be self closing. Colour preference is for red and yellow.
- Seating should be provided to encourage social interaction and provide comfort for parents / guardians. A litter bin should be provided, being carefully located to not obstruct play space. Design should consider issues such as ease of use and deterring wildlife (e.g. birds, wasps).
- Where impact absorbing play surfaces are required, the preference is for Wetpour. This provides a high quality, low maintenance, durable and safe surface that is useable in all weather conditions. Whilst vibrant colour schemes can add visual stimulus, this can also significantly impact on maintenance. Minimal graphics (i.e. just around wear pads) are recommended using primary colours.
- Equipment should be carefully planned to provide optimum experience for the target age range. All swings should be anti-wrap.

Play Value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much fun can be had from the equipment • The range of experiences provided including balancing, crawling, rocking, gliding, agility, rotating, sliding, and swinging • The use of sensory items, variation in materials, variation in ground contours, bright colours, themed play, added graphics, • Potential for ball games areas, and wheeled play areas • The amount of extra space on site for other types of play such as locomotive play or role play
Durability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life span of equipment and furniture, taking into account deterioration factors (weathering etc), and vandalism resistance
Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance of fencing, gates and surfacing, surfacing edging, vegetation and equipment (including bolt tightening, staining oiling etc)
Inspections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How regularly the equipment needs to be inspected, the time taken for each inspection, and practicalities such as ladder work
Visual impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship to the setting, landscaping, first impressions
Inclusiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How inclusive is the site - with particular reference to the

	<p>mobility impaired, and taking into account how many senses are stimulated within the play area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age range of the equipment provided
Behavioural aspects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In order to prevent bullying and antisocial behaviour confined spaces and hidden zones need to be avoided • Entrances and exits need to be well planned, clearly visible and easy to use – more than one should be available • Flat panels can encourage graffiti, so these need to be avoided in certain areas
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with standards (EN1176 / EN1177) • Equipment type and position in relation to the location • Shade/ shelter • Toddler and junior area separation • How open and safe is the site
Provision for parents and guardians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social, supervisory and play provision for parents and guardians

Pitches and Courts

Provision and maintenance of formal facilities such as sports pitches and courts should be appropriate to the type of use and in accordance with guidance by the respective governing bodies and / or Sport England.

Section 6 Delivery

6.1 Summary of Roles

Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bracknell Forest Council • Government Departments and Agencies
Design and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bracknell Forest Council • Parish and Town Councils • Developers • Consultants
Management, Maintenance and Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bracknell Forest Council • Parish and Town Councils • The Crown Estate • The Ministry of Defence • The Forestry Commission • Berkshire Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust • The National Trust • Land Owners and Occupiers • Contractors • Local Community

6.2 Management and Development

PEST Analysis: The following table summarises the Political, Economic, Social and Technological aspects of parks and open space provision within Bracknell Forest and the opportunities this affords.

Political

Public Sector

- Unitary Authority - ownership of land and provision of leadership, expertise and accountability
- Parish and Town Councils - site ownership and management delivery partners
- Government Departments and Agencies (Department for Communities and Local Government, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Natural England, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, Environment Agency) – legislation, policy, advice and funding

Voluntary Sector

- Charitable Trusts (Berks Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust, National Trust, South Hill Park Arts Trust) – land ownership and management, provision of services and expertise (arts, heritage, wildlife)
- Local Community Groups – local knowledge, practical support, guidance

Private Sector

- The Crown Estate – land ownership and management
- Farmers, small-holders, equestrian – land ownership and management
- Attractions – provision of facilities
- Developers – design and build of new green spaces
- Contractors and Consultants - provision of technical expertise and services

Summary

- Multi-agency approach enabling utilisation of wide ranging expertise
- Local accountability (public sector) combined with grass roots flexibility (voluntary sector) and tailored specialism (private sector)
- Risk of fragmentation and competition for resources

Economic

- Affluent population with pockets of deprivation
- Regional significance
- Public service
- High demand for development
- Increasing pressure on revenue budgets
- Competition for external funds

Summary

- Relatively high disposable income to support leisure based activities balanced by free access to / provision of green spaces to support excluded groups
- Drawing visitors from a large catchment
- Community benefit as key factor and so not fully dependant on income streams
- Developer contributions to mitigate impacts
- Need to secure efficiencies and savings

Social

- Increasing population - high pressure for new housing to support growth at a regional level
- Importance of quality environment - quantitative and qualitative provision of green space
- Culture – enriching people’s lives
- Access to leisure / recreation - quality of life (healthy active lifestyles)
- Biodiversity - safeguarding and enhancing habitats and species (proximity to Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area)

Summary

- Growing demand for accessible green space
- Aspiration and commitment to increasing amount of green space alongside raising quality standards (including Green Flag Awards)
- Walking, cycling, running (and contact with natural environment) increasingly significant in contributing to quality of life (addressing issues such as heart disease, obesity, diabetes, attention deficit disorder)
- Commitment and support for protecting and increasing biodiversity (including attracting people to sites outside of the SPA)

Technological

- IT - greater use and understanding of remote access and new tools supporting design and management
- Contrast - use of interpretative tools to stimulate interest
- Materials - sustainability and longevity

Summary

- Capacity to reach new audiences
- Opportunity to address physical barriers restricting inclusion
- Ability to stimulate senses and add contrast (integrating and adding value to heritage through sensitive use of modern design)
- Opportunities to minimise environmental impact and off-set future revenue costs through capital works

6.3 Resources

Local authority budgets are secured through funding received via a combination of a settlement grant from Central Government, the collection of Council Tax, and income secured through direct activities such as service charges.

The Council Tax is collected from residents by Bracknell Forest Council to support delivery of the services that the organisation manages, as well as those of Thames Valley Police Authority, Berkshire Fire Authority and the local town or parish councils. The Council Tax is a property-based tax, with a personal element included. It is not a direct payment for services and so is payable whether or not individual services are actually used.

Management and maintenance efficiencies have resulted in use of low input management regimes which reduce costs and are more sustainable e.g. native planting, wildlife verges and meadows (replacing high intensity measures such as floral displays, summer bedding

and frequently mown amenity grass). In addition to reducing revenue costs, these measures directly contribute to delivery of Biodiversity Action Plan targets.

BFC has been very successful in securing external funding to deliver improvements to quality standards. This includes grant support from organisations such as the Heritage Lottery Fund / Big Lottery Fund and Natural England, and use of planning obligations (S106 developer contributions).

Developer Contributions

Under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), planning obligations may be used to:

- Restrict development or the use of land in a specified way
- Require specified operations or activities to be carried out in, on, under or over land
- Require land to be used in a specified way
- Require sums to be paid to the authority on a specified date or periodically

Obligations may be conditional or unconditional and may impose restrictions or requirements for an indefinite or specified period.

They can be secured by agreement, (for example signed by both the Borough Council and anyone else with an interest in the land); or by a Unilateral Undertaking (signed solely by those with an interest in the land).

Circular 05/2005 on planning obligations sets out five tests that must all be satisfied where planning obligations are sought:

- Necessary to make proposed development acceptable in planning terms
- Relevant to planning
- Directly related to proposed development
- Fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to proposed development
- Reasonable in all other respects

Arrangements for developer contributions are set out within Limiting the Impact of Development Supplementary Planning Document (2007).

Specific reference is made to green infrastructure requirements including Open Space and Outdoor Recreational Facilities; Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area; Natural Environment; Climate Change; Public Realm and Environmental Enhancements and Heritage.

From April 2014, BFC will not be able to continue with the use of S106 planning obligations for pooled contributions (for a piece of infrastructure from more than 5 developments) as currently implemented through the 'Limiting the Impact of Development' Supplementary Planning Document. However; BFC will be able to apply a new levy.

The Planning Act 2008 established powers to create a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in England and Wales. CIL allows BFC to levy a charge on the owners or developers

of land so that they contribute to the costs of providing the infrastructure needed to support the development of the area. CIL payments will be calculated by applying a tariff rate to the net increase in floor area resulting from a development. The rate will be based on a schedule that can set different levels of charge for different land uses (residential, business, retail etc.) and for different geographic areas. The rates and any variations within them must be set at a level that will ensure that most development is viable. Any variations between uses and geographic areas must be based on there being quantifiable differences in their viability.

In addition to this legislation, The Localism Act 2011 gives the Government the power to require that some of the money raised from the levy go directly to the neighbourhoods where development takes place. This is intended to help ensure that the people most immediately impacted by new development feel the benefit of that decision.

Public open space is an important component of green infrastructure and is of high value to local residents. It is therefore important to make sure that relevant provision is included within the CIL.

S106 planning obligations will continue to be of significance for larger scale developments; particularly where there is a need for bespoke, on-site provision of public open space.

Grants and Awards

Investment can be secured through the use of grant schemes where it can be demonstrated that green space initiatives support delivery of priorities set out by external organisations. Of particular relevance are initiatives such as Parks for People (delivered through the Heritage Lottery Fund). Most of these schemes are highly competitive and so it is essential to clearly set out how parks and open spaces in Bracknell Forest will contribute on a national scale.

Income Generation

With regards to green spaces, income can be raised through:

- Direct charges - raised for the hire of facilities such as sports pitches and courts; and for specialist services such as the provision of technical and / or administrative expertise
- The use of land - for activities such as the grazing of livestock; fishing; installation of infrastructure and equipment (utilities); and special events
- Sale of land - the release of non operational assets to facilitate strategic objectives

In seeking to secure income, it is important to make sure that charging regimes do not result in significant inequalities and / or large scale reductions in participation rates.

Sponsorship

Many local businesses are keen to demonstrate commitment to the environment and social responsibility towards the communities within which they operate. Support to projects can also provide a cost effective means to generate positive publicity.

Sponsorship can take the form of direct financial contribution and / or the provision of

goods, services and staff time.

Anecdotal evidence indicates that sponsorship is of most relevance to supporting environmental improvements rather than securing resource to support day to day maintenance activities.

Volunteers

Local communities provide a valuable resource; offering a wealth of expertise, enthusiasm and commitment. In addition to supporting day to day management, local community groups and individuals can be a major catalyst for change and unlock funding opportunities that are not always available to organisations such as local authorities. Volunteers are of particular significance and value where the focus is on participation rather than efficiency.

Local residents and businesses provide extensive support through volunteering. The current average on sites managed by BFC is 447 hours of volunteer support per month; equating to approx. 3 Full Time Equivalents each and every working day (involving an estimated 200 people per year).

6.4 Action Plan (2012 – 2017)

Key Theme	Focus	Objective	Action	Funding Mechanism
Quantity	Size Function Distribution Access	A. Provision: Protect and establish public open space for recreation, play, sport, health, biodiversity, heritage and climate change adaption that is appropriate to need; strategically located; and adaptable to future requirements	<p>A1. Ensure new development includes Open Space of Public Value in accordance with relevant national guidance and local standards as set out within relevant policy e.g. the Local Development Framework (Limiting the Impact of Development Supplementary Planning Document)</p> <p>A2. Identify and secure Open Space of Public Value as part of strategic green infrastructure within site allocations (as set out within the Local Development Framework e.g. Amen Corner, North Bracknell)</p> <p>A3. Facilitate the development and future management of new recreational facilities (Country Park, Copses, Public Spaces, Play Areas, Sports Facilities) as set out within S106 Agreements for Churchill House, RAF Staff College (The Parks), Peacock Farm (Jennett's Park), Town Centre (new Jubilee Gardens)</p> <p>A4. Deliver actions in support of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy / Supplementary Planning Document:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production and delivery of Mini-Plans for Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANGs) • Access Management • Education <p>Support habitat management and enhancement within the Thames Basin Heath SPA</p>	<p>Developer Contributions (S106 / CIL)</p> <p>Developer Contributions (S106 / CIL)</p> <p>Developer Contributions (S106)</p> <p>Developer Contributions (S106 / CIL)</p> <p>Revenue Budgets, External Grants</p>

Key Theme	Focus	Objective	Action	Funding Mechanism
			<p>A5. Where legally and financially viable, acquire land to provide for future Open Space of Public Value. This includes extending and connecting existing sites to create green infrastructure networks.</p> <p>A6. Ensure that the development, improvement, and subsequent management of Open Space of Public Value supports delivery of the Biodiversity Action Plan</p> <p>A7. Support the work led by the Early Years Childcare and Play service to maximise opportunities for play and increase the number of children using parks and open spaces (linked to national initiatives co-ordinated by Play England)</p> <p>A8. Review the distribution, location, design and management of small equipped play areas. Potential measures to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transferring ownership and / or management to local partners • Removing under utilised or poor quality facilities where local need is better served by suitable, alternative provision • Re-design to raise quality and bring facilities into effective use <p>A9. Support work (led by Parish Councils) to identify and secure land for Allotments</p>	<p>Developer Contributions (S106 / CIL) External Grants Capital Budgets</p> <p>Revenue Budgets External Grants Developer Contributions</p> <p>External Grants Revenue Budgets</p> <p>Revenue Budgets Capital Budgets External Grants Developer Contributions (S106 / CIL)</p> <p>Parish / Town Council Budgets Developer Contributions</p>

Key Theme	Focus	Objective	Action	Funding Mechanism
			<p>A10. Implement priority actions as set out within the Rights of Way Improvement Plan (co-ordinated through the Local Countryside Access Forum)</p> <p>A11. Carry out research to increase the knowledge base for sites of historic and archaeological interest. Develop and implement a prioritised programme to enhance management, understanding and enjoyment</p> <p>A12. Ensure provision of green infrastructure in support of climate change avoidance and mitigation. Specific measures include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soft engineering measures to provide for Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in accordance with duties under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 • Working with utility companies and statutory agencies to implement improvements to existing land drainage features such as balancing ponds to ensure that they operate effectively; alongside improving biodiversity, landscape and recreation value 	<p>(S106 / CIL) External Grants</p> <p>External Grants, Capital and Revenue Budgets, Developer Contributions</p> <p>External Grants Capital Budgets Revenue Budgets</p> <p>Developer Contributions (S106 / CIL) Private Sector</p>

Key Theme	Focus	Objective	Action	Funding Mechanism
Quality	Function Distribution Access Community Management	B. Maintenance: Provide safe and welcoming public open space; attain and improve quality standards	<p>B1. Encourage and support co-ordinated, joint working between agencies in the design, construction, adoption and maintenance of Open Space of Public Value; including identifying and securing resources for sustainable management</p> <p>B2. Produce a landscape design guide to support best practice in the creation of new green infrastructure. Promote and implement associated recommendations</p> <p>B3. Ensure that maintenance and improvement of all parks and open spaces is encompassed within appropriate Management Plans (Target of 10 sites per year)</p> <p>B4. Sustain and improve quality standards for parks and open spaces through a prioritised programme of enhancement; achieving a minimum quality rating of 'Good' (i.e. implement the 'Plus 1 Principal')</p> <p>B5. Redesign and implement improvement works to address 'backland' sites</p> <p>B6. Review the methodology for assessing the quality of parks and open spaces (Bracknell Forest Standard); to include the Public Rights of Way Condition Survey. Implement a regular</p>	<p>Developer Contributions (S106 / CIL)</p> <p>Revenue Budgets</p> <p>Revenue Budgets</p> <p>Developer Contributions (S106 / CIL) Capital Budgets Revenue Budgets External Grants</p> <p>Developer Contributions, Capital Budgets, External Grants</p> <p>Revenue Budgets</p>

Key Theme	Focus	Objective	Action	Funding Mechanism
			<p>review of quality standards a on a 3 - 5 year cycle</p> <p>B7. Produce and implement Business Plans for major projects to restore and / or enhance high profile parks and gardens; specifically including South Hill Park. Bid for external grants where applicable</p> <p>B8. Improve maintenance standards of outdoor sports facilities within parks; specifically pitches, tennis courts and wheeled sports (examples include Longhill Park, Westmorland Park, Farley Wood Community Centre)</p> <p>B9. Assess Play Quality and local needs for equipped play areas to ensure appropriate targeting of locations, facilities, age range and ability. Deliver a prioritised programme of upgrading and replacing equipped play areas, including extending opportunities for 'natural' play</p> <p>B10. Continue to participate in the Green Flag Award scheme to assess, monitor and celebrate attaining high quality standards. Retain and add to the number of parks attaining the Award; to include sites enhanced through major capital schemes (Lily Hill Park, South Hill Park)</p> <p>B11. Support the inclusion of Bracknell within the Britain in Bloom Award scheme (as led by Bracknell Town Council)</p> <p>B12. Review and improve mechanisms for</p>	<p>Capital Budgets External Grants</p> <p>Revenue Budgets Capital Budgets, Developer Contributions (S106 / CIL)</p> <p>Capital Budgets, Developer Contributions (S106 / CIL)</p> <p>Revenue Budgets</p> <p>Parish / Town Council Budgets Revenue Budgets</p> <p>Revenue Budgets</p>

Key Theme	Focus	Objective	Action	Funding Mechanism
			<p>assessing, advising and enhancing management of Local Wildlife Sites. Implement and monitor actions in accordance with National Indicators for Biodiversity</p> <p>B13. Improve information base and management standards for trees in the landscape. Specific measures to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey and inspection • Review of Tree Preservation Orders • Producing Ancient and Veteran Tree policies <p>B14. Encourage and support partnership working between agencies; including reviewing and rationalising management responsibilities to improve maintenance standards and secure efficiencies. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parish and Town Councils • Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Access Management Partnership • Joint working with The Crown Estate and Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust • Service Level Agreements e.g. Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre <p>B15. Review Value For Money in the use of contract arrangements for site maintenance activities. Identify and implement improvements</p> <p>B16. Actively seek external investment to support</p>	<p>Capital Budgets Revenue Budgets</p> <p>Revenue Budgets</p> <p>Revenue Budgets</p>

Key Theme	Focus	Objective	Action	Funding Mechanism
			the development and enhancement of parks and open spaces. Specific measures include bidding for grants and awards and investigating the feasibility of sponsorship	

Key Theme	Focus	Objective	Action	Funding Mechanism
Use	<p>Community</p> <p>Marketing and Promotion</p> <p>Enjoyment and Understanding</p>	<p>C. Use and Enjoyment:</p> <p>Make sure public open space supports well-being; encourages participation; and facilitates social inclusion</p>	<p>C1. Raise awareness of parks and open spaces through targeted marketing and publicity. Specific measures to include updating web based information, a review of branding and encouraging co-ordinated information across different providers</p> <p>C2. Increase enjoyment and understanding of parks and open spaces through the use of interpretative media; to include off site measures e.g. the review of leaflets and use of web based material</p> <p>C3. Identify and implement measures to address barriers to participation caused through fear of anti-social behaviour; to include actions such as on-site presence and improving natural surveillance</p> <p>C4. Identify, prioritise and implement actions to increase social inclusion; including participation for the elderly, disabled, young people and minority groups. Measures to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A rolling programme of site access audits and implementation of practical improvements • Review the involvement of disabled people within consultative forums. Identify gaps and invite appropriate representation • Audit of interpretation / information provision. Identify and implement a 	<p>Revenue Budgets</p> <p>Revenue Budgets Developer Contributions (S106 / CIL) Capital Budgets External Grants</p> <p>Revenue Budgets Developer Contributions (S106 / CIL) Capital Budgets External Grants</p> <p>Revenue Budgets Developer Contributions (S106 / CIL) Capital Budgets External Grants</p>

Key Theme	Focus	Objective	Action	Funding Mechanism
			<p>programme of improvements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify needs and opportunities for community transport links to green spaces <p>C5. Encourage participation in healthy active lifestyles through events, marketing and support to initiatives to increase participation rates (e.g. '3 x 30') and sport for young people (e.g. the '5 hour offer')</p> <p>C6. Support and extend community involvement in the management and enhancement of green spaces; including through consultative forums, Friends groups, residents associations and volunteering</p> <p>C7. Continue and extend joint working with local clubs to raise awareness of facilities available; improve management; secure resources; and increase participation</p> <p>C8. Identify and implement opportunities for increasing provision of and access to facilities through joint working and initiatives such as Extended Schools</p> <p>C9. Review existing methodologies for collecting and collating visitor data. Develop a clear and consistent methodology for seeking visitor feedback and calculating levels of use (linked to GreenSTAT).</p>	<p>Revenue Budgets, External Grants</p> <p>Revenue Budgets</p> <p>Revenue Budgets</p> <p>Revenue Budgets Capital Budgets External Grants Developer Contributions (S106 / CIL)</p> <p>Revenue Budgets</p>

Section 7 Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

7.1 Measuring Performance

Parks and open spaces are essential to the delivery of wide ranging priorities; from wildlife protection and enhancement through to improving public health. In addition to assessing physical achievements relating to design, construction and management, it is important to also monitor outputs and outcomes which support delivery of broader social and environmental priorities.

This requires use of appropriate indicators. Targets and results should be carefully considered, with priorities and actions regularly reviewed to support resource allocation, assess performance and ensure effective delivery.

Two main methods are used:

- i) Outcomes – use of surveys to assess levels of use; satisfaction ratings; public needs and perceptions; quality and quantity standards; habitat condition; and wildlife diversity
- ii) Outputs – monitoring and measuring activities such as the number of events held; groups and individuals participating; works implemented

7.2 National Indicators

A previously used National Indicator was 119(e):

Performance Indicator	Definition
119(e)	The percentage of residents satisfied with the Local Authority Cultural Services e) parks and open spaces

178 and 119(a) were also relevant:

178	The percentage of total length of footpaths and other rights of way which are easy to use by members of the public
119(a)	The percentage of residents satisfied with the Local Authority Cultural Services a) sports/leisure facilities

The last Government developed a Local Government Performance Framework to measure implementation of national priorities.

Of most relevance to parks and open spaces were:

Performance Indicator	Definition
NI 197	Improved local biodiversity – active management of local sites (as defined through designation as Wildlife Heritage Sites)

In addition to NI 197; parks and open spaces also contribute to delivery of:

Performance Indicator	Definition
NI 6	Participation in regular volunteering
NI 8	Adult participation in sport
NI 188	Adapting to climate change
NI 189	Flood and coastal erosion risk management
NI 195	Improved street and environment cleanliness (levels of graffiti, litter, detritus and fly posting)

The current Government has replaced the National Indicator Set with a single comprehensive list of all data reporting requirements for local government. This includes submitting information relating to Public Rights of Way, Fly Tipping and Local Nature Conservation / Biodiversity.

7.3 Tools and Guidance

Towards an Excellent Service

As set out by CABE Space (now part of the Design Council):

“Towards An Excellent Service (TAES) for parks and open spaces enables you to benchmark your service against a model of excellence and to plan improvements. Adopting this approach can assist in improved user and staff satisfaction, efficiency, the delivery of parks and open spaces that meet users needs and increased recognition for the parks team within the authority”

This was developed specifically for the parks and open spaces sector by CABE Space with IDeA, the Institute for Sports Parks and Leisure (now The Institute for The Management of Sport and Physical Activity IMSPA), GreenSpace and practitioners.

The Culture & Sport Improvement Toolkit (CSIT) is a similar initiative that was developed for (and by) the culture, sport, green space & tourism sectors to help improve performance based on self assessment and external challenge through validation and peer supported improvement. Bracknell Forest Council Parks & Countryside service has participated in the use of CSIT as part of a review across all Leisure and Culture services in 2010; the results of which have helped identify key actions set out within this Strategy.

GreenSTAT

Green Space is a registered charity which works to improve parks and green spaces by raising awareness, involving communities and creating skilled professionals. As set out on their website:

“GreenSTAT is a system that gives local residents the opportunity to comment on the quality of their open spaces and how well they feel they are being managed and

maintained. It allows site managers to compare the results with others up and down the country to give a truly national voice of what we think about our open spaces.”

Both of these initiatives will be utilised to help benchmark services; assess quality; and measure success.

7.4 Parks and Open Spaces Monitoring

Theme	Monitoring Mechanism	National or Local Indicator	Method	Frequency (Where Applicable)
Quantity	Hectares of green space provision	Local	Desk based research	Annual
	Number and type of facility	Local	Desk based research / site assessment	
	The percentage of total length of footpaths and other rights of way which were easy to use by members of the public	Local (previously 178)	Site assessment (Representative Sample)	
Quality	Improved local biodiversity – active management of local sites (as defined through designation as Wildlife Heritage Sites)	National (NI 197)	Representative sample	Annual
	Species and habitat surveys	Local	Site surveys (linked to Biodiversity Action Plan)	3 – 5 Years
	The Bracknell Forest Standard Quality Rating / Plus 1 Principle	Local	Site assessment (in-house and external)	
	Rights of Way Condition Survey	Local	Path surveys	
	Green Flag Award Scheme / Britain in Bloom (Thames and Chilterns Region)	Local	External Judging	Annual
Use	Visitor use and experience	Local	GreenSTAT (web based survey)	3 Years
	Satisfaction - the percentage of residents satisfied with parks and open spaces	Local (previously 119(e))	Resident Panels	
	Increasing recreational use of sites outside the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area i.e. SANGs	Local	On site visitor surveys (linked to the Strategic Access Management and Monitoring project co-ordinated by Natural England)	Quarterly
	Volunteer Input	Local	Hours contributed	

The aims set out within this document were:

- The Council will seek to ensure good levels and appropriate distribution of parks and open spaces of recreational value, which are of an appropriate nature, which contribute to the wide range of social and environmental functions of parks and open spaces and broad use of provision by all members of the community
- The Council will take the lead role in ensuring appropriate provision of parks and open spaces of recreational value and use by all members of the community. A formal partnership approach will be adopted and local delivery of services will be sought

Objectives were:

- Existing parks and open spaces of recreational value will be protected
- A clear perspective will be developed on quantities of provision, distribution of provision, the nature of sites, provision of facilities, which sites should be staffed and the role and nature of individual sites
- Appropriate provision will be sought at each site covered by this Strategy relative to the determined role of sites, the needs of the community and the social and environmental functions of parks and open spaces
- Broader community use of parks and open spaces of recreational value by all members of the community and broader community involvement in the management of sites will be sought
- Public understanding of environmental and cultural issues relating to parks and open spaces will be sought
- A strategic approach to funding for parks and open spaces of recreational value will be adopted and additional funding will be sought

Proposed actions were centred on:

- A. Protection of existing provision
- B. Strategic perspective
- C. Appropriate provision at individual sites
- D. Community use and involvement
- E. Education
- F. Strategic approach to funding

The Parks & Open Spaces Strategy has proved to be a valuable document, particularly in the context of major successes including securing external investment for the restoration of Lily Hill Park and South Hill Park; Green Flag Awards for key parks; and high levels of public satisfaction (82.1% of respondents, Bracknell Forest Residents Panel 2005).

Appendix 2 Legislative Context

Example Act (not definitive)	Headline Action
Open Spaces Act 1906	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing powers for local authorities to acquire open spaces for recreation
New Towns Act 1946	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide for the creation of new towns by means of development corporations, and for purposes connected therewith
The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduced the concept of National Nature Reserves (NNRs) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), important for their flora and fauna, geological or physiographical (landform) features; and conferred powers on local authorities to create nature reserves • Procedures for recording public rights (of access) on definitive maps • Footpaths and bridleways maintainable at public expense
The Countryside Act 1968	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A duty to have regard to the desirability of conserving the natural beauty and amenity of the countryside in the exercise of functions relating to land
Highways Act 1980	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extending Powers and Duties relating to the management and maintenance of Public Rights of Way
Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The creation of wildlife habitats through restoration of mineral workings/reclamation of derelict land; • Managing local authority land so that account is taken of its wildlife interest/environmental improvement schemes • Educational activities and the provision of information about conservation. • Definitive map procedures, sign posting of byways
Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (Section 106)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (1) A local planning authority may enter into an agreement with any person interested in land in their area for the purpose of restricting or regulating the development or use of the land, either permanently or during such period as may be prescribed by the agreement. • (2) Any such agreement may contain such incidental and consequential provisions (including financial ones) as appear to the local planning authority to be necessary or expedient for the purposes of the agreement.
The Planning and Compensation Act 1991	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved local planning authorities' abilities to safeguard conservation and amenity areas by strengthening their planning enforcement and development control powers. It also required structure, local and unitary development plans to include policies in respect of the conservation of the natural beauty and amenity of the land.
EC Council Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora: The Habitats Directive (1992)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes to the conservation of biodiversity by requiring Member States to take measures to maintain or restore natural habitats and wild species at a favourable conservation status in the Community, giving effect to both site and species protection objectives.
Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New rights of access on foot for open air recreation on access land – predominantly mountain, moor, heath or down • Establishment of Local Access Forums – to advise on access to land for all types of open air recreation • Production of Rights of Way Improvement Plans • Greater protection for nature conservation – due regard for

	biodiversity and increased powers regarding Sites of Special Scientific Interest
The Local Government Act 2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Act provides new powers for local authorities to promote the economic, social and environmental well being of their area; a duty to develop Community Strategies; and establishes a new ethical framework for local government
Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005	<p>A range of measures to improve the quality of the local environment by giving Local Authorities and the Environment Agency additional powers to deal with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> fly-tipped waste litter nuisance alleys fly-posting and graffiti abandoned and nuisance vehicles dogs noise, nuisance from artificial lighting and insect, and other issues affecting the local environment.
Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extension of responsibilities to safeguard and enhance biodiversity Additional legislation relating to Rights of Way – specifically Byways
The Localism Act 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local authority general power of competence: the legal capacity to do anything that an individual can do that is not specifically prohibited Community right to challenge: the right to express an interest in taking over the running of a local authority service Listing land of community value: maintain a list of assets of community value which have been nominated by the local community

Legal compliance:

In addition to the above, there are a number of legal provisions and statutory obligations that affect the delivery of park services that need to be duly considered and if necessary reflected in management plans. These include:

- Statutory Instrument 2004 No.118 Prescribed Descriptions (England) Order 2004 (established statutory crime and disorder strategies);
- Local Government Acts 1972, 1999 (established Best Value Authorities) and 2000 (established promotion of economic, social or environmental well-being);
- Local Government and Rating Act 1997;
- Dogs (Fouling of Land) Act 1996;
- Environmental Protection Act 1990;
- Litter Act 1983;
- Parish Councils and Burials Authorities (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1970;
- Public Health Acts 1848 to 1875;
- Smallholdings and Allotments Act 1908;
- Enclosure Act 1845.

The provisions of these Acts enable local authorities to hold land, provide services, enforce byelaws and in some cases impose fines.

Strategic Background

BFBC's over-arching vision is: *"To make Bracknell Forest a place where all people can thrive; living, learning and working in a clean, safe and healthy environment."*

The Council's Medium Term Objectives (2011 - 2015) include:

Priority One: a town centre fit for the 21st century

MTO 1: Regenerate Bracknell Town Centre

- deliver high quality public realm and public spaces

Priority Two: protecting and enhancing our environment

MTO 2: Protect communities by strong planning policies, including work to

- develop robust evidence to ensure new development delivers the infrastructure priorities for the Borough (through s.106 and Community Infrastructure Levy – CIL)
- ensure infrastructure is delivered alongside new development to the benefit of the whole community, by introducing Infrastructure Delivery Plans, which residents contribute to, in support of any approved planning policy document
- take strong enforcement action against those that do not comply with planning law

MTO 3: Keep Bracknell Forest clean and green, including work to:

- maintain our open spaces to a high standard
- complete the transformation of the grounds at South Hill Park
- increase the amount of green space that is accessible to residents

Priority Three: promoting health and achievement

MTO 6: Support opportunities for health and well being:

- support sports activities and facilities within the Borough

Priority Four: create a borough where people are, and feel, safe:

MTO 8: Work with the Police and other partners to ensure Bracknell Forest remains a safe place, including work to:

- improve the safety of our roads by improvements to the infrastructure and, where appropriate, by thorough speed enforcement

Priority Five: Sustain economic prosperity:

MTO 11: Work with our communities and partners to be efficient, open, transparent and easy to access and to deliver value for money:

- implement a programme of economies to reduce expenditure

The Bracknell Forest Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2014

The vision is for Bracknell Forest to have a reputation for its distinguished green landscape and contemporary, vibrant town centre. Contributing to this unique identity

will be many neighbourhoods offering accessible facilities to meet individuals' needs. Local communities will be strengthened with people feeling safe and getting on well together. Ensuring everyone has similar opportunities and is included in public life will enhance confidence in public services. Preserving our green heritage will be key to the future development of the area, integrating environmental concerns into all activities. The Borough will have a prosperous and diverse economy, offering local jobs, personalised public services and a range of ways to spend leisure time.

The strategy is split into a list of key priorities:

A Thriving Population:

- a) Opportunities for everyone
- b) Nurturing the Next Generation
- c) Supporting the Older Generation
- d) People who require Additional Support

A Desirable Place:

- a) Sustainable Development
- b) Protecting the Environment
- c) Travelling around the Borough

Cohesive Communities:

- a) Engaged & Empowered Communities
- b) Enjoying Life
- c) Being & Feeling Safer
- d) Sustaining a Vibrant Economy

Bracknell Forest Borough Local Plan (January 2002)

The local plan sets out a clear statement of Bracknell Forest Borough Council's strategy for land use planning to 31 March 2006.

Relevant policies:

- POLICY EN1: *Protecting tree and hedgerow cover*
- POLICY EN4: *Local Nature Reserves, Wildlife Heritage Sites and Regionally Important Geological Sites*
- POLICY EN8: *Development on land outside settlements*
- POLICY R1: *Loss of open space of public value*
- POLICY R7: *Countryside recreation*

Bracknell Forest Borough Local Development Framework 2007 (LDF)

The Bracknell Forest Borough Local Development Framework (LDF) is a portfolio of documents that together will guide future development in the borough.

While documents in the LDF are being prepared, policies in the Bracknell Forest Borough Local Plan (2002) will be used to guide the development until they are replaced.

The Core Strategy Development Plan Document (Adopted in December 2007) contains policies which set out an over-arching planning framework to guide the location and level of development in the borough for the next 20 years.

The Core Strategy policies are divided into six themes:

1. *Sustainable Growth*
2. *Quality of Life*
3. *The Environment*
4. *Somewhere to Live*
5. *Somewhere to Work and Shop*
6. *Transport*

Within these themes, 24 policies are set out and form the basis for more details policies and proposals to be set out in other Local Development Documents.

Relevant policies listed in the Core Strategy are:

- POLICY CS1: *Sustainable Development Principles*
- POLICY CS6: *Limiting the Impact of Development*
- POLICY CS7: *Design*
- POLICY CS8: *Recreation and Culture*

Of particular relevance is:

- *Policy CS8: Recreation and Culture*
Development will be permitted which;
 - i. Retains, improves and maintains existing Recreational Facilities; and/or*
 - ii. Provides and maintains new Recreational Facilities.*

'Life is for Living Two' Bracknell Forest Cultural Strategy 2008-2012

Vision: To improve the look and feel of Bracknell Forest making it a stimulating and enjoyable place to visit, and contributing to a thriving community where all people are happy to live, work and achieve.

This vision is supported through three strategic themes:-

- Enhance Town Centre, villages and neighbourhoods
- Improving the sense of belonging and community spirit for all
- Continue to support and improve the range of high quality facilities and services

The following points are the relevant proposed Action Plans for each theme:

Theme 1: Enhance Town Centre, villages and neighbourhoods

- Provide appropriate facilities and activities for young people
- Providing purposeful leisure opportunities as diversionary activities
- Encourage residents to care for their local environment
- Increase participation in and enjoyment of art, sport and recreation
- Encourage best practice in conservation management of archaeological sites
- Safeguard and enhance the natural environment
- Create new Conservation Areas

Theme 2: Improving the sense of belonging and community spirit for all

Encouraging participation and enjoyment:

- Improve community cohesion through culture and sport
- Improve the health and wellbeing of adult residents
- Improve health and wellbeing in the community and in the workplace
- Support schools with increasing the cultural content of after school and holiday activities
- Implement the Play Strategy
- Establish woodland crafts and forest heritage project to enhance local identity and skills
- Encourage the voluntary sector to increase quality and range of activities
- Increase community involvement in parks by establishing liaison and Friends of Groups
- Seek to provide community development in new neighbourhoods

Reducing Barriers to Access:

- Remove physical barriers that prevent access by those with physical disabilities
- Seek to provide facilities close to where people live
- Provide more community arts activities in local community venues

Celebrating:

- Encourage civic pride and civic participation in the local area

Improving information and awareness:

- Promote sense of place through raising awareness of local parks, countryside and heritage resources
- Promote awareness and care of the Borough's splendid tree stock and landscape character

Theme 3: Continue to support and improve the range of high quality facilities and services

Improving infrastructure:

- Implement the Rights of Way Improvement Plan
- Continually improve green spaces using the 'plus one' principle
- Improve non car access to sites by improving facilities for walking and cycling

Encouraging use:

- Support appropriate local sports clubs to achieve improvements in their facilities and services
- Encourage sports development through community and voluntary groups
- Encourage use of parks and community centres by older people
- Improve access for disabled people to all buildings and to green spaces
- Encourage countryside recreation on low impact sites so as to meet the needs of the SPA Mitigation Strategy
- Continue to support the voluntary footpath warden scheme and local conservation volunteers
- Improve consultation and community engagement in shaping the future of services
- Promote good practice through cultural accreditation schemes e.g. Chartermark, Green Flag

- Promote 3 x 30, the government aspiration for the adult population (age 16+) to participate in 30 minutes of sport of moderate intensity physical activity on at least three days in any one week.

PPG17 Study (2006)

The BFC PPG17 Study (2006) comprised a report on open space and indoor sport and recreational facilities and provides a clear vision and priorities for the future, based on local need:

“A high quality, accessible network of clean, safe and attractive green spaces and facilities which allow people to improve their health and well-being through recreation and sport now and in the future”

The ‘plus one’ principal is being followed to ensure that the quality of existing recreational facilities and open space is progressively improved from its current assessed quality rating (as stated in the PPG17 Audit) into the next quality category, for example from an ‘Average’ rating to ‘Good’ or ‘Good’ to ‘Very Good’ (with ‘Good’ as the minimum standard to be attained).

The study followed a five-stage process:

- Step 1: Identifying Local Needs
- Step 2: Auditing Local Provision
- Step 3: Setting Provision Standards
- Step 4: Applying Provision Standards
- Step 5: Draft Policy Principles

The Study demonstrated that the quality of lives is a priority; with several clear themes emerging from consultation:

- Open space and facilities are important, and in many ways are seen as the Borough’s best assets. There is overall support to maintain the existing level of provision and provide new where needed.
- People want to see their open space and facilities improved.
- The character of the borough is undoubtedly defined to a large extent by its greenness and open spaces. Open space landscaping also serves to soften the hard edge of an urban environment.
- Open space and recreational facilities are an important contribution towards achieving truly sustainable communities, either through maintaining or enhancing existing communities or in helping create new communities.
- All seven Councils (Bracknell Forest Borough Council and the six parish or town councils) have prided themselves on their active management of open space and facilities. The high quality ratings of spaces from the results of the audit prove this point.
- Open space and recreational facilities are well used for both passive and active recreation. Visitor surveys and other counts prove their popularity.

Biodiversity Action Plan 2006-2011

The BAP has the following aims and objectives:

1.1 Aim

To conserve and enhance biodiversity within Bracknell Forest Borough

1.2 Objectives

- *Comprehensive Monitoring: of species and habitats in the Borough to enable decisions to be informed, with up-to-date and detailed records.*
- *Proactive Policies: on planning and conservation, to ensure that important sites are protected and that where development occurs actions are taken to achieve the best result for wildlife in the Borough.*
- *Positive Management: to maintain, restore and create habitat for wildlife and balance the varied uses on open spaces in the area.*
- *Effective Communication: between partners, landowners and the public to raise awareness, encourage partnership working, and inform decision-making*

The new Biodiversity Action Plan (2012 – 2017) has undergone consultation and is due to be adopted in May 2012.

Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2006

Vision: Bracknell Forest Borough Council, through the Bracknell Forest Rights of Way Improvement Plan, aims to provide a public rights of way network:

- on which up-to-date information is readily available by a variety of means;
- that is physically accessible for all where practicable;
- which meets the needs of a wide variety of users for both recreation and access.

Relevant Policies:

- **POLICY ROWIP 1: *Rights of Way Users***
Protect and enhance the public rights of way network. Place priority on improving accessibility of the network for the mobility or visually impaired.
- **POLICY ROWIP 2: *Maintenance***
Continue to maintain the public rights of way network to a high level based on BVPI standards and aim to increase the accessibility of the network where practical.
- **POLICY ROWIP 3: *Routes and Links***
Where practicable, reclassify existing paths or create new paths to provide further network linkages and create further safe circular routes, particularly for horse-riders, cyclists and carriage-drivers.
- **POLICY ROWIP 4: *Information and Marketing***
Provide information on and promote the public rights of way network to the public through online information, leaflets, route guides, press releases and on-site information.
- **POLICY ROWIP 5: *Non Users***
Consider non-users of the public rights of way network as potential future users; examine reasons for non-use and take action on those which might easily attract new users.
- **POLICY ROWIP 6: *Responsible Use / Landowners and Managers***

Promote and publicise legal and responsible use of the public rights of way network and access to the countryside; landowners and land managers with areas open to public access will be supported regarding public use of their land.

A mid-term review was carried out in 2011. In addition to updating the action plan, this has amended the Vision to include reference to cyclepaths and other paths/networks that are essential for mobility/access within the Borough but which are not categorised as Public Rights of Way.

Local Transport Plan (LTP3 2011-2026)

Local goals:

- 1.1 To improve the connectivity of the transport system to places of work, schools, hospitals and public amenities.
- 2.4 To promote, support and improve facilities for cycling and walking.
- 3.1 To promote accessibility to everyday facilities for all, especially those without a car.
- 3.3 To improve connections to, from and within areas away from Bracknell Town Centre.
- 3.4 To promote the use of non-motorised transport for local journeys.
- 3.7 To ensure that new development providing facilities and services is accessible by pedestrians (to include people with disabilities), cyclists and by public transport and to promote improvements to existing development where this is inadequate.
- 4.2 To promote means of travel that are conducive to better health.
- 4.3 Encourage more walking and cycling, as both a leisure pursuit and commuting choice.

Objectives

4. To ensure accessibility to everyday facilities for all, especially those without a car.
 5. To promote sustainable modes of transport for local journeys.
-

Play Strategy (2007)

The Play Strategy (2007) adopts the seven 'Best Play' objectives published in "Best Play: What play provision should do for children" (Children's Play Council). These objectives are broad statements intended to set out how the definition of play and the underpinning values and principles should be put into practice. They form the basis against which play provision and future developments can be evaluated.

- *Objective 1: The provision extends the choice and control that children have over their play, the freedom they enjoy and the satisfaction they gain from it.*
- *Objective 2: The provision recognises the child's need to test boundaries and responds positively to that need.*
- *Objective 3: The provision manages the balance between the need to offer risk and the need to keep children safe from harm.*
- *Objective 4: The provision maximises the range of play opportunities.*
- *Objective 5: The provision fosters independence and self-esteem.*
- *Objective 6: The provision fosters children's respect for others and offers opportunities for social interaction.*
- *Objective 7: The provision fosters the child's well-being, healthy growth and development, knowledge and understanding, creativity and capacity to learn.*

The strategy sets out an action plan with 9 areas of work:

1. *Play rangers*
 2. *Training and education*
 3. *Inclusive play*
 4. *General infrastructure of parks and open spaces*
 5. *Opening up school grounds*
 6. *Urban design*
 7. *Jabadeo programme*
 8. *Cultural change*
 9. *A place for young people*
-

Community Safety Partnership Plan (2011-2014)

Vision: Everyone has the right to be free from being a victim of crime and anti-social behaviour, to feel safe and to choose their own lifestyle. Everyone also has the responsibility to take reasonable steps to avoid becoming a victim of crime, not to cause harassment or distress to others and to respect differences in others.

The 3 broad objectives of the CSP are:

Objective 1: Reduce Crime

Objective 2: Reduce ASB

Objective 3: Reduce Fear of Crime and ASB

Priority 9: Reduce Environmental ASB (including Dumped Rubbish and Fly Tipping)

“All of Us in Bracknell Forest” Community Cohesion Strategy 2008/9–2011/12

Key objectives are:

- Everybody has similar life opportunities
 - The diversity of people, their circumstances and their communities is respected and valued
 - There are positive relationships between people
 - Work with people and partners to assist with building and strengthening communities
-

Community Engagement Strategy 2009-2012

The strategy has six aims.

1. Increase the effectiveness and efficiency of community engagement work through forward planning, improved communication and increased collaboration. By:

- i) Raising awareness and improving communication on engagement in the workforces of partners.
- ii) Improving communication between those working directly with communities and those in strategic roles.
- iii) Where appropriate, joining up and sharing engagement mechanisms to improve coordination and avoid duplication.

2. Increase the inclusiveness of consultation and engagement activities ensuring that all people have equal opportunity to have their voices heard. By:

- i) Increasing awareness and understanding of the needs of specific groups to ensure engagement work is accessible to all.
 - ii) Supporting community development work with specific communities underrepresented in partners' engagement work.
3. Increase community engagement skills among partners. By:
- i) Ensuring Partnership members sign up to good consultation principles and practices.
 - ii) Delivering training and guidance in community engagement; promoting and sharing examples of best practice.
4. Improve understanding and appreciation of our community. By:
- i) Coordinating Partnership community mapping and developing this into a centrally held evidence base, accessible to all partners.
 - ii) Ensuring that findings from engagement work and consultations are summarised and shared to help shape partners' plans and strategies.
5. Ensure community engagement work has a genuine influence on the development, commissioning and provision of services by evaluating the impact and outcomes. By:
- i) Measuring the impact of community consultation on partners; service development and delivery.
 - ii) Feeding back to communities on the outcomes of consultations detailing how their input has affected service provision.
 - iii) Summarising consultations and making them available.
6. Enable communities to take an active role in tackling the issues which affect them. By:
- i) Encouraging the reporting of community issues to relevant partners.
 - ii) Publicising events and activities for communities to become involved in and details of how they can become involved.
-

Disability Awareness

Bracknell Forest Borough Council is committed to providing an accessible environment for all the community. In recognising the access needs of disabled people, the Borough Council aims to improve the built environment, services and facilities for all users, creating an inclusive environment for all those who live, work or visit Bracknell Forest.

The Borough Council runs an Access Advisory Panel. The Panel is made up of local representatives of disability organisations within the Borough and four councillors. The Panel works to improve services and facilities in Bracknell Forest for disabled people.

Designing for Accessibility Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was adopted at a meeting of the Executive of Bracknell Forest Borough Council on 20 June 2006. This document sets out the standards now expected in new development to create an accessible environment for all within the Borough. It promotes the design of an inclusive built environment for all and has chapters on legislation, policy, best practice and design advice.

Planning Policy Guidance

<p>Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development</p>	<p>PPS1 sets out the overarching planning policies on the delivery of sustainable development through the planning system. These policies complement, but do not replace or override, other national planning policies and should be read in conjunction with other relevant statements of national planning policy.</p> <p>Four aims for sustainable development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone • Effective protection of the environment • The prudent use of natural resources • The maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment
<p>Planning Policy Guidance 2: Green belts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • States the general intentions of Green Belt policy, including its contribution to sustainable development objectives • Reaffirms the specific purposes of including land in Green Belts, with slight modifications • Gives policy a more positive thrust by specifying for the first time objectives for the use of land in Green Belts • Confirms that Green Belts must be protected as far as can be seen ahead, advises on defining boundaries and on safeguarding land for longer-term development needs • Maintains the presumption against inappropriate development within Green Belts and refines the categories of appropriate development, including making provision for the future of major existing developed sites and revising policy on the re-use of buildings
<p>Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting an urban renaissance - local networks of high quality and well managed and maintained open spaces, sports and recreational facilities help create urban environments that are attractive, clean and safe. Green spaces in urban areas perform vital functions as areas for nature conservation and biodiversity and by acting as 'green lungs' can assist in meeting objectives to improve air quality. • Supporting a rural renewal - the countryside can provide opportunities for recreation and visitors can play an important role in the regeneration of the economies of rural areas. Open spaces within rural settlements and accessibility to local sports and recreational facilities contribute to the quality of life and well being of people who live in rural areas. • Promotion of social inclusion and community cohesion - well planned and maintained open spaces and good quality sports and recreational facilities can play a major part in improving people's sense of well being in the place they live. As a focal point for community activities, they can bring together members of deprived communities and provide opportunities for people for social interaction. • Health and well being - open spaces, sports and recreational facilities have a vital role to play in promoting healthy living and preventing illness, and in the social development of children of all ages through play, sporting activities and interaction with others. • Promoting more sustainable development - by ensuring that open space, sports and recreational facilities are easily accessible by walking and cycling and that more heavily used or intensive sports and recreational facilities are planned for

	<p>locations well served by public transport.</p> <p>The guidance specifically relates to assessments of needs, audits of provision and future opportunities and policy</p>
<p>Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation</p>	<p>Key Principles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development plan policies and planning decisions should be based upon up-to-date information about the environmental characteristics of their areas. These characteristics should include the relevant biodiversity and geological resources of the area. In reviewing environmental characteristics local authorities should assess the potential to sustain and enhance those resources. • Plan policies and planning decisions should aim to maintain, and enhance, restore or add to biodiversity and geological conservation interests. In taking decisions, local planning authorities should ensure that appropriate weight is attached to designated sites of international, national and local importance; protected species; and to biodiversity and geological interests within the wider environment. • Plan policies on the form and location of development should take a strategic approach to the conservation, enhancement and restoration of biodiversity and geology, and recognise the contributions that sites, areas and features, both individually and in combination, make to conserving these resources. • Plan policies should promote opportunities for the incorporation of beneficial biodiversity and geological features within the design of development. • Development proposals where the principal objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity and geological conservation interests should be permitted. • The aim of planning decisions should be to prevent harm to biodiversity and geological conservation interests. Where granting planning permission would result in significant harm to those interests, local planning authorities will need to be satisfied that the development cannot reasonably be located on any alternative sites that would result in less or no harm. In the absence of any such alternatives, local planning authorities should ensure that, before planning permission is granted, adequate mitigation measures are put in place. Where a planning decision would result in significant harm to biodiversity and geological interests which cannot be prevented or adequately mitigated against, appropriate compensation measures should be sought. If that significant harm cannot be prevented, adequately mitigated against, or compensated for, then planning permission should be refused.
<p>Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the historic environment</p>	<p>The Government urges local authorities to maintain and strengthen their commitment to stewardship of the historic environment, and to reflect it in their policies and their allocation of resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is fundamental to the Government's policies for environmental stewardship that there should be effective protection for all aspects of the historic environment. • The physical survivals of our past are to be valued and protected for their own sake, as a central part of our cultural heritage and our sense of national identity.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They are an irreplaceable record which contributes, through formal education and in many other ways, to our understanding of both the present and the past.• Their presence adds to the quality of our lives, by enhancing the familiar and cherished local scene and sustaining the sense of local distinctiveness which is so important an aspect of the character and appearance of our towns, villages and countryside.• The historic environment is also of immense importance for leisure and recreation.
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Appendix 4 Defining Outdoor Recreation

Outdoor recreation encompasses a wide variety of activities, both formal and informal. In addition, the range and choice of possible locations is extensive.

As part of work identifying and establishing early priorities, the confederate organisations which formed Natural England commissioned discussion papers to inform a new recreation strategy. As set out within Paper 1 of the Henley Centre Headlight Vision report (2005); outdoor recreation can be broadly defined as:

- Just being outdoors** – watching wildlife, looking at the view, picnicking
- Creative activities** – art, photography, story telling, music
- Health or relaxation** – walking, jogging, dog walking, horse riding, cycling
- Utility Journeys** – which also provide a recreation experience (e.g. Greenways to connect people and place)
- Informal games and play** – kite flying, model aircraft, glider flying, sand castles, sledging
- High adrenalin, non-competitive activities** – canoeing, mountain biking, caving, climbing and bouldering
- Commercially run activities**
- Study of the natural environment**
- Educational activities and programmes**
- Conservation volunteering**
- Sustainable journeys to outdoor recreation**

Added to this are activities such as organised sports, history and archaeology and visiting friends and family.

Henley Centre Headlight Vision have also devised a matrix to illustrate the process of planning and travelling undertaken by users in determining recreational choice.

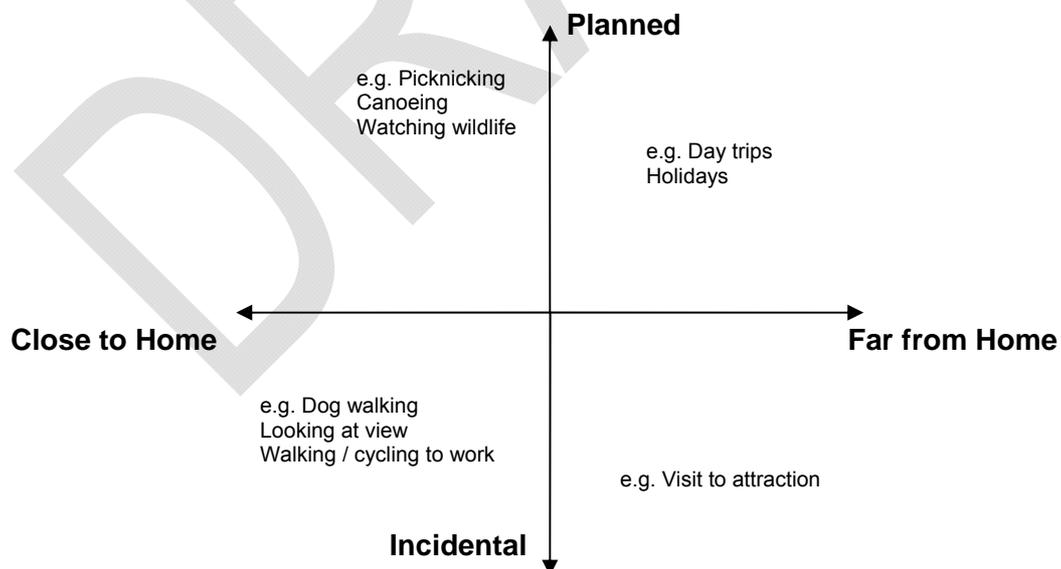
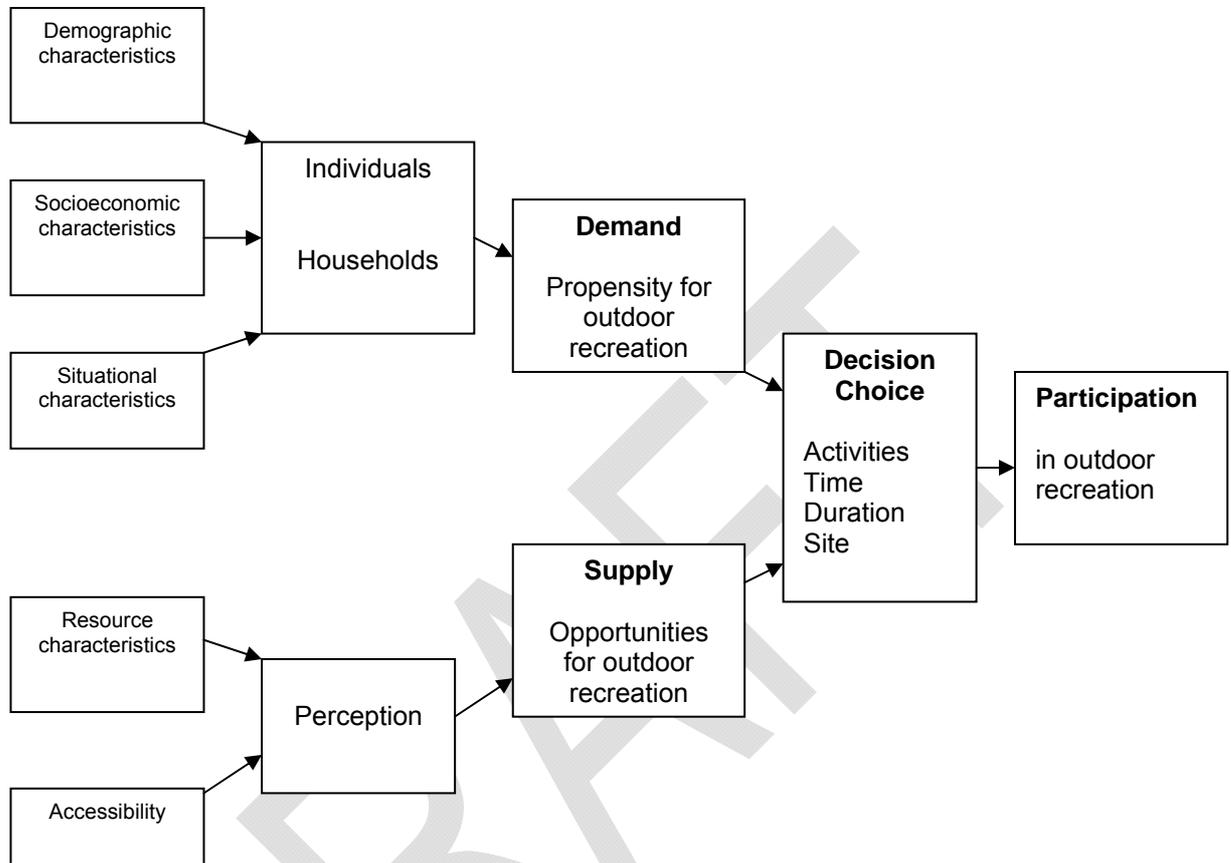


Figure: The decision making process in outdoor recreation (as summarised by Pigram, 1983)



Appendix 5 Assessing Risk

Nature of Risk	Description	Level		Impact	Actions
		Likelihood	Severity		
Technical					
Understanding of Asset	Insufficient knowledge and awareness of parks and open spaces	Low	Medium	Inadequate level of provision Poor quality standards Public dissatisfaction Diminished Quality of Life	Strategic approach adopted with all actions meeting and delivering policy priorities PPG17 Audit undertaken (Study of open spaces, recreational and leisure facilities) Master-plans created for new developments Use of Planning system to influence future provision (S106 Agreements, Unilateral Undertakings, Environmental Impact Assessments, Planning Conditions) Management Plans for key sites
Biodiversity Value	Incomplete understanding of habitats and wildlife value	Low	High	Loss of habitat and / or species Inability to maximise value Failure to meet regulatory / legislative requirements	Actions in accordance with and support delivery of the Bracknell Forest Biodiversity Action Plan Projects developed and delivered utilising appropriate expertise Key activities to include ecological survey, with watching brief and subsequent monitoring Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy produced
Historic Significance	Incomplete understanding of heritage value	Low	High	Poor quality and / or unsympathetic design Inappropriate use of materials Loss of heritage Failure to meet regulatory / legislative requirements	Research Management Plans Proposals / design and specification work developed utilising appropriate expertise
Climate Change Weather	Heavy rainfall, heat waves and other climatic issues	Medium	High	Environmental change including; loss of species, escalating costs, timescale delays, erosion	Fundamental role of green infrastructure in avoidance and mitigation Landscape and planting proposals to factor change and minimise potential negative impact (such as water consumption)

					Project timescales calculated to allow for potential weather related impacts Works phased to minimise impact on public and / or site.
Type and Extent of Skills and Activity required	Incomplete knowledge of the range of works required to establish, manage and enhance green infrastructure	Low	Medium	Poor quality and / or unsympathetic design Inappropriate use of materials Escalating costs Delays to timescales Failure to meet regulatory / legislative requirements	Use of appropriate expertise / multi-discipline teams; including partnership working – in-house, partner bodies and contractors / consultants
Ground Conditions	Incomplete site knowledge	Low	Medium	Inappropriate works Escalating costs Timescale delays	Surveys and research prior to formulating design proposals Use of appropriate expertise
Market					
Public Demand / Aspiration	Need for infrastructure / facilities Public dissatisfaction	Low	Medium	Poor public profile Low / inappropriate use of park	Research - including PPG17 Audit to assess provision Regular public consultation Community engagement
Visitor Numbers	Static or declining visitor numbers	Low	Low	Low public use of green space.	Regular public consultation including use of GreenStat Marketing and Promotion - on- and off-site
Visitor Profile	Actions do not result in attracting new and / or under-represented audiences.	Low	Low	Existing audiences only continue to use green spaces.	Regular public consultation Development of new marketing material, both on- and off-site to attract new audiences Targeting of groups Delivery of key actions to address barriers
Competing Uses	Tension between different user groups and / or functions served	Medium	Medium	Loss of habitat or species Erosion Dissatisfaction from particular user groups	Action Plan developed through consultation and activities prioritised Site improvement projects developed and delivered utilising appropriate expertise Surveys and research prior to formulating design proposals Regular public consultation including use of GreenStat

Financial					
Funding	Insufficient financial resources to deliver	Medium	High	Actions not delivered - impacting on quality of life Deteriorating condition of facilities Declining visitor numbers Future budgetary implications (capital and revenue) through neglect	Delivering national, regional and local priorities Action Plan developed through consultation with activities prioritised Multi-agency delivery External funding opportunities maximised including use of grants and developer contributions
Revenue Budgets	Revenue budgets insufficient to allow for effective maintenance	Medium	High	Quality and quantity compromised by lack of future maintenance	Ensure high public satisfaction and delivery of corporate priorities Potential for capital works to minimise revenue implications Efficiency – including Partnership working Collation and use of Commuted Sums from developer contributions
Rising Costs and Inflation	Costs higher than anticipated Inflation rises above estimated levels	Low	Medium	Reduced quality and / or quantity Delays to implementation Reduced funding available	Design, specification and cost estimating works developed utilising appropriate expertise (multi-discipline teams) Monthly monitoring of expenditure
Income Generation	Reduced or no income	Low	Medium	Reduced funding available	Maximise appropriate opportunities for income generation Quality and quantity improvements to provide opportunities for future income generation Ensure revenue budgets are not income dependent (income dependence will greatly reduce social inclusion)
Management					
Expertise	Lack of appropriate skills and experience	Low	Medium	Ineffective Management Failure to meet regulatory / legislative requirements	Use of appropriate expertise / multi-discipline teams including partnership working – in-house, partner bodies and contractors / consultants Recruitment and Training to secure and enhance

					expertise Management Plans to guide actions Consultation and benchmarking (including Local Access Forum, Biodiversity Forum, Friends of groups and Site User Group Forums)
Timescales	Timescales not identified and / or adhered to	Low	Medium	Delays Poor quality works	Management Plans and work programming
Support	Lack of management support (including infrastructure)	Low	High	Ineffective management Public dissatisfaction Failure to meet regulatory / legislative requirements	Inclusion within Corporate Priorities Efficiency – including partnership working
Quality Standards	Quality Standards such as Green Flag status not achieved	Low	Medium	Objectives not met Static or declining visitor numbers	Actions and future management and maintenance developed in line with quality standards Benchmarking and training - staff with significant Green Flag Award experience Monitoring
Legal					
Land Ownership	Control over land	Low	High	Lack of control over access to and management of green space Unable to undertake works Limits to public benefit Inappropriate use of land (e.g. fly-tipping)	Securing public ownership and / or legal rights of access Defining responsibilities
Statutory Consents	Relevant consents not obtained	Low	High	Works cannot proceed Conservation objectives compromised	Actions developed utilising specialist advice e.g. English Heritage, Natural England, Development Control re planning consent

Appendix 6: Quality Audit Proforma

Site Name:	
Site ID:	
Date of survey:	
Weather Conditions:	
Surveyed by:	

Site Feature	Key Element	Rating (5 = 1 or 0)		
MAIN ENTRANCE	Easy to Find		0	
	Obvious			
	Safe			
	Clean			
	Well Maintained			
	litter bin / dog bin			
	Other			
TOTAL		0.00		
AVERAGE		0.00		
SIDE ENTRANCE	Safe		0	
	Clean			
	Well Maintained			
	Other			
TOTAL		0.00		
AVERAGE		0.00		
SIGNAGE	Welcoming		0	
	Contact Detail			
	Name of Site			
	Site map			
	Information			
	Well Maintained			
	Open Closing times			
	Other			
TOTAL		0.00		
AVERAGE		0.00		
BOUNDARY/ HEDGES / GATES/ FENCES	Well Maintained		0	
	Clearly Defined			
	Other			
TOTAL		0.00		
AVERAGE		0.00		
ROADS / PATHWAYS/ CYCLEWAYS/ ACCESSES	Suitable Materials		1	30
	level for safe use			
	Disabled access			
	Well Defined Edges			
	Surface Clean			
	Weed Free			
	Other			
TOTAL		0.00		
AVERAGE		0.00		
FLOWER BEDS	Suitable Use of Plants		0	
	Weed Free			
	Edged			
	Peat Free			
	Well Maintained			
	Other			
TOTAL		0.00		
AVERAGE		0.00		

SHRUB BEDS	Suitable Use of Plants		0
	Weed Free		
	Edged		
	Peat Free		
	Well Maintained		
	Other		
TOTAL		0.00	
AVERAGE		0.00	
YOUNG TREES	Appropriate Mix		0
	Well Maintained		
	Tree Ties Maintained		
	Trees Tagged		
	Other		
TOTAL		0.00	
AVERAGE		0.00	
MATURE TREES	Well Maintained		0
	Adequate Crown Lifting		
	Trees Tagged		
	other		
TOTAL		0.00	
AVERAGE		0.00	
GRASS AREAS	Full Grass Cover		0
	Good Cover		
	Cleanly Cut		
	No Weeds		
	No Clippings		
	other		
TOTAL		0.00	
AVERAGE		0.00	
BINS	Numerous		0
	Well Maintained		
	Emptied Regularly		
	surfaced		
	other		
TOTAL		0.00	
AVERAGE		0.00	
SEATS	Numerous		0
	Well Maintained		
	Ease of Access		
	Provision for Disabled		
	Litter Bin Nearby		
	other		
TOTAL		0.00	
AVERAGE		0.00	
TOILETS	Provided on site		0
	Easy Access		
	Well Maintained		
	Good Condition		
	Safe to use		
	Visible		
	Well Signposted		
	Well used		
	Other		
TOTAL		0.00	
AVERAGE		0.00	
PARKING	Provided in or nearby		0

	Adequate Spaces			
	Clean			
	Tidy			
	Good Condition			
	Well Signed			
	Safe to use			
	Other			
TOTAL		0.00		
AVERAGE		0.00		
LIGHTING	Good Lighting			0
	Well Maintained			
	Other			
TOTAL		0.00		
AVERAGE		0.00		
INFORMATION BOARDS	Site Name			0
	Adequate and Up to Date			
	Other			
TOTAL		0.00		
AVERAGE		0.00		
PLAY PROVISION	Signed			0
	Rules and Regs			
	Safe			
	Adequate			
	Well Maintained			
	Other			
TOTAL		0.00		
AVERAGE		0.00		
CLEANLINESS	Litter			0
	Dog Fouling			
	Graffiti			
	Chewing Gum			
	Other			
TOTAL		0.00		
AVERAGE		0.00		
EVENTS / PUBLICITY/EDUCATION	Programme			0
	Leaflets			
	Posters			
	interpretation			
	environmental Education			
	Other			
TOTAL		0.00		
AVERAGE		0.00		
TENNIS COURTS	Surface			0
	Fencing			
	Posts			
	Nets			
	Line Markings			
	Secured Entrance			
	Correct Size			
	Adequate run off margins			
	Floodlighting			
	Information Board/Charges/Contact			
	Club Hut			
	Other			
TOTAL		0.00		

AVERAGE		0.00		
BOWLING GREENS	Benches			0
	Clean Gullies / Sand			
	Backboards in Gullies			
	Turf / Surface			
	Ring Pins/ No.s			
	Fenced			
	Club House			
	Notice board/ Rules and Regs			
	Floodlighting			
	Staffed			
	Other			
	TOTAL			
AVERAGE		0.00		
MUGA	Surface			0
	Fencing			
	Posts			
	Nets			
	Goals			
	Line Markings			
	Secured Entrance			
	Correct Size			
	Adequate run off margins			
	Floodlighting			
	Information Board/Contact/Charges			
	Vandalism			
Other				
TOTAL		0.00		
AVERAGE		0.00		
TOTAL CATEGORIES				
Total Score		0.00		
Sum of Average Scores		0.00		
Average Score		#DIV/0!		

Maximum Possible Score	30.00
Total Score	0.00
Percentage Score of Site	0.00%

Site Status (enter into green cell below from list below - copy and paste)

Appendix 7 Quantity Audit Summary

The information below is extracted from the Bracknell Forest Borough Study of open space, sports, recreational and leisure facilities (PPG17) October 2006. This relates to quantities across the borough, not just specific to Bracknell Forest Council.

Current Quantities			
Type of Green Space	Area (Hectares)	% of Total	Provision Per 1000 Population
Parks & Gardens	47.27	1.91	0.43
Amenity Greenspace	174.76	7.07	1.59
Natural & Semi-Natural Greenspaces	1,429.77	57.81	13.04
Urban Woodlands	73.69	2.98	0.67
Green Corridors	32.34	1.31	0.30
Provision for Children & Young People	40.45	1.64	0.37
Outdoor Sports Facilities	496.22	20.06	4.53
School Playing Fields	147.45	5.96	1.35
Civic Spaces	0.47	0.02	0.00
Allotments	5.8	0.23	0.05
Cemeteries, Churchyards	20.59	0.83	0.19
Total	2,473.31	100.00	22.56

N.B. Not including Incidental Open Space and Highways Verge

Formal Facilities

The provision of new facilities such as equipped play areas is not necessarily best delivered according to a quantitative approach. A particular concern is that this will not reflect population characteristics and could result in low levels of use and poor resource allocation. In addition, it could lead to imbalance with provision over supplied in some locations whilst some neighbourhoods may be poorly served.

The recommendation is that new provision should be properly planned on a site by site basis, with a particular focus on accessibility. The Six Acre Standard provides a valuable reference point for this.

To maintain existing provision, it will be necessary to ensure that there is a pro-rata increase commensurate with population increases.

Equipped Play Areas			
Type of Facility	Total Number	Current Provision Per Population	Quantity
Local Area of Play (LAPs)	18 (74 inc. LEAPs and NEAPs)	1 per 1481	To be based on accessibility
Local Equipped Area of Play (LEAPs)	50 (56 inc. NEAPs)	1 per 1957	
Neighbourhood Equipped Area of Play (NEAPs)	6	1 per 18270	

Sports Pitches, Courts, Greens and Allotments				
Type of Facility	Current Total Number	Current Provision Per Population	Proposed Standard	Reason
Outdoor Tennis Court	59	1 per 1858	1 per 1850	Based on existing provision
Winter Sports Pitches	5 Rugby	1 per 21923	1 per 21900	Based on existing provision
	44 Soccer	1 per 2491	1 per 2500	Based on existing provision
Summer Sports Pitches	10 Cricket	1 per 10962	1 per 11000	Based on existing provision
Bowling Greens	18 rinks	1 per 6090	1 per 6100	Based on existing provision
Golf Courses	7	1 per 15660	No standard	Commercially driven facility
Golf Driving Ranges	3	1 per 36539	No standard	Commercially driven facility
Allotments	305 plots (some of which are half plots)	1 per 359	1 per 400	Based on existing provision

In terms of pitch provision, it is recommended that (in accordance with national standards) local playing fields are available within 1.2 kilometres (three-quarters of a mile) of all dwellings in major housing areas to provide opportunities for participation in outdoor sports.