

Green Space Strategy

First Draft - December 2008



**Bracknell Forest Council
Parks & Countryside Service**

'To build, to plant, whatever you intend,
To rear the column or swell the grot,
In all let nature never be forgot,
Consult the genius of the place in all,
That tells the waters or to rise or fall,
Or helps the ambitious hill the Heavens to scale,
Or scoops in circling Theatres, the Vale,
Calls in the country, catches opening glades,
Joins willing woods and varies shades from shades,
Now breaks or now directs, the intending lines;
Paints as you plant and as you work designs.'

Alexander Pope, Epistle to Lord Burlington, 1731.



Bracknell Forest Green Space Strategy

2008 - 2013

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1.1 Introduction

This Strategy is part of a suite of documents designed to help prioritise and facilitate the management and development of the borough of Bracknell Forest. (*Reference diagram 1*)

Of particular significance are the Bracknell Forest Sustainable Community Plan, Living Together Working Together 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.

The emphasis of this strategy is on identifying, assessing and delivering local aspirations to safeguard and enhance quality of life; especially in the context of green space provision.

The intention is to build on the issues and opportunities identified within related plans, but not duplicate other work.

This document has been produced by Bracknell Forest Borough Council. It is primarily a guiding document for work to be led by the Authority over the next 5 years. However, green space development and management cuts across numerous organisations and so this Strategy also provides an important reference point and tool in support of their activities.

A core principal is Green Infrastructure. As defined in 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)

“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.”

<http://www.greeninfrastructure.eu/>

Within a policy context, the terminology ‘Green Infrastructure’ is relatively new; however, the concept is extremely well established. As written in 1731, by the renowned, Binfield born poet, Alexander Pope:

**“In all let nature never be forgot,
Consult the genius of the place in all”**

This is at the heart of landscape design.

1.2 Background

This strategy follows on from the Parks & Open Spaces Strategy which was published by Bracknell Forest Borough Council in February 2002.

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

Subsequent 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 restoration of Lily Hill Park; securing Parks for People Heritage Lottery Funding to restore South Hill Park; Green Flag Awards for Westmorland Park, Pope's Meadow, Shepherd Meadows / Sandhurst Memorial Park, and Lily Hill; and high levels of public satisfaction (82.1% of respondents, Bracknell Forest Residents Panel 2005).

1.3 Themes

There are 3 key themes that run through this new Strategy:

- Quantity
- Quality
- Use

In basic terms, this involves:

- The amount of green space available and needed
- Standards of provision
- Range of activities and functions facilitated
- Communities involved
- Management requirements

1.4 Vision

The over-arching vision for Bracknell Forest Borough Council is:

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

<http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/your-council.htm>

This closely reflects the vision set out within the Sustainable Community Plan (Living Together Working Together, Bracknell Forest Partnership 2005)

“In 2015, the community of Bracknell Forest will be self-confident, socially cohesive, economically buoyant and renowned for its “can do” attitude. Living and working in Bracknell Forest will mean having an excellent quality of life. Local people will be safe and healthy. They will have a home that meets their needs and be able to travel easily around the borough, particularly by public transport. The distinctive, quality environment of Bracknell Forest will be enhanced and the community and learning will be valued throughout people’s lives.”

<http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sustainable-community-strategy-2005.pdf>

Provision of and access to a quality environment are integral components of these visions. This has been quantified and assessed through the Bracknell Forest Borough Study of open space, sports, recreational and leisure facilities (Planning Policy Guidance Note 17) October 2006.

The resulting vision is for:

“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.”

<http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/ppg17-audit-report.pdf>

1.5 Objectives

3 key objectives underpin this strategy;

A. Green Space Provision:

Secure and safeguard infrastructure for recreation, play, sport, health, biodiversity and heritage that is sustainable; appropriate to need; strategically located; and adaptable to future requirements

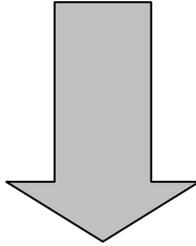
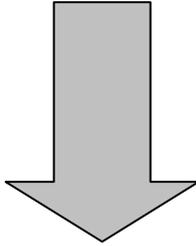
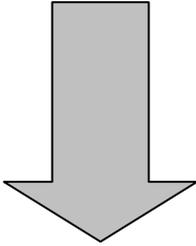
B. Management and Development:

Provide safe and welcoming green spaces; achieve and raise quality standards

C. Use and Enjoyment:

Ensure green spaces support and sustain well-being; encourage participation; and enable social inclusion

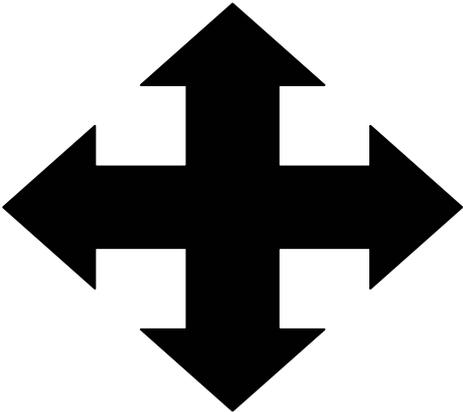
COMMUNITY STRATEGY



**LOCAL DEVELOPMENT
FRAMEWORK**

CULTURAL STRATEGY

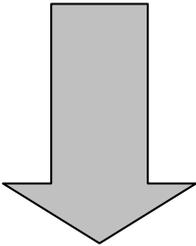
PLAY STRATEGY



BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

**RIGHTS OF WAY
IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

**GREEN SPACES
STRATEGY**



SITE MANAGEMENT PLANS

MINI-PLANS

**PROJECT BUSINESS
PLANS**

2.1 Historic Context

Bracknell Forest has a rich and varied history. Throughout the last 10,000 years, interaction with and management of the natural environment has been a constant theme:

- 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 perhaps 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. Places such as Easthampstead Park, South Hill Park and Lilly Hill Park have evolved from this action.

The period following World War II has resulted in 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

Alongside this historic significance, Bracknell Forest is of great importance for biodiversity and landscape:

- More than 12% of Bracknell Forest is within a designated Special Protection Area (1357 hectares)
- 255 hectares of the borough are within a Special Area of Conservation
- There are 9 designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (1912 hectares)
- 70 Wildlife Heritage Sites have been designated within planning policy documents
- Approximately 35% of Bracknell Forest is identified as Green Belt

The Bracknell Forest Biodiversity Action Plan identifies 22 species of plants and animals and 6 habitat types of particular relevance.

Of greatest significance for biodiversity is the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. This is a network of heathland sites which are 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 Habitats Directive and the Habitats Regulations.

2.3 Strategic Significance

Provision of and access to green space is extensively recognised as being a key contributor to well-being and quality of life. This includes being pivotal to:

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

Legislation and Policy

The importance is such that creation, protection and management of green space are enshrined through a rich and diverse legislative framework (*reference Appendix 1*).

At a Policy level, green infrastructure is imbedded within key documents (*reference Appendix 2*).

Central Government provides guidance on this through organisations such as the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and also advisory bodies such as Natural England and the Environment Agency.

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/issues/index.htm>

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/leisure/default.htm>

Particular relevant initiatives relating to green space include:

- 'Cleaner Safer Greener'

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/communities/sustainablecommunities/cleanersafergreener/parksurban/>

- Planning guidance and statements (especially Planning Policy Guidance 17)

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planning/planningpolicyguidance/planningpolicystatements/>

- Manual for Streets

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/sustainable/manforstreets/>

National Bodies

A range of organisations commission research, lobby for and / or advise on best practice in the provision of green infrastructure. The resulting guidance offers an invaluable resource base from which to help steer and influence future activity.

Examples include:

- The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE)
<http://www.cabe.org.uk/default.aspx?contentitemid=41>
- The Joseph Rowntree Foundation
<http://www.jrf.org.uk/public-spaces/>
- Fields In Trust (formerly the National Playing Fields Association) and the Six Acre Standard
<http://www.fieldsintrust.org/>
- Sport England
http://www.sportengland.org/index/get_resources.htm
- Play England
<http://www.playengland.org.uk>
- The Civic Trust
<http://www.civictrust.org.uk>

3.1 Definitions

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.*

This Strategy is largely guided by research set out within Bracknell Forest Borough Study of open space, sports, recreational and leisure facilities (PPG17) Final Report October 2006.

<http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/ppg17-audit-report.pdf>

The Study focuses on Open Space of Public Value (OSPV). This 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)*

In addition to the approach indicated above, green infrastructure can be identified according to primary functions 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
Active	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

In reality, green infrastructure and green spaces are multi-functional and provide for a combination of uses. This is a significant strength, although conversely, can lead to disjointed management and confused public perception.

3.2 Provision

Local councils are key managers of green space; however, provision is significantly more extensive than as facilitated through these bodies.

Organisational context is summarised within Section 6, including through the use of a PEST Analysis (Political Economic Social and Technical).

Of particular significance to the establishment and management of green space within Bracknell Forest: is:

Public Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unitary Authority • Parish and Town Councils • Government Departments and Agencies
Voluntary Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charitable Trusts (Wildlife Trusts, National Trust, South Hill Parks Arts Trust) • Local Community Groups
Private Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land Owners • Attractions • Developers • Contractors and Consultants

3.3 Customer Research and Community Feedback

Public perception is that Bracknell Forest is well served for accessible green space.

From recent survey work;

- 82.3% of respondents use parks and open spaces
- 39% of respondents make use of open space near their home on a daily basis

Source – Door to Door Household Survey undertaken by Strategic Leisure Ltd on behalf of Bracknell Forest Borough Council (2005)

- 82.1% of respondents are satisfied with parks and open spaces (28.5% 'Very Satisfied' and 53.6% 'Fairly Satisfied')

Source - Bracknell Forest Residents Panel undertaken in July 2005

- 92.3 % satisfaction with the provision of parks and countryside activities in Bracknell Forest (42.9% 'very satisfied' and 49.2% 'fairly satisfied')

Source - Residents Panel Survey undertaken in July 2007 as part of research for the Cultural Strategy

This does not mean that complacency can occur. The natural environment is identified as

an especially important feature of what is good about living in Bracknell Forest. Set against high levels of post war urbanisation and significant further development pressure for at least the next 20 years, considerable challenges lie ahead in sustaining and enhancing this special quality.

Barriers to Access:

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.

The Residents Panel from the same year suggest that 17.9% of respondents are not adequately satisfied with parks and open spaces.

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

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

4.1 Strategy Process

The primary purpose of this Strategy is to influence, guide and support work by Bracknell Forest Borough Council and other agencies in the provision and management of green infrastructure throughout the borough.

This involves development of new provision alongside management and improvement of existing facilities.

In developing this strategy, the principle is to focus on:

Priority  Objective  Action

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

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

Various tools are available to further enable assessment, prioritisation and programming. A PEST analysis, SWOT analysis and Risk Assessment have been undertaken and utilised to support the development of the Action Plan (*Reference Diagram 2 and Appendix 4*)

4.2 Example Issues

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, set against escalating costs to enable appropriate provision.
Design:	
Location and scale	In striving to maximise economic return, the risk is that green space 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 mis-use such as fly-tipping and vandalism.
Specification and delivery of works	Developers may look to use materials and planting which is cheap, 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 and / or compromised through regulatory issues such as Highway Standards. Whilst it is important to ensure safe spaces, this should not act as a barrier to innovation, character and quality. Linked to this, factors relating to adoption and future revenue costs can lead to an imbalance of influence on use of materials, planting and layout.</p> <p>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 / or 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 locally accessible play areas. In some instance, the legacy is provision of 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>Play space provision is receiving an increasingly high profile. A growing body of evidence is demonstrating the link 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. 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.</p> <p>The popularity of different activities varies over time; particularly with the advent of new influences. Less traditional sports and activities currently have a high profile, such as baseball and cheer leading. Wheeled sports facilities (skate boarding, roller blades and BMX cycles) are also proving very popular with young people.</p>
Biodiversity	Under European and national legislation, organisations such as Bracknell Forest Borough Council have a duty to assess whether there is a risk of any plan or

	<p>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 Wildlife Heritage Site (WHS). 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 is often disjointed. Opportunities for identifying and delivering efficiencies, including best use of available expertise are not maximised. 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>Within the borough, there are some excellent examples of partnership working between agencies and services. 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. 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 from within sites. This results in limited management of entrances and boundaries. As a result residents and visitors may have a negative first impression, which can subsequently inform the overall experience.</p> <p>The issue is further compounded where parcels of land adjoining neighbouring properties are perceived predominantly as 'screening' 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> <p>Added to this, boundaries have been compromised through decisions allowing small land sales to neighbouring properties.</p>
Community:	
Participation	<p>Although satisfaction ratings are high, the indication is that up to 17.7% of residents do not use parks and open spaces (Household Survey undertaken by Strategic Leisure Ltd on behalf of BFBC in 2005). 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 can be 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>At a corporate level within Bracknell Forest Borough 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. Considerable success is being achieved through joint working between public services. 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>In addition to staff employed to manage green space, joint funding has enabled the Police to appoint Community Support Officers, and a dog warden is employed by Bracknell Forest Borough Council (jointly with the Parish and Town Councils).</p> <p>A key focus has been 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 green infrastructure 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 'specialisms' • 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 Policy Priorities

Key factors relating to green infrastructure include:

- Size, location, function and distribution – ensuring that the right facility is in the best place
- 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

Flowing from this are 3 key themes:

- Quantity
- Quality
- Use

These encompass:

- The amount of green space
- The standard 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 3 key objectives which underpin this strategy:

A. Green Space Provision:

Secure and safeguard infrastructure for recreation, play, sport, health, biodiversity and heritage that is sustainable; appropriate to need; strategically located; and adaptable to future requirements

B. Management and Development:

Provide safe and welcoming green spaces; achieve and raise quality standards

C. Use and Enjoyment:

Ensure green spaces support and sustain well-being; encourage participation; and enable social inclusion

4.6 Actions

Resulting actions encompass function; distribution; access (to, within and between); community (use and involvement including non users, minority groups and under represented audiences); marketing and promotion; education and awareness; and management. An action plan is set out in Section 7.

5.1 Quantity

The Six Acre Standard

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

<http://www.fieldsintrust.co.uk/>

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 m2	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 m2	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 m2	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.

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

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.

Sport England

The 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.

The Bracknell Forest Quantity Standard

Local standards for open space provision in Bracknell reflect the distinctive features of the Borough. Particularly notable is the significance of being a New Town and aspirations behind the New Towns Act 1946 to develop a total community based on the motto of "Home, Industry, Leisure".

Also of pertinence are aspects including landscape character and make up of the resident population.

The 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 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:

- 12 hectares per 1000 new population

A summary of quantity standards for Bracknell Forest is set out in Appendix 6.

5.2 Quality

Fields in Trust Guidance (The Six Acre Standard)

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

<http://www.playengland.org.uk/resources/design-for-play.pdf>

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.

<http://www.securedbydesign.com/pdfs/SBD-principles.pdf>

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

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

Green Flag Award Standards

As set out by The Civic Trust: *"The Green Flag Award is the national standard for parks and green spaces in England and Wales. The award scheme began in 1996 as a means of recognising and rewarding the best green spaces in the country. It was also seen as a way of encouraging others to achieve the same high environmental standards, creating a benchmark of excellence in recreational green areas."*

<http://www.greenflagaward.org.uk/>

The Green Flag Award Scheme provides the definitive quality benchmark. In 2008, 4 parks in Bracknell successfully achieved Green Flag Awards.

Summary of Green Flag Award Criteria:

1. A Welcoming Place: The overall impressions for any member of the community approaching and entering the park or green space should be positive and inviting, regardless of the purpose for which they are visiting. Features of particular importance are:

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

2. Healthy, Safe, and Secure: The park or green space must be a healthy, safe and secure place for all members of the community to use. Relevant issues must be addressed in management plans and implemented on the ground. New issues that arise must be addressed promptly and appropriately. Particularly important issues are:

- Equipment and facilities must be safe to use
- The park or green space must be a secure place for all members of the community to use or traverse
- Dog fouling must be adequately addressed
- Health & 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 or green space, and clearly sign posted

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 issues must be adequately addressed
- Grounds, buildings, equipment and other features must be well maintained
- A policy on litter, vandalism and maintenance should be in place, in practice and regularly reviewed

4. Sustainability: Methods used in maintaining the park or 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.

Specifically:

- An environmental policy or charter and management strategy should be in place, in practice and regularly reviewed
- Pesticide use should be minimised and justified
- Horticultural peat use should be eliminated
- Waste plant material in the park or green space should be recycled
- High horticultural and arboricultural standards should be demonstrated
- Energy conservation, pollution reduction, waste recycling, and resource conservation measures should be used

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

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

6. Community Involvement: Management should actively pursue the involvement of members of the community who represent as many park or green space user groups as possible. Management should be able to demonstrate:

- 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: Marketing strategy in place, in practice and regularly reviewed

- Good provision of information to users, e.g. about management strategies, activities, features, ways to get involved
- Promotion of the park or green space as a community resource

8. Management: A Green Flag Award application must have a management plan or strategy in place which reflects the aspirations of Local Agenda 21 and clearly and adequately addresses all the above criteria and any other relevant aspects of the park or green space's management. The plan must be actively implemented and regularly reviewed. Financially sound management of the park or green space must also be demonstrated.

Thames & Chilterns Britain in Bloom

This scheme sets out key criteria for public spaces and provides opportunity to benchmark local provision. In 2008, Bracknell was winner of the Large Town/Small City - Thames & Chilterns in Bloom Silver Gilt Award. Summary of Criteria:

<p>A. Floral Displays</p>	<p>Design and quality of features and displays, standards of maintenance, including lawned areas and evidence of spring displays and autumn colour. Including actions taken to reduce irrigation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local authority public parks & town gardens; war memorials; recreational areas; public buildings; displays associated with roads including roundabouts • Business & commercial Shops; multiple stores; retail centres; bus and train stations • Residential front gardens • Initiatives to conserve water appropriate use of plant material; suitable location of schemes; evidence of a balance between seasonal & permanent planting; changes of methodology including systems to retain / reduce water
<p>B. Permanent Landscaping, including shrubs:</p>	<p>Design and quality of plantings and standard of appropriate maintenance, including grass cutting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential areas • Commercial premises industrial estates; business & retail parks • Local authority public parks; recreation areas; open spaces; war memorials; verges; roundabouts • Recycling sites and car parks • Community involvement planting by voluntary organisations; encouragement of young people
<p>C. Local Agenda 21 and Sustainable Development.</p>	<p>Innovative new ideas having impact on different areas of the community together with community effort</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of natural areas nature conservation projects; monitoring; education; work programmes • Other nature projects designated areas created to encourage wild flowers and wildlife; Interpretation / signage • Waste management Recycling; composting • Community involvement to encourage recycling to save natural resources Mulching; water conservation; minimisation of peat / pesticide / herbicide usage • Encouragement of young people
<p>D. Local Environmental Quality</p>	<p>Absence of litter, dog fouling, graffiti, fly-posting and other associated factors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleanliness of city/town centres and other high profile public areas; functional areas (other than streets) public parks and gardens; bus and train stations; children's play areas • Treatment of weeds in hard landscaped areas • Condition of street furniture Litter / dog bins and management of gap sites • Community involvement campaigns and community projects to encourage improved cleanliness; encouragement of young people
<p>E. Public Awareness</p>	<p>Publicity and promotion of Britain in Bloom and local "In Bloom" activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing, publicity and promotion of Britain in Bloom • Communication of information and media coverage. <p>Organisation and innovation in attracting sponsorship, fundraising and other support including "in kind" benefits</p>

Litter

Defra has produced a Code of Practice.

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/localenv/litter/code/index.htm>

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

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 is Grade A.

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.

Assessment was based on criteria similar to Green Flag Award, encompassing all the critical elements advocated within Planning Policy Guidance 17 (Reference Appendix 5).

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

Section 6 Delivery

6.1 Summary of Roles

Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bracknell Forest Borough Council• Government Departments and Agencies
Design and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bracknell Forest Borough Council• Parish and Town Councils• Developers• Consultants
Management, Maintenance and Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bracknell Forest Borough 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 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 Borough 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.

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).

<http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/env-spd-lid.htm>

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.

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

Grants and Awards

Investment can be secured through the use of grant schemes whereby 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) and use of the Landfill Communities Fund (co-ordinated through Entrust).

<http://www.hlf.org.uk>

<http://www.entrust.org.uk>

Funding can also be secured through participation in initiatives additional to core service delivery. These initiatives are set up to enable innovation; facilitate joint working between organisations; and 'stretch' performance. A good example of this is Local Area Agreements set up between central government and Local Strategic Partnerships.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/performanceframeworkpartnerships/localareaagreements/>

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.

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 outside of the availability to organisations such as local authorities.

6.3 Management and Development

PEST Analysis

The following table summarises the Political, Economic, Social and Technological aspects of green infrastructure provision within Bracknell Forest and the opportunities this affords.

<i>Political</i>
<p>Public Sector</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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 Food and Rural Affairs, Government Office for the South East, Natural England, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, Environment Agency) – legislation, policy, advice and funding
<p>Voluntary Sector</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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
<p>Private Sector</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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
<p><u>Summary</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Multi-agency approach enabling utilisation of wide ranging expertise➤ Local accountability (public sector) combined with grass roots flexibility (voluntary sector) and tailored specialisms (private sector)➤ Risk of fragmentation and competition for resources

<i>Economic</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Affluent population with pockets of deprivation• Regional significance• Public service• High demand for development• Increasing pressure on revenue budgets• Competition for external funds
<p><u>Summary</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ High disposable income to support leisure based activities balanced by free access to / provision of green spaces to attract potentially 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
- 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

			<p>A5. Actively seek, and where feasible acquire land to support appropriate future green infrastructure provision. This includes linking and connecting to existing sites to develop extensive networks.</p> <p>A6. Ensure that the creation, enhancement and subsequent management of green spaces supports delivery of the Biodiversity Action Plan</p> <p>A7. Support the development and delivery of the Play Strategy (led by Early Years and Childcare) and related national Children's Plan initiatives such as Play Builders, Fair Play and Pathfinder</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, External Grants, Capital Budgets</p> <p>Revenue Budgets, External Grants, Developer Contributions</p> <p>External Grants</p> <p>Revenue and Capital Budgets, External Grants, Developer Contributions</p> <p>Parish Council funds, External Grants</p>	
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			<p>A10. Support delivery of actions (co-ordinated through the Local Countryside Access Forum) as set out within the Rights of Way Improvement Plan</p> <p>A11. Instigate 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"> Actively engage utility companies and statutory agencies to secure provision of and implement improvements to land drainage features such as balancing ponds to ensure that they operate effectively; alongside providing for biodiversity, landscape and recreation 	<p>External Grants, Capital and Revenue Budgets, Developer Contributions</p> <p>External Grants, Capital and Revenue Budgets</p> <p>Developer Contributions, Private Sector Revenue funds</p>	
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Key Theme	Focus	Objective	Action	Funding Mechanism	Timescale
Quality	Function Distribution Access Community Management	Management and Development: Provide safe and welcoming green spaces; achieve and raise quality standards	<p>B1. Ensure co-ordinated, joint working between agencies in the design, construction, adoption and maintenance of green spaces; 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 green spaces is encompassed within appropriate Management Plans (Target of 10 sites per year)</p> <p>B4. Include all publicly accessible green spaces within 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>Developer Contributions</p> <p>Revenue Budgets</p> <p>Revenue Budgets</p> <p>Developer Contributions, Capital and Revenue Budgets, External Grants</p> <p>Developer Contributions, Capital Budgets, External Grants</p>	<p>2008</p> <p>2008 onwards</p> <p>2008 onwards</p> <p>2008 onwards</p>

			<p>B6. Assess quality of green spaces (Bracknell Forest Standard) on a 3-5 year cycle; to include Public Rights of Way Condition Survey</p>	Revenue Budgets	<p>Winter 2009 for PROW</p> <p>2010 for sites</p>
			<p>B7. Produce Business Plans and secure resources to implement major projects to restore and / or enhance high profile parks and gardens; specifically including South Hill Park</p>	Capital Budgets, External Grants	<p>Business Plan and HLF bid Sept 2007 Stage 1 from Spring 2008</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>	Revenue Budgets	
			<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 developing opportunities for 'natural' play</p>	Capital Budgets, Developer Contributions	<p>2007 onwards</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>	Revenue Budgets	

			<p>B11. Continue to participate in the Britain in Bloom Award scheme to assess, monitor and celebrate attaining high quality standards with 'Bracknell Flowers'</p>	Revenue Budgets	2008 / 09
			<p>B12. Review and improve the procedures available to assess, advise and enhance management of locally designated Wildlife Heritage Sites. Implement and monitor actions in accordance with proposed National Indicators for Biodiversity</p>	Revenue Budgets	2007 onwards
			<p>B13. Raise the knowledge base, profile and subsequent management standards for trees in the landscape. Specific measures to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing an asset register • Reviewing and updating use of Tree Preservation Orders • Producing Ancient and Veteran Tree policies 	Capital Budgets, Revenue Budgets	
			<p>B14. Continue and extend partnership working between agencies; including reviewing and rationalising responsibilities to raise management standards and secure efficiencies. Specific measures include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Parks and Public Realm Forum (Parishes) • 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 	Revenue Budgets	

			<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 the development and enhancement of green spaces. Specific measures include bidding for grants and awards and investigating the feasibility of sponsorship</p>	Revenue Budgets	2007 onwards
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Key Theme	Focus	Objective	Action	Funding Mechanism	Timescale
Use	Community	Use and Enjoyment:	C1. Raise awareness of green infrastructure and the opportunities available through targeted marketing and publicity. Specific measures to include a review of branding of publicly accessible green spaces	Revenue Budgets	2008 onwards
	Marketing and Promotion Education and Awareness	Ensure green spaces support and sustain well-being; encourage participation; and enable social inclusion	<p>C2. Increase enjoyment and understanding of publicly accessible green space through the use of interpretative media; to include off site measures including the review of leaflets and web based material</p> <p>C3. Identify and implement actions to raise on-site management presence in order to address barriers to participation caused through fear of anti-social behaviour</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"> • Initiate a programme of site access audits and implement resulting practical improvements • Review the involvement of disabled people within consultative forums. Identify gaps and invite appropriate representation • Initiate an audit of interpretation / information provision. Identify and implement a programme of improvements • Identify needs and opportunities for community transport links to green spaces 	Revenue Budgets, Developer Contributions, Capital Budgets, External Grants	2007 onwards

			<p>C5. Encourage participation in healthy active lifestyles through events, marketing and support to initiatives including '3 x 30' (Local Area Agreement for increasing participation rates) and the proposed '5 hour offer' (sport for young people)</p>	<p>Revenue Budgets, External Grants</p>	<p>2008 onwards</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>Revenue Budgets</p>	<p>2007 onwards</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>Revenue Budgets</p>	<p>2007 onwards</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>Revenue Budgets, Capital Budgets, External Grants</p>	<p>2008 onwards</p>

Section 8 Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

8.1 Measuring Performance

Green infrastructure is essential to the delivery of wide ranging initiatives and functions; from wildlife protection and enhancement through to improving people's health.

Alongside demonstrating success in the design and management of green space, there is logic and value in monitoring relevant outputs and outcomes which help achieve these initiatives and functions.

Relevant national and local indicators need to be in place to support delivery and assess performance. Targets and results must be carefully considered, with priorities and actions regularly reviewed to ensure effective delivery.

Linked to this, two main approaches to measuring will be implemented:

- 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

8.2 National Indicators

Previous

The main National Indicator previously in place that is of direct relevance to green space is 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) are also of relevance:

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

Future

The Government recently consulted on a new Local Government Performance Framework to measure implementation of national priorities.

As set out by the Department for Communities and Local Government; *“the new local performance framework aims to reform the way in which public services are delivered – in health, welfare, housing, employment, education, communities, economic development,*

policing and community safety, the environment and beyond. It will help Government to focus on its priorities in a co-ordinated way and transfer power from Whitehall to local authorities and to communities. Devolving power to local authorities and their partners will help them to respond to local priorities resulting in the better provision of public services and improvement of the quality of life of local communities.”

Of most relevance to green space is:

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

Related

In addition to NI 197; green infrastructure can 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)

There are also potential links to:

Performance Indicator	Definition
NI 10	Visits to museums or galleries
NI 11	Engagement in the arts
NI 175	Access to services and facilities by public transport, walking and cycling
NI 185	CO2 Reduction from Local Authority operations
NI 194	Level of air quality – reduction in Nox and Primary PM10 emissions through local authority’s estate and operations
NI 196	Improved street and environment cleanliness – fly tipping
NI 198	Children travelling to school – mode of travel usually used

8.3 Tools and Guidance

Towards an Excellent Service

As set out by CABE Space:

“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”

<http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/aio/7095846>

This version has been developed specifically for the parks and open spaces sector by CABE Space with [IDeA](#), the Institute for Sports Parks and Leisure ([ISPAL](#)), [GreenSpace](#) and practitioners.

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.”

<http://www.greenstat.org.uk/>

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

8.4 Proposed Monitoring for Green Spaces

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 Years
	The Bracknell Forest Standard Quality Rating / Plus 1 Principle	Local	Site assessment (using consultant)	
	Rights of Way Condition Survey	Local	Path surveys	3 Years
Green Flag Award Scheme / Britain in Bloom (Thames and Chilterns Region)	Local	External Judging (Civic Trust / Royal Horticultural Society)	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	Local	On site visitor surveys	Quarterly
	Volunteer Input	Local	Hours contributed	