



SOLIHULL GREEN SPACES STRATEGY

Adopted AUGUST 2006

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PART 1

VISION, PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY, METHODOLOGY AND GUIDING POLICIES

INTRODUCTION TO PART 1

1. Part 1 of the Green Spaces Strategy includes the background against which the Strategy has been developed, and details of the methodology. The main sections within it are:
 - **Purpose of the Green Spaces Strategy**
The brief for the Strategy work and the reasons why Solihull MBC needed the work at this time.
 - **Methodology**
An outline of the steps used for the development of the Strategy.
 - **The Character of Solihull**
The key characteristics of the different parts of the Borough, including the differences between the local communities.
 - **The Importance of Green Space**
The results of consultation, including the household survey, and the place of green space within the wider agenda of health, crime, education, and conservation. Identification of the main issues and priorities guiding the formation of policies for green spaces.
 - **Planning Framework**
The national, regional and local planning framework and key policy guidance. Consideration of the how the Green Spaces Strategy can be implemented within the new Local Development Framework, and how to make the most effective use of developers' contributions.
 - **Other Green Space Policies and Strategies**
A summary and critique of a number of topic strategies which also need to guide the Green Spaces Strategy.
2. The findings from the sections in Part 1 guide the proposals for the Green Infrastructure Plan, including the Local Standards, which are developed in Part 2.

PURPOSE OF THE GREEN SPACES STRATEGY

A vision for Solihull's Green Spaces

"By 2025 Solihull aims to provide a network of attractive, high quality, accessible green spaces that are managed and developed, recognising the Borough's landscape character and local distinctiveness, to meet the diverse needs of the community and the natural environment. Our green spaces should be safe, clean and maintained in a sustainable way, becoming an important element of every day life, for the future enjoyment and well-being of all."

Purpose of the Strategy

3. Solihull has a population of approximately 200,000, and an area of 17,832 hectares. The south of the Borough is very prosperous, it has a rural area to the east, but some of the highest national deprivation is visible in three wards to the north of the Borough.
4. The Borough has borders with Birmingham, Coventry, Warwickshire and Worcestershire. Considerable development has taken place in the Borough over the last 5 years, with more planned. The Council is keen to provide a "level playing field" for developers, while protecting, developing and creating open spaces and facilities to enhance services and the quality of life for those who live, work, study and play in the Borough.
5. Green space, sport and recreational activity all underpin people's quality of life. Therefore, well-designed and implemented planning policies are fundamental if they are to deliver the Authority's, vision, objectives and values. It is essential that the Authority ensures that there are sufficient facilities and open spaces in the right places of an appropriate quality, and that they are both well managed and maintained for the future.
6. The overall project aim was therefore to produce a Green Spaces Strategy for the Borough that helps to deliver:
 - Networks of accessible, high quality and sustainable green spaces and facilities for physical activities which meet local needs and are valued by the community, both in urban and rural areas.
 - An appropriate balance between enhancement and increased access to existing provision, and new provision; including a clear framework for investment priorities and action.
 - Clarity for development proposals in relation to the requirements and expectations of the Authority in respect to green space and facilities for physical activity.

7. It also:
 - Meets the requirements of Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation by setting local standards for provision for each different type of green space. These local standards need to relate to quantity, quality and accessibility of provision.
 - Ensures consistency between the relevant plans and strategies of the authority and the emerging Local Development Framework
 - Develops a strategic approach towards the management of green spaces
8. Specific questions needing to be answered during the course of the Strategy included:
 - Which types of existing open spaces and recreational facilities should be protected and/or enhanced?
 - Where should new provision be made?
 - Are there areas within which there are opportunities for new, enhanced or relocated provision?
 - Are there areas or locations with over-provision of facilities?
9. The Strategy's proposals provide a long-term vision for the provision of green spaces and related facilities across Solihull. The Implementation Plan will help determine the priorities for policy, investment and other work programmes both for Solihull Council and its partners.
10. The Zone Action Plans provide a more detailed set of priorities for each area of the Borough, based on the adopted local standards for green space and the other issues emerging from the Strategy process. The relative priorities between these will emerge from discussions at the Parish or Town Council level, and will also take into account the views of local residents.
11. The achievement of the network of green spaces and related facilities proposed by the Strategy will depend upon the availability of funding. This will include both the capital investment needed to achieve a new element of the green spaces network, and the revenue to enable its effective long term management.
12. A consultancy team comprising of Nortoft Partnerships Ltd and Wardell Armstrong were appointed in November 2004 to undertake the Strategy work.

The development of the Green Spaces Strategy

13. The Green Spaces Strategy has been developed through a number of stages, which can be summarised as:
- An audit of the existing green spaces and their associated facilities.
 - Mapping of the audit findings onto a computer based mapping system (GIS)
 - Consultation with stakeholders.
 - Consultation via a household survey.
 - Review of the existing policies and strategies, including the planning policies.
 - Comparison with other local authorities and any relevant 'national standards'.
 - Identification of surpluses and deficiencies and development of local standards.
 - Testing and revision as necessary of the proposed 'local standards'.
 - Consideration of other policy objectives, including those relating to conservation measures.
 - Development of a comprehensive Green Infrastructure Plan, which is a long term vision.
 - Development of an Implementation Plan that sets out the actions necessary to achieve both the vision and the local standards.
14. The Green Spaces Strategy has a number of sections that broadly reflect these stages.

METHODOLOGY

Definition of Green Space

15. The term Green Space tends to be applied loosely to all land used for purposes which do not involve a substantial proportion of the site being covered with buildings; and in this respect a definition could include derelict and waste or vacant land. Open space is defined in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as “land laid out as a public garden, or used for the purposes of public recreation, or land which is a disused burial ground”, but there are other types of public and private green space of public value.
16. Planning for green space needs to deal with its complex typology. The usual public perception of such space is often the larger parks, but it also encompasses commons and village greens, playing fields, children’s playgrounds, recreation grounds, allotments, cemeteries, golf courses, and woodlands. The network of traffic free routes, including the canals, cycle routes and rights of way are also part of the green space infrastructure.
17. Green spaces are put to many different uses, often within a single site. The parks in Solihull have always been seen as multi-purpose, providing opportunities for organised sport (football pitches, tennis courts, bowling greens etc), informal leisure (pleasure gardens, children’s play) and simply as a means of getting away from it all. Many green spaces however have a single primary purpose, such as playing fields, golf courses, allotments and cemeteries. Almost all will have a nature conservation interest and contribute towards the mosaic of natural habitats within Solihull.

The approach to the Strategy

18. The Green Spaces Strategy needs to encompass both space for people and for wildlife, and must also take into account the landscape and local character of different parts of Solihull. The Strategy needed to bring together all of these strands and to develop proposals which would reflect the many functions of these areas.
19. This section provides a summary of the methodology behind the Strategy, and reasons for the way in which issues have been addressed.

Audit and mapping

20. There was already a large amount of existing information about all of the green spaces, but this information was spread across different parts of Solihull Council, held by other organisations, or remained the personal knowledge of officers or volunteers. As there was no consistent format, the information could not be shared between interested parties.

21. The first step was therefore to record, as far as possible, on a computer-based mapping system, all of the green spaces and their characteristics. Some of this information already existed, but needed importing from other parts of the Council, such as the Phase 1 Habitats Survey. Other information had been newly recorded, such as the detailed management codes for areas managed by the Council. Other green spaces needed surveying, such as those playing fields managed by private sports clubs.
22. The database developed as part of the Green Spaces Strategy will be a lasting legacy from this project, and can be used as a tool by the Council and its partners on a day-to-day basis, for planning and management purposes.
23. The maps produced through the auditing process have been an important element in the assessment of the quantity of green space and facilities in Solihull, and are provided in Appendix 1.

Consultation

24. Consultation on the issues and priorities for the Strategy have been essential for the development of the Green Infrastructure Plan, including the 'local standards', as well as confirmation of the priorities for investment by the Council and its partners. As it was not possible to consult everyone with an interest in green spaces, because the topic is so wide ranging, targeted consultation with key stakeholders, together with a household survey, were agreed as the most appropriate means of approach.

Stakeholder consultation

25. Five topic-based stakeholder meetings were held with a mixture of volunteers, partner organisations and key Solihull officers. The meetings, mainly in February, were well attended and lively. The issues arising from these meetings are considered in more detail in the section entitled 'The Importance of Green Space'. A full list of consultees is provided at the end of this report.

Topic 1 - Green spaces; equity and social inclusion

26. A meeting to consider issues about how green spaces are currently used, particularly by those who are most disadvantaged, and future priorities. Invitees included the Primary Care Trust, disabled people's organisations, and officers concerned with youth and children's provision.

Topic 2 - Wildlife and conservation

27. A meeting to discuss options for the future and issues associated with conservation, including increasing community involvement in both designated sites and other green space areas. Invitees included

representatives of the volunteer network and Solihull MBC conservation and landscape officers.

Topic 3 - Strengthening Community Involvement

28. A meeting to discuss effective methods of involving local communities, both in the main parks and smaller areas of local green space. Invitees included Neighbourhood Managers and Zone Co-ordinators.

Topic 4 – Youth provision

29. A meeting with the Youth Council to discuss issues and aspirations of young people from across Solihull in relation to green spaces.

Topic 5 - Parish and Town Councils' provision

30. Two meetings with the parish and town councils to focus on their provision for local communities, and associated green space management issues.

Other consultation

31. Some of the topics and issues required individual consultations: for example, the future role of the canals and British Waterways, the implications of the North Solihull Regeneration initiative, and the development of cycling routes across Solihull.
32. The Local Strategic Partnership was consulted via the 'Place to Live' subgroup in March, and the initial findings of the Strategy were presented to a joint Councillors and extended officers group at the end of April.

Household survey

33. A postal survey of 5000 randomly selected households was conducted from mid-January to mid-February 2005, using the survey questionnaire and covering letter given in Appendices 2 and 3. A 27% response rate to the survey (which is high) has enabled analysis of the responses on both an authority-wide and strategy zone basis. The results of this survey together with the other consultation results will provide an unparalleled resource in supporting the case for green spaces within Solihull. The detailed findings of the household survey are contained in the section 'The Importance of Green Space' and a full copy of the analysis is provided in Appendix 3a.

A review of policies, plans and strategies

34. Green spaces have been the subject of a large number of policies, plans and strategies produced by Solihull MBC and its partners. However some documents make no mention of them and this issue is addressed elsewhere. These existing documents provide important background material and a policy steer for the Strategy. A review of the key documents has therefore been undertaken and commentary on them is provided within the relevant sections of this report. The updating and review of the key documents are also identified for action within the Implementation Plan for the Strategy.

Comparison with other authorities

35. The process of comparing Solihull with other authorities, and their provision of green spaces and facilities, is a useful guide in developing appropriate local standards and other proposals. Ideally, it would be valuable to compare the local standards derived from full PPG17 assessments undertaken by other similar authorities. However, none of the CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) 'family group' of authorities into which Solihull falls has done such an assessment, so their 'old local standards' can be only a partial guide. The comparison with other authorities has therefore been taken wider, and the findings from authorities that have undertaken PPG 17 type assessments have been included where appropriate.

National standards

36. Some Government agencies and other national bodies have produced 'standards' for green space, the most notable being those produced by English Nature, NPFA and Sport England. Where possible and appropriate, these were used as a starting point for the standards in Solihull. When the standards are realistically achievable, they are proposed to be adopted. However, where they are not achievable, they have been translated into other achievable standards, or their adapted principles promoted as proposed policies. The relevant 'national standards' have been identified within each relevant section of the Strategy.

Management issues

37. There are a number of different ownership and management regimes for different types of green space and associated facilities, usually relating to the function and history of the spaces, including:
- Solihull MBC ownership and management
 - Parish or town council ownership and management
 - 'Private club' e.g. many sports clubs
 - Long term leases on specific sites e.g. Olton Sailing Club
 - Industrial e.g. Land Rover playing fields

- British Waterways for canals
 - Independent Trusts e.g. Lant Trust, and Castle Bromwich Hall and Gardens Trust
 - Network Rail for railway lines and embankments
 - Highways Agency for the motorway network
 - Solihull MBC management of public rights of way
 - Private landowners and farmers
38. The long-term involvement of local communities in managing their publicly accessible local spaces is a key to long-term success, and Solihull has already developed a network of volunteer groups.
39. It is unlikely that many of the sites will change fundamentally in their management over the next few years. This has therefore been a factor in considering the potential impact of local standards and the options for action within the Implementation Plan.
40. Many of the Solihull MBC sites are managed on a long-term contract with an external grounds management company. The overall terms of this contract cannot be varied in the short term, but there might be scope to review the works undertaken, and change the detailed management regimes for different sites to reflect some of the objectives of the Strategy.

Financial implications

41. The initial provision and long-term management of green spaces and the associated facilities can be expensive. For example the capital cost of a new Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP) (excluding sites costs and fencing) and surfacing can be around £30,000, and a new Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP) around £50,000 at 2005 prices. The cost of a new 4-room changing pavilion could range from £180,000-500,000 at 2005 prices. These items can be costed relatively easily, as can the anticipated life-span of the facilities. It is also possible to give some guidance on the likelihood of achieving any external financial grant aid for new provision.
42. However, the costs of short and longer term maintenance is more difficult to assess. Particular items, such as the cost of major drainage works on a single football pitch can be costed with a degree of accuracy, as can standard operating costs and maintenance regimes. Also possible to cost would be changes in management, such as allowing some areas currently with short-cut grass to naturally regenerate into scrub. More difficult to assess are the following factors which will often be site or location specific:
- 42.1. Positive
- The likely long term value of the volunteer help in managing sites, particularly Local Nature Reserves and some parks.
 - The degree of self-management by site users e.g. of allotment and playing field sites.

- The support of local communities in direct management, and passive surveillance of local green spaces.

42.2. Negative

- Vandalism
 - For example, a children's play area could be a long term asset to an area, with a life-time of at least 5-10 years. However, if sites are seriously vandalised, complete replacement may be required within only a few months.
- Fly-tipping
 - This costs Solihull over £130,000 each year with over 1000 separate incidents.
- Litter and dog mess
 - The presence of these in parks and green spaces is the largest discouragement to use, but the costs of dealing with these problems is high.
- Cost of ranger service/policing
 - Problems with anti-social behaviour means that the costs of rangers and police time also needs to be taken into account in considering green space provision.

43. Due to these complex local factors, accurate long term maintenance costs are impossible to assess at the Strategy level, and can be addressed in general terms only.

Use of zones for the Strategy

44. The Strategy has adopted a number of zones in order to simplify the assessment of provision, and the balance in supply and demand for facilities. The adoption of a zoned approach means that there are 6 'units' to consider, rather than 17 individual wards. These zones are illustrated by Map 2. Solihull MBC has previously used the urban area zones for the 2001 Urban Capacity Study.

45. Among the reasons for adopting zones are that they:

- Enable similar areas to be considered together.
- Enable comparison between areas with significantly different characteristics e.g. north Solihull to be compared to the rural east.
- Enable the household survey results to be reasonably robust for each zone (there are enough responses from each to allow analysis).
- Recognise the movement of people within areas to different facilities, and identify the 'catchment areas' say of a senior football pitch.
- Follow best practice for playing field assessment, as set down by Sport England.

- Simplify the negotiations with developers for new contributions for certain facilities or green spaces.
46. The use of the zones for assessment does not detract from more local needs. As an example, a Strategy objective is to improve the number and spread of children's play areas. The smaller play areas known as LEAPs are usually accepted to have a catchment area of 400 m. This distance is therefore used as the basis for the assessment, rather than the much larger zone.

Strategy Steering Group and communication

47. The Strategy Core Steering Group included both internal representatives, and representatives from Sport England. The Solihull MBC officers represented Forward Planning, Area Management, Community Services (Sport & Recreation), Zone Co-ordination, Landscape Architects, and the North Solihull Regeneration Project.
48. This group was supplemented by a wider group consisting of Solihull MBC officers representing other Departments, and other external bodies, including CABE Space. This wider group was kept informed of the progress of the Strategy through regular bulletins. These bulletins were also made available to a wider network of partner organisations, which were encouraged to comment if appropriate.
49. The draft Strategy is available in full via the Solihull web site, and the Summary has been provided to all stakeholders and partners, in addition to being made available more widely for public comment.

THE CHARACTER OF SOLIHULL

History

50. There is evidence that there were people in the area now covered by the Borough of Solihull about 10,000 years ago. They lived in temporary camps along the River Blythe and other streams, and they left their mark at settlements like Barston and Temple Balsall.
51. Later, Celtic tribes came to the area followed by the Romans who built three major roads across the Midlands: Watling Street, the Fosse Way and Ryknild Street. The marching camps at Meriden were probably overnight resting places for troops and travellers on their way between Metchley (south of Birmingham) and Bagington at Coventry.
52. The Anglo-Saxon settlement of Ulverley (which became Olton) was recorded in the Domesday survey of 1086. It was the beginning of Solihull. Ulverley was later passed to a Norman, William de Oddingsell, who recognised its potential as it contained two important cross-roads.

One linked Birmingham with Warwick, and the other linked Worcester with Coventry.

53. William set out plots for occupation along the streets which now form Solihull's town centre; High Street, Warwick Road, Poplar Road, Drury Lane, and Mill Lane. The settlement flourished, and in 1242 King Henry III gave William a charter which allowed the new settlement to hold a weekly market and an annual three-day fair.
54. A series of bad harvests followed by outbreaks of plague were setbacks for the development of Solihull. The area did not have a natural resource, like coal, with which to found manufacturing industry and so the industrial revolution largely passed it by. Its character was little changed through the centuries, though it remained at the travel crossroads of England, becoming important to coach travel.
55. Later two canals were cut through Solihull, one from Birmingham to Warwick and one from Birmingham to Stratford-upon-Avon, but it was the railway era which led to the main period of development. The first trains began in 1838 running between Birmingham and London, with a station at Hampton. However the real impact came in 1852 when the Great Western Railway from Birmingham Snow Hill to Oxford (and thus to London, Paddington) was opened. There were stations at Solihull and Knowle. This improved access to Britain's industrial heartland, bringing new prosperity. Many new houses were built for industrialists, professional, and business people who worked in the city but preferred to live in the country.
56. Just over 100 years ago Solihull (including the parishes of Shirley, Baddesley Clinton, Barston, Lapworth, Balsall, Bushwood, Elmdon, Knowle, Nuthurst, Packwood and Tanworth-in-Arden) was created as a Rural District Council in the county of Warwickshire. However in 1932 some of its rural areas were taken away when the RDC was succeeded by Solihull Urban District Council. Expansion continued and Queen Elizabeth II granted a charter in 1954 making Solihull a Municipal Borough; ten years later it was given the status of County Borough.
57. Reorganisation of boundaries and council responsibilities in 1974 created the Metropolitan Borough of Solihull as it is known today. The wards of Chelmsley Wood, Fordbridge and Smiths Wood became part of Solihull at this time.
58. The 'new' boundary between Solihull and Birmingham left a number of anomalies in relation to green space sites. There are some sites in Solihull which Birmingham City Council own and manage, such as the Gospel Oak allotment site, and parts of Birmingham which Solihull manage. The most important green space which runs between the authorities is the River Cole, which is now managed as a joint project, Project Kingfisher, between Solihull and Birmingham.

59. For the purposes of this Strategy, all sites that fall within Solihull and which are open to Solihull residents, have been counted as part of the Solihull green space.

Development of the airport

60. Birmingham airport was first opened in 1939. It was owned by the City Council as a municipal airport and designed to meet the needs of the local residents and the industry of Birmingham city and the surrounding areas.
61. During wartime the Air Ministry took over and developed the site, building two hard runways. In 1946 the civilian airport reopened and flights recommenced. By 1954 there were services to Dublin, Belfast, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Jersey but the length of the runways restricted the use of larger aircraft.
62. The expansion of the main runway in 1966 led to an increased number of jets using the airport and the need for further expansion became evident. In 1984 the Main Terminal was opened and further development of the main runway helped attract long-haul scheduled and charter flights.
63. A second terminal was opened in 1991. Passenger numbers continued to increase annually as did development to both terminals and facilities with nine million passengers using the airport by 2003. Birmingham International Airport is now the UK's 5th largest airport, and the 2nd outside of London.
64. The future of the airport and its potential expansion is a topic of much debate in Solihull. The impact of any expansion on the green spaces of Solihull, their quality and enjoyment may go well beyond the immediate boundaries of any development itself. However, as the plans and their timescale for implementation are uncertain, this Strategy does not consider the potential impacts in any detail.

Development of the NEC

65. The NEC opened in 1976 and has doubled in size to 200,000 square metres. The visitor numbers have increased to 5 million, and the centre provides around 18,500 jobs across the region. There are proposals to develop further on adjoining land, and also redevelop within the current site.

East Birmingham and North Solihull Regeneration Zone

66. The East Birmingham and North Solihull Regeneration Zone was created by the Regional Development Agency and it encompasses four wards: Chelmsley Wood, Fordbridge, Kingshurst and Smith's Wood. The focus of the Regeneration Zone is on;

“maximising the benefits of local economic drivers, ensuring economic and social benefits are relayed down to all people living in the deprived wards. It encourages initiatives to tackle the strategic priorities of:

- Unemployment
- Business investment
- Learning opportunities
- Sustainable transport
- Health
- Supporting development projects
- Offering a diverse range of sustainable housing
- Community safety
- Environmental sustainability”

67. North Solihull also has a Neighbourhood Pathfinder Project, called Fordbridge Plus, and this will be the first area to develop neighbourhood management.
68. The North Solihull Draft Strategic Framework document of October 2004 recognises the importance of the large area of green space within the Regeneration Zone. The protection and improvement of the green space in the Regeneration Zone is a high priority because green spaces are recognised as contributing to several of the Regeneration Zone’s objectives, including the quality of housing, safe walking and cycling routes, and the encouragement of a healthy community.
69. Findings from the Baseline Study and the objectives of the Strategic Framework are integrated into this Green Spaces Strategy. The proposals and priorities which have now been generated through the Green Spaces Strategy will, in turn, be used to inform the neighbourhood planning stages for the Regeneration Zone.

Solihull’s geography

70. Solihull has two main urban areas, both bordering Birmingham. These are divided by Birmingham Airport and the A45. Solihull also has a large rural area, mostly to the west. Much of this rural area is designated Green Belt, although this also includes Dorridge (almost 8500 population) and Balsall Common (almost 6000 population) in addition to several villages. Policy on protecting the Green Belt in the Borough is contained in the Solihull Unitary Development Plan 2006 (Policy C2).
71. Solihull has a number of major routes crossing it, particularly roads and rail. The motorways M42, M6 and M6 toll, and the main trunk roads such as the A45 have a major impact upon the recreational use of green spaces in Solihull and the links to areas beyond the boundaries. On the one hand they offer fast links to the countryside for car owners. On the other, they are major barriers to movement particularly in the north of the Borough, where they form almost impenetrable barriers to the south, north and east. This means that people living in the north part of Solihull are

constrained to use the green spaces local to them. They cannot easily enjoy the countryside of North Warwickshire or east Solihull without access to a car. The Green Spaces Strategy therefore generally places a high priority on good quality green spaces and facilities for the north of the Borough.

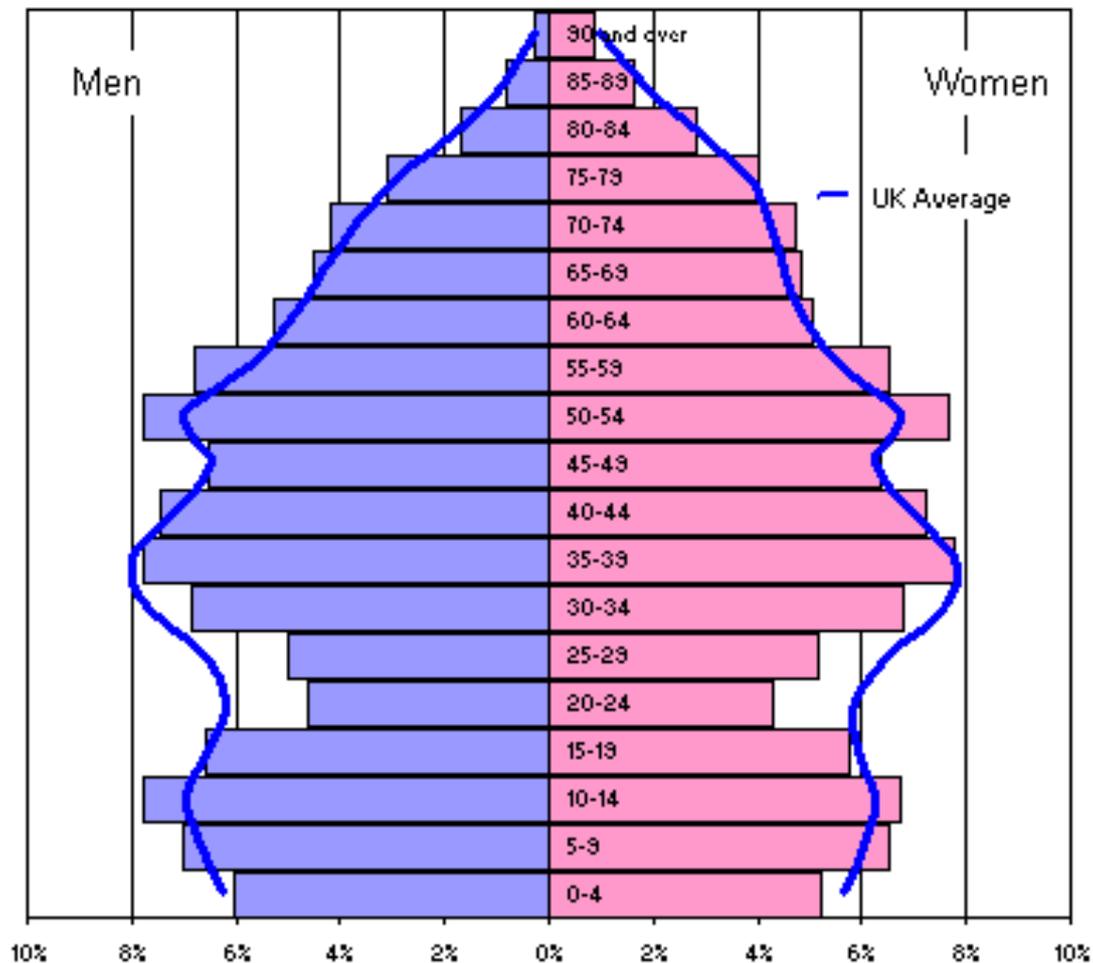
72. The natural environment is mainly characterised by the ancient Forest of Arden. Much woodland has now disappeared with the development of grassland and farmland, but there are still remnants of ancient woodland and hedgerows. The ancient woodlands are characterised by oak, birch and small-leaved lime and good examples include Millison's Wood. There are also secondary woodlands planted in the 19th Century, which typically consist of oak, birch, sycamore, beech and ash. A good example is Mill Pool Spinney in Solihull. The woodlands, and tree cover more generally, are both important characteristics of Solihull borough. The Green Spaces Strategy takes this into account in the policies proposed, including the promotion of appropriate landscaping.
73. There are a number of 'green corridors' that form a network across the Borough, linking different habitat types. Some of these provide for both wildlife and people, as along the canals and their towpaths. Other corridors have a high potential nature conservation value, but are of limited direct value for people. These include the margins of the motorway network and main railway lines. The Green Spaces Strategy aims to maintain and improve these corridors.

Population

Population profile

74. The population in 2001 as recorded by the National Census was 199,518, and although there will be more house building in Solihull over the next few years, the population is expected to stay constant.
75. In 2001, the population of Solihull generally followed the national picture (see Figure 1) but there were fewer people aged in their 20s than nationally. Overall there are 48% males and 52% females, though this varies for those aged under 20, when the percentage split is reversed.

Figure 1: Population of Solihull in 2001 from the National Statistics Census



For the Strategy it is important to consider both the total populations and the age profiles for each ward and strategy zone. This will help determine where the greatest need for different specific facilities arise. For example, areas having the highest number of children will require more play facilities than areas with an older population, for whom other green space such as allotments might be more important.

76. The Figures 2 and 3 demonstrate the population age structures for both the Wards and Strategy zones. It is clear that the wards in north Solihull have a younger age profile than other areas, with 26% of population within the North Solihull Regeneration Zone being aged 16 or under. Knowle also has a high number of children, which reflects the recent growth of this area.
77. The demographic information illustrated in these figures feeds directly into the assessments for playing fields and children's play, which both have specific age parameters, for example, the ages for junior football. The full demographic tables are provided as Appendix 4.

Figure 2: Age by Ward in 2001, based on National Census

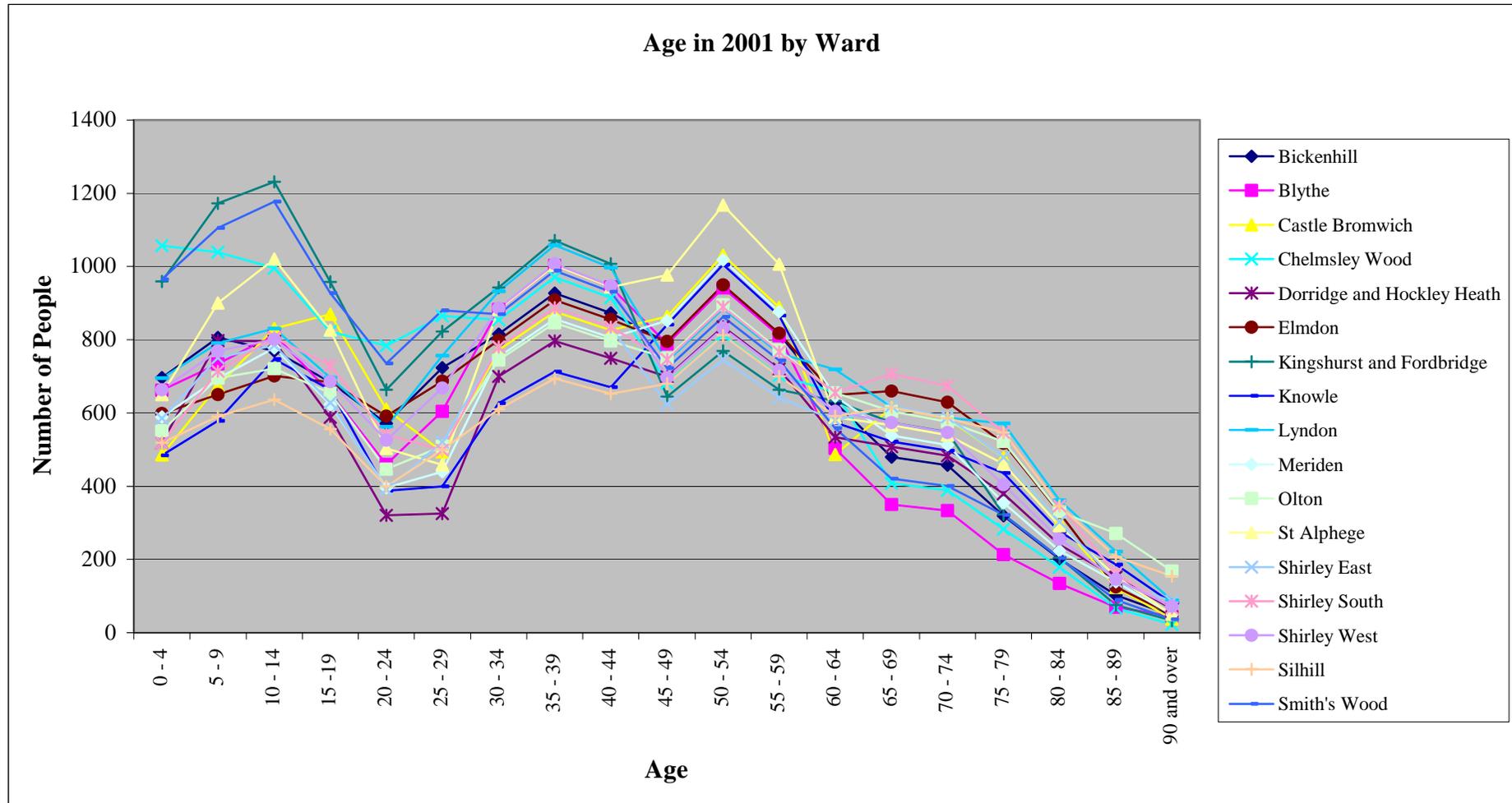
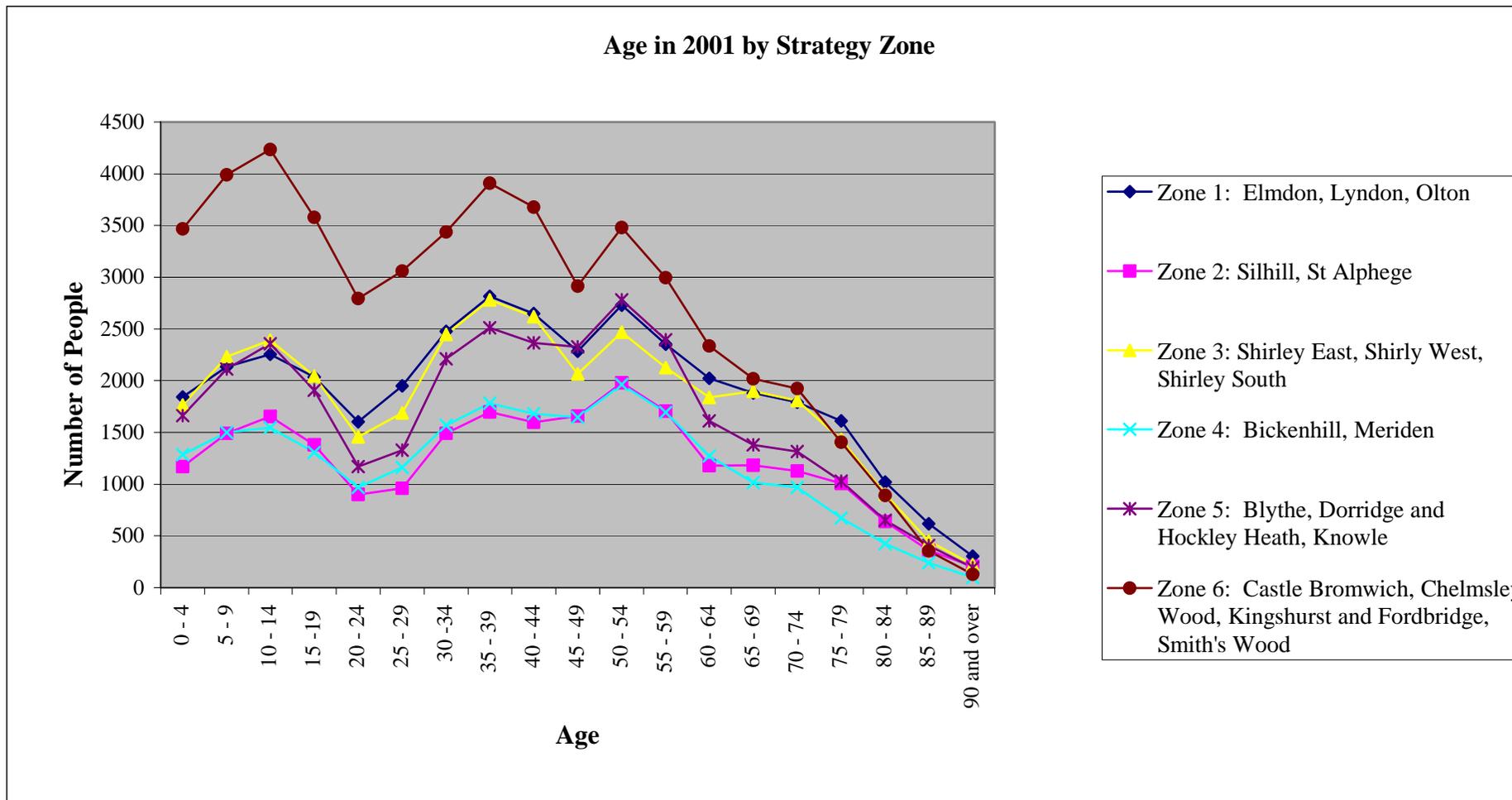


Figure 3: Age by Zone in 2001, based on National Census

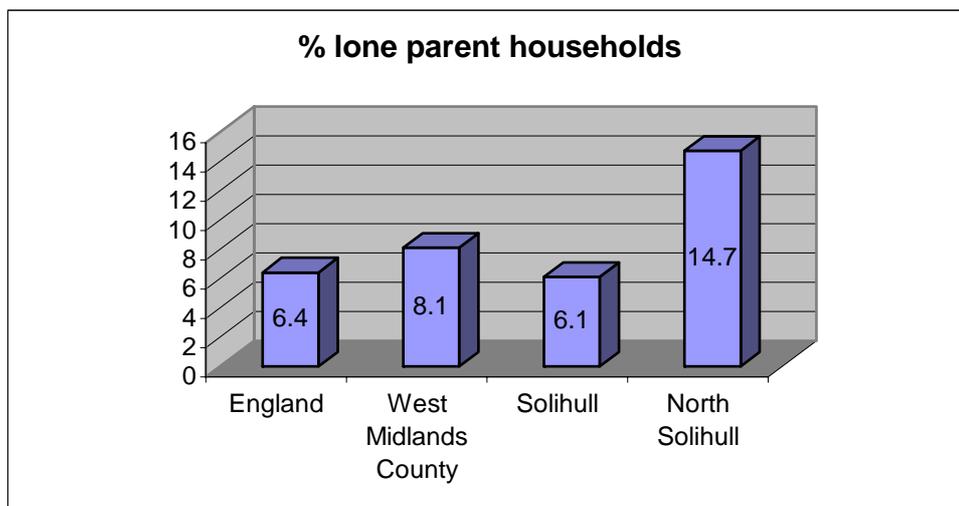


Ethnic Diversity

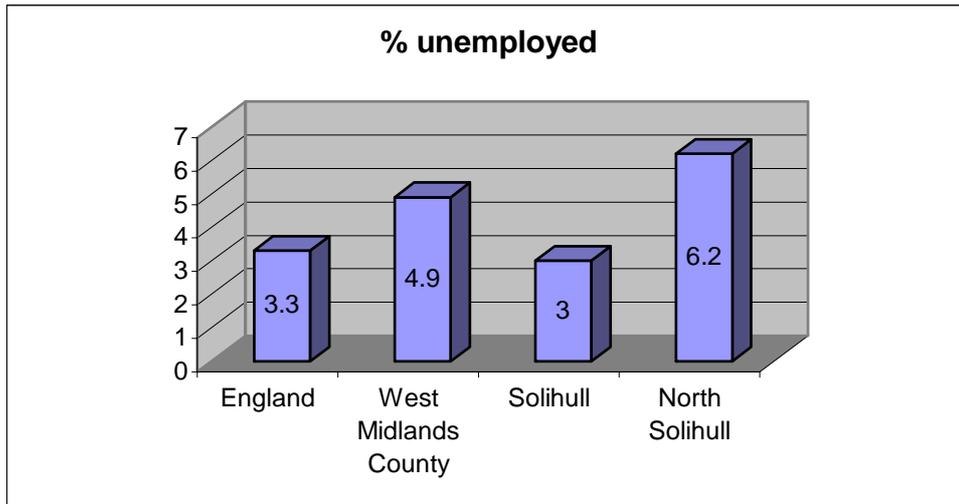
78. The population of Solihull is 95% White British. The wards comprising the Regeneration Zone in north Solihull have an average 2.3% Black Caribbean population, and the highest level of ethnic minorities are found in Chelmsley Wood and Smith's Wood. South Solihull has a stronger representation of Asian residents.
79. The North Solihull Regeneration Area also has a number of Asylum Seekers. In 2004 these numbered 130, and came from 17 countries.

Deprivation

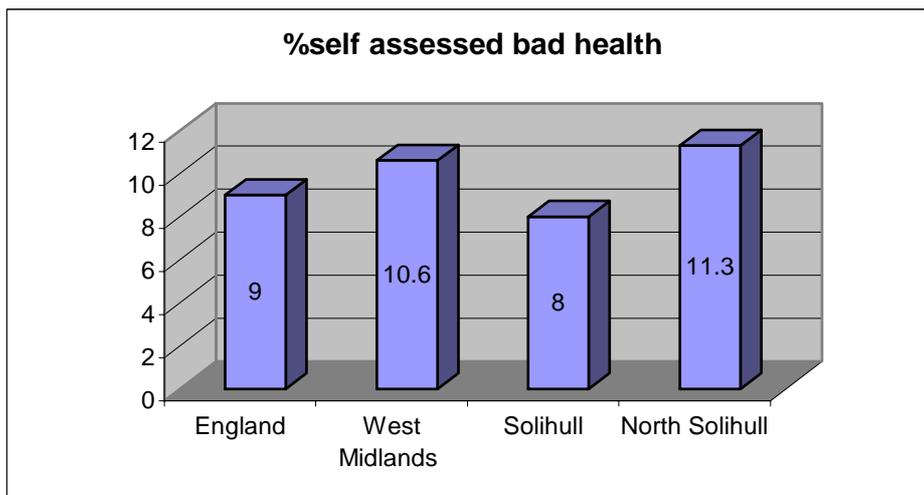
80. Solihull is a Borough of contrasts. The following examples taken from the North Solihull Regeneration Strategy highlight the polarised nature of the north and south of the Borough.
81. The North Solihull Regeneration Area is characterised by a higher proportion of single people, and those who are separated and divorced. Here the number of lone parent households is twice that of the rest of Solihull, and England and Wales average. There are particularly high concentrations of lone parents households in Kingshurst and Chelmsley Wood.



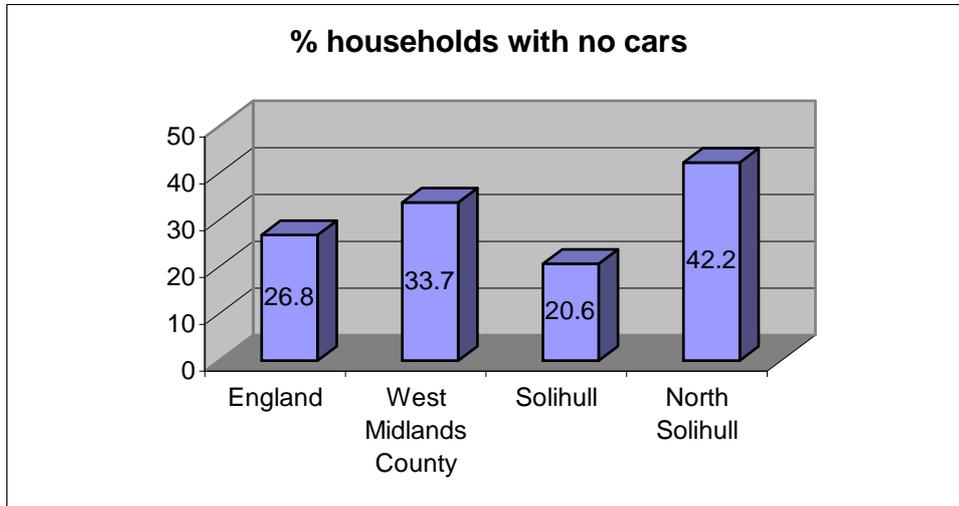
82. Despite the fact that Solihull has a buoyant economy and that both the north and south of the Borough have a range of employment opportunities, unemployment rates within the North Solihull Regeneration Area remains high, with many young people growing up in families where unemployment has been a reality for several generations.



83. Health inequality is a particular issue for the Regeneration Area. A large number of the economically inactive in claim inactivity as a result of being sick or disabled. In the 2001 census 11.3% residents considered themselves as having poor health in the North Solihull Regeneration Area, in comparison to 8% Borough wide.



84. Car ownership or access to a car can have a significant impact on people's ability to access work and leisure opportunities. Households in the North Solihull Regeneration Area compare poorly with the rest of the Borough and the region.



THE IMPORTANCE OF GREEN SPACE

Introduction

85. This section considers how important green space is within Solihull, and the main issues affecting use by the community. It also draws out the relevance of green spaces to the Solihull corporate agenda, and to the wider agendas of health, education and crime reduction.

Green Space in Solihull

86. The character of Solihull changes, from the densely populated north and other urban areas to the agricultural landscapes of the rural areas. Solihull has a large number of trees and these, together with the accessible green spaces and the agricultural areas, mean that many people feel strongly about their local area, and the green spaces within it.

87. Most people within Solihull have access to at least a small area of green space within 400 m from home, and the amount of accessible green space is high compared to many places. On average there is more than 5 ha of accessible green space for every 1000 people across the Borough, but this varies at the ward level from just under 3 ha in Olton and Smiths Wood, up to more than 11 ha per 1000 in St Alphege and Blythe wards (see Appendix 5).

88. The main types of green space are:

- Parks and formal gardens.
- Wildlife and woodland areas.
- Amenity green space; the smaller local green spaces.
- Playing fields (public and education).
- Other outdoor sports e.g. bowls.
- Green corridors; cycling and walking routes and the canals, public rights of way.
- Play space and equipped playgrounds for young children.
- Space for older children including skate parks.
- Allotments.
- Cemeteries and churchyards.
- Village greens and Commons.

89. Most of these spaces have unrestricted access, but some are limited, for example, school playing fields, allotments, and designated wildlife sites (with the exception of Local Nature Reserves).

90. The importance of the green spaces to people living within Solihull has been confirmed by the household survey conducted as part of this Strategy. The following paragraphs provide an overview of the main findings of this survey, together with other views expressed during the

development of the Strategy. More detailed results from the household survey are given in relation to each of the different open space types.

Household Survey Results

91. A 5000 household postal survey was conducted in January 2005 using the questionnaire in Appendix 3. There was a 27% response rate, of which 90% came from those 35 and over. The good level of responses demonstrates the importance residents attach to the green spaces in Solihull. A full copy of the Household Survey is provided at Appendix 3a.

92. Many of the comments made in the returns show the strength of feeling about the green spaces in Solihull. These are a small selection:

“Let green spaces remain green spaces!”

“We have lived in this area for 5 years and feel very lucky to have so much green.”

“Please do not build houses on green spaces”

“Preserve the green belt and create more open space”

“Would like to see more of them”

“Do not build on any of our green spaces”

“Do not lose our park. A valuable asset to the village and used by all”

“All green spaces are precious and appreciated by all and should be maintained/extended/created wherever possible”

93. The following are the main findings from the survey.

- Parks and gardens are the most used spaces by all age groups in Solihull. They are used, at least occasionally by 90% of residents, and 60% use them at least monthly. These areas also have the highest rate of daily use.
- Green spaces are used mainly for walking, running, relaxing and playing, but 1 in every 5 visits is to walk the dog.
- Most people visit with their families or friends, but one in every three visits are by people on their own.
- Parks and gardens have the highest use across each of the zones.
- Zones 4 and 6 also have a particularly high level of use of wildlife and woodland areas.

- Wildlife and woodland areas are used by almost 80% of residents at least occasionally, and almost 40% use these areas at least monthly.
- Play areas have high levels of use by families with young children, but are used by more than 50% of residents at least occasionally.
- The use of the green corridors, the cycling, walking and canal routes, varies across the authority, reflecting the nature of the areas and the availability of these routes.
- About 65% of people are satisfied with the parks and gardens in Solihull, and people in Sillhill, Elmdon and Olton are the most content.
- The highest levels of dissatisfaction relate to the provision of play areas for young children and teenagers, and this is particularly in Kingshurst and Fordbridge, and Chelmsley Wood.
- There are also problems with the green corridors, with these being raised as a particular concern in Bickenhill, Kingshurst and Fordbridge, Olton and Castle Bromwich.
- Problems with sports facilities have emerged in Meriden, Chelmsely Wood, Kingshurst and Fordbridge, Olton, Knowle and Blythe.
- People usually go on foot, but there is also a high level of car and vehicle use when visiting green spaces. There is some variation between zones, with the largest number of journeys by car being from Zones 1 and 3.
- About 1 in every 10 journeys to green spaces is by bike, except in the very rural Zone 4, where this falls to about 1 in 20 journeys.
- Access to green spaces locally is important, with about one third of visits being within 5 minutes travel time (whatever mode of travel), and two thirds of visits to sites within 10 minutes travel.
- About 20% of trips are to sites, which take between 11 and 20 minutes to reach.
- Almost half of the people responding to the survey said that they were discouraged from using green spaces, with the highest level of concerns being in Zone 6. The three main reasons given, authority-wide, were (in descending order)
 - Dog fouling
 - Feeling unsafe/anti-social behaviour
 - Litter and graffiti.
- Of those expressing concern in Zone 6, 70% were worried about safety or anti-social behaviour.

- Most people would like to see improvements in the green space they visit most often, particularly by people living in Zone 6. Authority wide, the main improvements sought are:
 - Cleanliness
 - Toilets
 - Improved safety
 - More and better play equipment
 - More and better lighting
 - Better landscaping/grass maintenance.

- The need for cleaner, safer spaces comes out particularly highly for Zone 6.

- The highest priorities identified in the Survey for investment by Solihull MBC are (in descending order of priority)
 - Parks and Gardens
 - Play Areas (both for younger children and teenagers)
 - Green Corridors
 - Nature Reserves.

Green space and the wider agenda

Solihull Borough's Council Plan

94. The Council Plan identifies 5 key objectives for the authority:

- A Brighter Future for our Children.
- Improving Quality of Life.
- Closing the Gap of Inequality.
- Treating People as Individuals within a Diverse Community.
- Good Value Services.

95. Each of these is then more clearly defined, however direct references to green spaces are limited.

95.1. Objective 1 Improving Quality of Life ~ Ensure that the Borough offers a quality living environment for everyone, with access to good facilities, clean attractive public spaces, freedom from pollution and anti-social behaviour.”

95.2. Objective 3 Closing the Gap of Inequality ~ Ensure good health and reduce health inequalities in all communities and areas of the

Borough, addressing the social, economic and environmental factors that prevent people from staying healthy.

96. Finally, each key objective is measured against clearly identified targets, but again none of these specifically relates to open space.

Solihull Borough's Community Strategy

97. The Community Strategy identifies 9 aims for the authority, its partners and the wider community, of these the most relevant are:
- A place that is good to live in for everyone.
 - Where people enjoy good health.
 - That is inclusive and community focussed.
98. It is well known that the provision of accessible, good quality, green spaces can make a positive impact on the well being of communities and contribute to tackling a wide range of social exclusion issues. Green spaces directly contribute towards each of the Corporate Plan objectives, and the proposals in this Strategy seek to further the principles enshrined within the Plan. For example, proposing improved provision for children and opportunities for young people, ensuring those least able to travel have access to good quality facilities close to home, and that the spaces are managed effectively.
99. It is clear from the response to the recent household surveys that local people feel strongly about green space provision and yet, despite all this, the importance of green spaces is not currently enshrined within the Borough's Council Plan community strategy or step change improvement priorities.
100. Within the review of the Corporate Plan in 2006, it is therefore proposed that green spaces should be specifically included by their incorporation into each of the Council Plan's objectives and linked targets. The current Refresh process for the Community Strategy and Priorities should also take full account of the green space agenda.

Solihull's plans and strategies for the wider agenda

101. Solihull MBC has a comprehensive range of strategies and policies covering a wide spectrum of social well-being and physical activity. A number of these including the Arts, Crime and Disorder, and Leisure and Cultural Strategy are in the process of being updated.
102. Set out below is a brief summary of some of the key issues identified in these documents relation to green spaces.

Arts Strategy

103. The current review of the Arts Strategy has updated the Council's commitment to public art and includes actions relating to artistic provision with green spaces. It contains a strategic objective relating to the development of public art with appropriate community involvement. The Arts Strategy Action Plan identifies opportunities for public art, within the park improvements planned for Tudor Grange and Meriden Parks as key projects. There is also a focus on arts based events being developed in parks both for entertainment purposes and for the purposes of developing community involvement and combating anti-social behaviour.
104. As part of the work being undertaken by the LSP "Places to Live" group a cross- departmental public art working group has been established. This group will focus on increasing the contribution that public art can make to open spaces and the built environment.
105. The household survey conducted as part of the Green Spaces Strategy did not specifically address arts issues, but a few comments were made about the importance of art in these spaces, such as the following from an Elmdon resident:

"We do appreciate that improvements have been made i.e. wardens and public events, children love the hidden wooden sculptures".

Leisure and Cultural Strategy 2003-2006 (2003)

106. The strategy recognises the important contribution leisure and culture can make to the wider social agenda.
107. The strategy identifies a number of key issues that relate to the full range of leisure and cultural services, but there are no recommendations that relate specifically to green spaces.

Physical Activity Strategy (2004)

108. The key findings of the Physical Activity Strategy can be summarised as follows:
- There are inequities in terms of the opportunities for participation in physical activity.
 - These are experienced mainly by those living in the north of the Borough.
 - There is a need to ensure that opportunities are available to all - especially those most in need.

109. There are a number of strategic objectives identified within the strategy but none relates specifically to Green Spaces.

Crime and Disorder Strategy 2002-2005 (2003)

110. The Crime and Disorder Act (1998) gave local authorities, the police and other partners specific responsibilities for tackling crime and disorder. Every three years an audit of crime and disorder must be carried out to identify future priorities. The current document covers the period 2002 – 2005 and so is nearing the end of its life. There are no specific recommendation in relation to open space.

LSP Strategic Framework and Action Plan for Reducing Health Inequalities in Solihull – Action Plan (2004)

111. There are six Key Action Areas identified within the action plan, each with a series of desired outcomes:

- Early years support for children and families.
- Improved living environment.
- Improved educational development and skills attainment among disadvantaged sectors of the population.
- Equity of access to services.
- Reduced unemployment and improved income amongst the poorest.
- Preventing and managing risks for coronary heart disease and cancer, with a highlight on smoking.

112. None of the above makes direct reference to green space although Action Area 6 sets out objectives for establishing GP exercise referral schemes and improving levels of physical activities among some families.

113. Within the Strategic Framework the quality of the environment is used as an indicator of health inequalities, but access to good quality green space is not mentioned. Equally, the need to reduce incidences of CHD is set out as an objective but again this is not linked to access to, or the quality of, green spaces.

Strengthening the role of green spaces

114. From the above summary, it can be seen that the broad principles of the Council's vision of Solihull being a place .."where well being, pride and quality of life is enjoyed by all" are clearly reflected in its policies and strategies. Equality of opportunity and the desire to see high quality services and facilities is clearly stated, yet the contribution green spaces can make towards these objectives does not seem to be recognised.

115. For example, the provision of sports pitches enables all sections of the community to lead more active lives, the health benefits of which are well known and documented. Participation in sport can also have much wider social benefits and can make a positive contribution to reducing crime and anti social behaviour among young people.

"Sport is a key weapon in our fight against social exclusion, crime and drugs, giving thousands of young people the chance to chose a positive, healthy lifestyle."

Prime Minister Tony Blair quoted in ILAM Leisure News Nov 2001.

116. Well-designed and well-used green spaces can help to reduce incidents of crime, and high quality spaces can have a positive impact on property values. These spaces provide places in which all sectors of the community can come together as they provide meeting places which can foster social ties. They can shape the cultural identity of an area, are part of its unique character, and provide a sense of place for local communities.

Summary

117. The contribution that good quality green spaces can make to the social and economic well being of an area is clear. However, this does not appear to be reflected in the policies and strategies currently in place within the Borough. There is a need to ensure that opportunities are not missed, and that the provision and maintenance of high quality green spaces are seen as integral to ensuring quality of life for the residents of Solihull.

PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Introduction

118. This section sets out the main planning framework of relevance to Green Spaces; the national framework and the Unitary Development Plan. It considers the overarching planning policies and options for the future. Topic specific-strategies and plans which also help to guide the proposals emerging from this Strategy are addressed in other sections of the report.
119. There are three main policy layers affecting the implementation, management and allocation of open space and green areas within the West Midlands Region. These are:
- National Policy; including PPG17.
 - Guidance from other national agencies.
 - Regional Policy; such as RPG 11, the Regional Spatial Strategy.
 - The Local Policy Framework: the UDP First Review, Supplementary Planning Guidance and adopted spatial policies, and landscape character assessments.
120. The Green Spaces Strategy needs to be informed by these, and to link the relevant Borough-wide strategies such as the Nature Conservation Strategy and the Physical Activity Strategy. The Green Spaces Strategy in turn needs to guide future developments within Solihull, including the proposals for the North Solihull Regeneration Area.

National Policy

Planning Policy Guidance

PPS 1 - Creating Sustainable Communities (2004)

121. PPS1 establishes sustainable development as a core principle of national planning policy. The delivery of sustainable development seeks to achieve:
- Efficient use of land, including the re-use of previously developed land.
 - A reduction in the need to travel by car.

- Sustainable communities with mixed-use development and high quality design.
122. This is applicable to the Green Spaces Strategy in relation to the need to determine surpluses and deficiencies in the provision of different types of green space and facilities, including space for play. It also gives weight to the need to further develop the network of walking and cycling routes.

Planning Policy Statement 12- Local Development Frameworks (2004)

123. This planning policy statement sets out the Government's policy on the preparation of local development documents which will comprise the local development framework (LDF). The LDF sets out the local development documents which collectively will deliver the spatial planning strategy for the local planning area. More details of this are provided in the paragraphs under the Local Planning Framework below.

PPG2 Green Belts (1995)

124. The aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. There are five purposes for including land within the Green Belt:
- To check the unrestricted sprawl of urban areas.
 - To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another.
 - To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.
 - To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.
 - To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land sites.
125. Once Green Belts are defined, the use of land within them also fulfils the following objectives which are relevant to this Strategy, they:
- Provide opportunities for access to the countryside.
 - Provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation near urban areas.
 - Retain attractive landscapes.
 - Secure nature conservation interest.

PPS9 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

126. In August 2005 new planning policy guidance was produced in relation to biodiversity and geological conservation. This guidance ensures that biological and geological diversity are conserved and enhanced as an integral part of sustainable development, and for their contribution towards urban renaissance and rural renewal.
127. The new guidance emphasises the importance of enhancement as well as conservation, and makes reference to sites of local importance, ancient woodlands and veteran trees. Conservation, enhancement and restoration of biodiversity and geology should form part of the strategic approach to the form and location of development.
128. Future development plan documents for Solihull will therefore need to indicate the location of designated sites of importance for biodiversity and geodiversity, and identify areas for the restoration or creation of new priority habitats that would contribute to regional and national targets.

PPG17 Open Space, Sport and Recreation (2002)

129. PPG17 sets out government policy on open space, sport and recreation provision. It recognises that sport and leisure facilities are fundamental to achieving broader government objectives including urban renaissance, rural renewal, social inclusion and community cohesion, health and well-being, and sustainable development. It suggests a framework for the development of robust local strategies, and places emphasis upon the need to produce local standards of provision based on local circumstances and identified needs.
130. PPG17 clearly directs local authorities away from adopting simple standards for open space, such as the National Playing Fields Association's standards. It states that local authorities should undertake robust assessments of the existing and future needs of their communities for open space, sport and recreation facilities. It stresses the importance of quality as well as quantity in the provision of facilities. PPG17 establishes the principle that where deficits in provision exist, planning conditions or obligations may be used to secure contributions towards reducing or eliminating the deficit.
131. The local assessment should be used to set locally derived standards for the provision of open space, sport and recreational facilities. Setting these local standards based on an assessment of existing facilities will form the basis for redressing quantitative and qualitative deficiencies through the planning process. This will include considering the different approaches required by the increased emphasis on urban brown-field sites.

132. The key paragraphs from PPG17 are:

Para 1. To ensure effective planning for open space, sport and recreation it is essential that the needs of local communities are known. Local authorities should undertake robust assessments of the existing and future needs of their communities for open space, sports and recreational facilities. Assessments will normally be undertaken at district level, although assessments of strategic facilities should be undertaken at regional or sub-regional levels.

Para 2. As a minimum, assessments of need should cover the differing and distinctive needs of the population for open space and built sports and recreational facilities. The needs of those working in and visiting areas, as well as residents should also be included.

Para 3. Local authorities should also undertake audits of existing open space, sports and recreational facilities, the use made of existing facilities, access in terms of location and costs (such as charges) and opportunities for new open space and facilities. Audits should consider both the quantitative and the qualitative elements of open space, sports and recreational facilities. Audits of quality will be particularly important as they will allow local authorities to identify potential for increased use through better design, management and maintenance.

Para 4. Assessments and audits will allow local authorities to identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities in their areas. They form the starting point for establishing an effective strategy for open space, sport and recreation at the local level (tied into the local authority's Community Strategy), and for effective planning through the development of appropriate policies in plans.

Para 6. The Government believes that open space standards are best set locally. National standards cannot cater for local circumstances, such as differing demographic profiles and the extent of existing built development in an area.

Para 7. Local authorities should use the information gained from their assessments of needs and opportunities to set locally derived standards for the provision of open space, sports and recreational facilities in their areas. Local standards should include: quantitative elements (how much new provision may be needed); a qualitative component (against which to measure the need for enhancement of existing facilities); and accessibility (including distance thresholds and consideration of the cost of using a facility).

Para 8. Setting robust local standards based on assessments of need and audits of existing facilities will form the basis for redressing quantitative and qualitative deficiencies through the planning process. Standards should be included in development plans.

133. The wider objectives of PPG17 are given below.

“Supporting an urban renaissance - local networks of high quality, 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 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 sustainable development - by ensuring that open space, sports and recreational facilities (particularly in urban areas) are easily accessible by walking and cycling and that more heavily used or intensive sports and recreational facilities are planned for locations well served by public transport.”

134. The Green Spaces Strategy acknowledges these objectives by considering both urban and rural spaces, and by assessing access to local provision to the variety of green spaces and associated facilities across the different areas of the Borough.

135. PPG17 states eleven general principles which should be applied when identifying where to locate new areas of open space, sports and recreation facilities.

ODPM Circular 05/2005 Planning Obligations

136. This Circular provides revised guidance to local authorities in England on the use of planning obligations under section 106 of the Town Country Planning Act 1990. It clarifies the policy terms for planning obligations and provides guidance on the process of securing them.

137. Planning obligations are defined in the Circular as ‘private agreements negotiated between local planning authorities and persons with an interest in a piece of land (or ‘developers’) and are “intended to make acceptable development which would otherwise be unacceptable in planning terms.” [paragraph B3 of the Circular]. Obligations can however also be secured through unilateral undertakings by developers.
138. Planning obligations might be used to prescribe the nature of a development, to help compensate for loss or damage caused by the development, or to mitigate the development’s impact. They can therefore be used to: restrict development; require operations or activities to take place on the land; require the land to be used in a specified way; and/or require payments to be made to the authority.
139. The Secretary of State has stipulated a number of tests, all of which must be met before a planning obligation is sought. These are set out in paragraph B5 of the Circular:
- Relevant to planning;
 - Necessary to make the proposed development acceptable in planning terms;
 - Directly related to the proposed development;
 - Fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development; and
 - Reasonable in all other respects.
140. The first two of these tests, “relevant to planning” and “necessary to make the proposed development acceptable in planning terms” require that the justification for seeking the obligation is set out in local, regional or national planning policies. The high level policies for planning obligations are already set out in Solihull’s Unitary Development Plan, and there are some policies relating to green space. However, there is a need to strengthen them and provide more detail, which can be done via the Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs).
141. In order for an obligation to be “directly related to the proposed development” there should be a functional or geographical link between the development and the proposed new provision. In order for an obligation to be “fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development” and “reasonable in all other respects”, developers may be expected to pay for or contribute to the cost of all, or that part of, additional infrastructure provision which would not have been necessary but for their development.
142. Paragraph B9 of the Circular states:
- “The effect of the infrastructure investment may be to confer some wider benefit to the community, but payments should be directly related in scale to the impact which the proposed development will make.*

Planning obligations should not be used solely to resolve existing deficiencies in infrastructure provision or to secure contributions to the achievement of wider planning objectives that are not necessary to allow consent to be given for a particular development.”

143. This enables new provision to also provide for the wider community, and allows contributions towards improving both the quantity and quality of green spaces and associated facilities. For example, developers may provide or contribute towards the range of green spaces and associated facilities; a Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP), a Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP) where there is a known deficiency in the area, and to improvements in the nearest Principal Park.
144. The pooling of contributions towards strategic provision is accepted, and there may also be opportunities to pool resources with neighbouring authorities. This might be useful where strategic green spaces can be provided over the authority border, for example if a major park was to be developed in north Birmingham near to Castle Bromwich, or where residents from other authorities use Solihull’s facilities.
145. The use of formula and standard charges is accepted, and these will be the subject of a revised SPD, which the Circular confirms can be adopted before the local development framework policies are approved.
146. The Circular also provides guidance in relation to maintenance payments. Where contributions are secured for facilities that are “...predominantly for the benefit of the users of the associated development” it may be appropriate for the developer to make provision for subsequent maintenance (i.e. physical upkeep) of such provision. Such provision may be required in perpetuity. However, what comprises a “facility primarily for the benefit of the users of the associated development” is not further defined in the guidance.
147. Where contributions towards the initial support (“Pump priming”) of other new facilities are necessary, these should be time limited, reflecting the time lag between the provision of the new facility and its inclusion in public sector funding streams.

Summary

148. Achieving investment for green spaces and related facilities through planning obligations depends upon clear and specific policy justification within the development plans of Solihull. Where the existing policies are insufficiently strong, these will need to be addressed by the Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents.
149. The investment sought from developers should be reasonable and must meet the tests set out in the Circular. The Circular enables new provision or investment towards meeting existing deficiencies, either by helping provide new facilities, or by making improvements at existing facilities where there is sufficient capacity.

These facilities may be local to the development, or be strategic facilities that have a wider catchment area.

150. Funds sought for maintenance will vary according to the nature of the facility being provided, but can be in perpetuity where a facility is provided mainly for the users of the development.

Guidance from other national agencies

Sport England

151. The following documents have relevance to the Green Spaces Strategy.

Planning Policy for Sport – a Land Use Planning Policy on behalf of Sport (1999)

152. This document outlines the guiding principles that provide the context for Sport England's policies, and provides guidance on the issues Sport England wishes to see addressed at different levels of the planning system. This document has not yet been updated to relate to the new planning system but it is unlikely that the objectives set out by Sport England in this document would change. The relevant policy objectives are:

Planning Policy Objective 1

To promote development that enhances the natural and built environment and which contributes to high quality of life for current and future generations.

Planning Policy Objective 3

To ensure that all members of the community have equality of access to sports facilities and opportunities for participation and that the particular needs of different groups are incorporated into the design and management of new facilities and access arrangements.

Planning Policy Objective 5

To prevent the loss of facilities or access to natural resources which are important in terms of sports development. Should redevelopment be unavoidable, an equivalent (or better) replacement facility should be provided in a suitable location.

Planning Policy Objective 9

To ensure that there is no further reduction in the supply of conveniently located, quality playing fields for sport to satisfy current and likely future demand.

Planning Policy Objective 11

To promote the use of planning obligations as a way of securing the provision of new or enhanced places for sport and a contribution

towards their future maintenance, to meet the needs arising from new development.

Planning Policy Objective 13

To promote the wider use of existing and new sports facilities to serve more than one group of users.

Planning Policy Objective 14

To promote the urban fringe as an important resource in providing opportunities for sport, and support proposals for improved access to sport, for the development of extensive facilities such as golf courses and pitches, and for built facilities which can be developed in a way which meets sustainable development objectives, and which helps maintain and improve the identity of that resource.

Planning Policy Objective 15

To promote the development of outdoor sports facilities in the Green Belt including ancillary built facilities.

Planning Policy Objective 19

To encourage and support a strategic approach to providing places for sport for rural communities based on an accessible network of facilities and sites.

Planning Policy Objective 20

To support the public rights of way network in its role of offering the single most important means by which people can get out into and enjoy the countryside.

Planning Policy Objective 25

To support the installation of floodlighting of sports facilities where this will lead to a significant increase in the opportunities for sport.

Planning Policy Objective 26

To support the development for sporting use of synthetic turf pitches and hard surfaced multi-use games areas as an integral part of community sports provision.

Providing for Sport and Recreation through New Housing Development – a Good Practice Guide (2001)

153. The Good Practice Guide identifies 6 stages that Local Authorities will need to go through in order to successfully agree developer contributions for sport and recreation in relation to new housing developments:

- Development of a clear local Sports Strategy, complemented by a regularly updated Sports Action Plan detailing facilities and management needs.

- Preparation of locally justified assessment of facilities and management costs and systems to ensure fair and equitable developer contributions.
- Approval of appropriate policies in Development Plans and use of Supplementary Planning Guidance to guide details on how the contribution scheme operates.
- Use of a team approach at Local Authority level in the negotiation process.
- Use of a template (checklist) against which the content of the planning obligations can be assessed.
- Development of accountable and transparent procedures for negotiating planning obligations incorporating at the same time effective monitoring and review.

CABE Space Guidance

154. The core aim of CABE Space is 'working for better public spaces in our towns and cities'. This includes urban green spaces. CABE Space identifies the 'top 20' good and bad issues relating to parks and open spaces which were identified through their own consultation. These issues were ranked:

155. Good Parks and Public Spaces....

- 1 ...give a sense of community
- 2 ...allow us to relax and escape
- 3 ...are great for recreation and exercise
- 4 ...let us experience nature
- 5 ...are well designed
- 6 ...are good for children and young people
- 7 ...are well maintained
- 8 ...are green spaces
- 9 ...provide a sense of open space
- 10 ...benefit our mental health and well being
- 11 ...are free and inclusive
- 12 ...are an opportunity for play
- 13 ...are beautiful places to be
- 14 ...are places to meet and socialise
- 15 ...can benefit our physical health
- 16 ...are accessible
- 17 ...provide quality of life
- 18 ...are places to enjoy and have fun
- 19 ...are a break from the urban environment
- 20 ...are places we must protect

156. Bad Parks and Spaces have problems with ...

- 1 ...maintenance and management
- 2 ...encroaching development
- 3 ...funding issues
- 4 ...litter
- 5 ...vandalism
- 6 ...crime and anti-social behaviour
- 7 ...safety
- 8 ... dog mess and other issues
- 9 ...lack of or poor facilities
- 10 ... lack of park keepers or wardens
- 11 ... poor design
- 12 ...under-use or misuse
- 13 ...accessibility
- 14 ...inclusivity
- 15 ...their benefit to children and young people
- 16 ...planting diversity
- 17 ...lack of greenness
- 18 ...lack of cleanliness
- 19 ...commercialisation
- 20 ...lack of appeal

157. In their research CABI Space found that 'parks and public spaces are changing all the time, whether they are guided by the community wants or not'. They also found that parks and public spaces are viewed as the heart of communities in that 'they help to create a sense of ownership and pride in a community'. It went on to identify a 'very definite link' between access to a natural environment and general well-being. One respondent to CABI Space's research made the following comment;

"Being able to access good quality green spaces gives people of any age a sense of personal freedom. For those living in urban areas, urban green spaces are their most accessible countryside".

Green Space Strategies – A Good Practice Guide (2004)

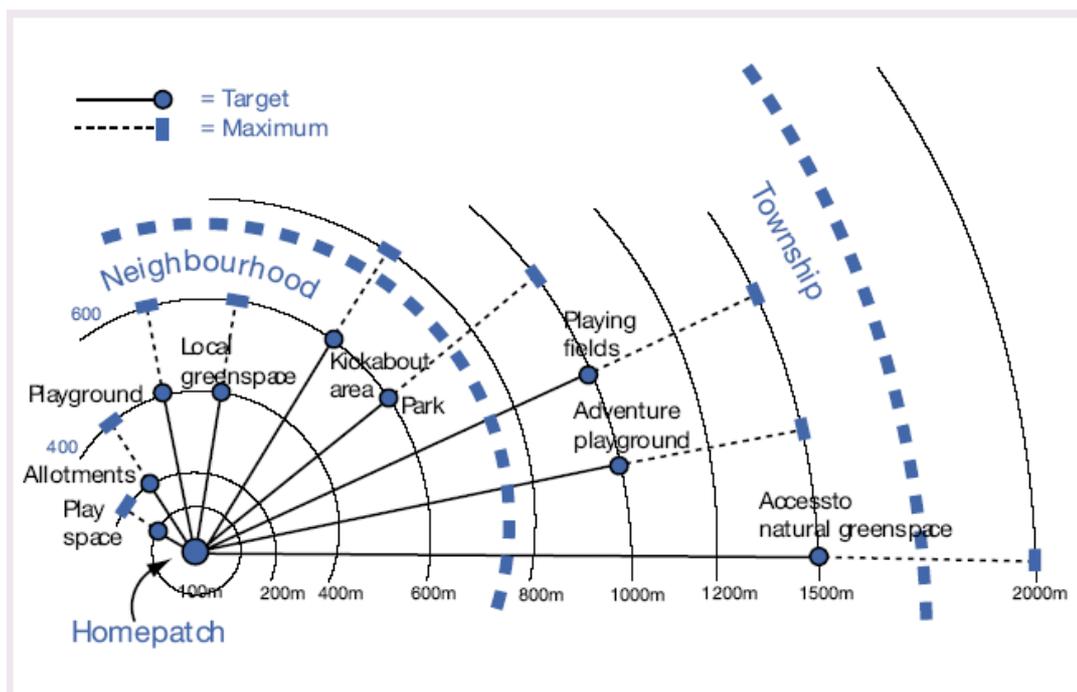
158. This is the principal document in relation to the planning and policy framework. It draws widely on the principles of PPG17. It also gives an important definition of a Green Space Strategy – "an Authority's vision for using its green space and the goals it wants to achieve, plus the resources, methods and time needed to meet these goals'. CABI state that a successful Green Space Strategy should:

- Support national, regional and local policy objectives.
- Be based on a clear assessment of the local community's current and future needs and opportunities, and of design, management and maintenance issues.

- Support the preparation of the Local Development Framework by recording the local characteristics of existing parks and green spaces, remedying any deficiencies and creating strategic links between networks of spaces.
- Establish an Action Plan.
- Identify investment priorities.

Making design policy work (2005)

159. This recent CABA Space document provides guidance on integrating green space design into policies for the Local Development Framework. It illustrates how the different catchment areas for different types of green space overlap, and provides model policies for such themes as 'urban form and scale', 'local character' and 'landscape and biodiversity'. The overlapping catchment areas are illustrated by the following diagram. The principles behind these have been adopted within the Green Spaces Strategy.



Green Flag Awards – the national standard for Parks and Open Spaces

160. The Green Flag Award scheme is the national standard for parks and green spaces across England and Wales. The award is managed by The Civic Trust on behalf of CABA Space, and it has backing in England from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, English Heritage, The Countryside Agency, and English Nature.

161. The objective of the Green Flag Award scheme is to encourage the provision of good quality public parks and green spaces that are

managed in environmentally sustainable ways. The Green Flag Award helps to create public recognition of good quality green spaces and in doing so aims to rebuild people's confidence in them. The Award aspires to raise expectations of what a public green space can offer and to reassure people that the high regard they have for their public parks and green spaces is not misplaced.

162. Three of Solihull's parks currently have the Green Flag status, and the principles behind Green Flag are proposed to be adopted more widely across Solihull.

Regional Guidance

Regional Planning Guidance West Midlands June 2004, RPG11 (The Regional Spatial Strategy)

163. RPG11 became the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) with the enactment of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act in September 2004. The main purpose of the RSS, which incorporates the Regional Transport Strategy (RTS), is to provide a Spatial Strategy to guide the preparation of local authority development plans and local transport plans so that they can deliver to a coherent framework for Regional development. It is important to note that many policies within the RSS are cross cutting and this is especially the case with those policies relating to the environment.

164. The RSS states;

“Conserving the quality of the environment and prudent use of natural resources are key elements in the achievement of sustainable development and the implementation of the Spatial Strategy and Regional vision. To fulfil this role requires losses of environmental quality to be minimised and a planned approach to securing higher environmental quality outcomes. Resource utilisation must recognise environmental limits, employ sound management practice and enable an ongoing reduction in waste and harmful side effects.”

165. The key policies are:

Policy QE1: Conserving and Enhancing the Environment

(B) Local authorities and other agencies in their plans, policies and proposals should:

“support regeneration, by restoring degraded areas, conserving existing environmental assets, including the reuse of redundant and under-used buildings of merit, and creating new, high quality, built and natural environments, particularly within the Major Urban Areas”

“conserve and enhance those areas of the Region, where exceptional qualities should be reinforced by sustainable use and management, including the Peak National Park, the five Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the European wildlife sites, and the World Heritage Site”

“protect and where possible enhance other irreplaceable assets and those of a limited or declining quantity, which are of fundamental importance to the Region’s overall environmental quality, such as specific wildlife habitats, historic landscape features and built heritage, river environments and groundwater aquifers”

“protect and enhance the distinctive character of different parts of the Region as recognised by the natural and character areas and associated local landscape character assessments, and through historic landscape characterisation”.

166. RSS states that certain environmental assets in the wider landscape, including features of historic value and particular habitats of nature conservation interest cannot be replaced. Their protection should have a high priority. However, where there are over-riding social or economic reasons for development, some reduction of less sensitive assets may be justified providing wherever possible appropriate measures are taken to mitigate and/or compensate for the loss.
167. Maintaining, enhancing and, where appropriate, increasing the amount of green space is therefore an important factor in considering the most efficient use of land. In doing so, regard should be paid to English Nature’s guideline of people in towns and cities having accessible green space within 300 metres of their homes. It is worth reiterating the planning policies in the RSS in relation to open and green spaces as it provides the spatial context for the local development plans and strategies.

Policy QE4: Greenery, Urban Greenspace and Public Spaces

“A. Local authorities and other agencies should undertake assessments of local need and audits of provision, and develop appropriate strategies for green space to ensure that there is adequate provision of accessible, high quality urban green space with an emphasis on:

- significantly improving the overall quality of public space, especially in city and town centres;*
- enhancing the setting of local residential neighbourhoods in built up areas;*
- increasing the overall stock of urban trees;*
- improved accessibility and community safety; and*
- maintaining and enhancing sports, playing fields and recreation grounds.*

B. Development plan policies should create and enhance urban greenspace networks by:

- ensuring adequate protection is given to key features such as parks, footpaths and cycleways, river valleys, canals and open spaces;*
- identifying the areas where new physical linkages between these areas need to be forged; and*
- linking new urban greenspace to the wider countryside to encourage the spread of species.”*

168. Recreational resources are an important component in the overall quality of life of the Region. The Spatial Strategy emphasises the need to make the most efficient use of land. In doing so, development plans should set out appropriate policies and proposals to maintain and enhance provision taking into account PPG17, which includes guidance on playing fields, the treatment of major sporting facilities, the urban fringe and rights of way.
169. The RSS addresses the issues of landscape character in policy QE6 that states:

POLICY QE6: The conservation, enhancement and restoration of the Region's landscape

"Local authorities and other agencies, in their plans, policies and proposals should conserve, enhance and, where necessary, restore the quality, diversity and distinctiveness of landscape character throughout the Region's urban and rural areas by:

- i) ensuring that a consistent approach is taken to landscape and character issues, particularly where they cross local planning authority boundaries;*
- ii) establishing a positive and integrated approach to the use, management and enhancement of the urban fringe;*
- iii) supporting the Community Forest and National Forest programmes;*
- iv) protecting and, where possible, enhancing natural, man-made and historic features that contribute to the character of the landscape and townscape, and local distinctiveness;*
- v) considering other factors that contribute to landscape character including tranquillity and the minimization of noise and light pollution; and*
- vi) identifying opportunities for the restoration of degraded landscapes including current and proposed minerals workings and waste disposal sites.*

170. Issues associated with biodiversity and nature conservation are primarily addressed by policy QE7, which is:

POLICY QE7: Protecting, managing and enhancing the Region's Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Resources

All the plans and programmes of local authorities and other relevant agencies should:

- i) encourage the maintenance and enhancement of the Region's wider biodiversity resources, giving priority to:*
 - the protection and enhancement of specific species and habitats of international, national and subregional importance as identified in the West Midlands Regional*

- Biodiversity Audit, Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) and other BAPs;*
 - those that receive statutory protection; and*
 - the biodiversity enhancement areas shown on the QE Areas of Enhancement Diagram.*
- ii) include policies and proposals which enable the West Midlands to achieve its minimum share of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP) targets as set out in Annex B and the targets of local partnerships and other BAPs;*
- iii) take a common approach to biodiversity and nature conservation issues which cross local planning authority and Regional boundaries, especially those relevant to:-*
- the strategic river corridors and tributaries of the Severn, Trent, Avon and Wye, river catchments, and issues in current local Environment Agency plans; and*
 - priorities derived from English Nature's Natural Areas Framework and associated Area Profiles and the West Midlands Biodiversity Audit.*

171. This policy (QE7) provides the justification for proposed nature conservation projects on the Rivers Blythe and Cole, as these are tributaries of the River Trent. The RSS also contains policies on forestry and woodlands, Policy QE8.

172. Annex B of the RSS outlines the targets for the protection, restoration and recreation of habitats in the West Midlands region. This is in relation to the UK Bio-diversity Action Plan and the West Midlands Bio-diversity Audit.

Local Planning Framework

Solihull Unitary Development Plan First Review 2001 – 2011

173. The Solihull Unitary Development Plan (UDP) was adopted in February 2006 and sets out the policies and proposals for the future development and use of land within the Borough to 2011. The UDP identifies adequate land to meet future housing and business needs. It contains policies to guide transport, shopping and recreational development, and measures to protect the Green Belt and the countryside from speculative development as well as ensuring that nature conservation interests are protected.

174. The UDP gives guidance on the protection of green spaces; only where green spaces are clearly demonstrated to be surplus to needs, taking account of their potential value for the full range of functions they can perform, and the need to address deficiencies in provision, will it be appropriate for alternative uses to be considered. This approach is incorporated into the Green Spaces Strategy.

175. Ensuring a balanced portfolio of development sites against the need to protect the environment, maintain the integrity of the Green Belt and protect nature conservation interest is paramount. The role that the new and emerging raft of local policy documents and guidance from central government and national bodies such as CABI Space will play in delivering and maintaining a strong open space strategy is also critical in achieving the overall aim of a sustainable environment.
176. The background paper 'Sport, Recreation, Leisure and the Arts' in relation to the UDP Public Local Inquiry states that the main issue raised in the objections was the conflict in the UDP Review First Deposit between draft guidance and PPG17. These were addressed in the Revised Deposit Document. The UDP seeks to protect and enhance open space and sports and recreation provision whether or not a local assessment has been undertaken. This approach is in accordance with PPG17.

"In April 1997, the amount of public open space in the Borough was 624 ha (1541 acres), the last major addition being the 85 acre Hillfield Park, opened in 1984. In this regard, the Council's policy is to work towards a minimum of 2.4 ha (6 acres) per 1,000 population. Whilst the Borough average, based on the 1996 mid-year estimate (ONS), is 3 ha (7.6 acres), there is variability between wards - from 0.6 ha (1.6 acres) in Olton to 9 ha (22.2 acres) in St Alphege.

The Solihull Unitary Development Plan ... proposes a considerable increase in the provision of public open space, and it is likely that further provision will also come forward as part of the public open space requirements on other strategic housing sites. In addition, the Blythe Valley Business Park will incorporate a 40 ha (100 acre) countryside park adjoining the River Blythe to which the public will have access".

177. The policy guidance in PPG 17 has been compared to the policy content of the UDP Review June 2003 in relation to Chapter 6: The Environment and Chapter 9: Sport, Recreation, Leisure and the Arts. The results are given in the Figure 4.

Figure 4: Comparison of PPG17 with Solihull First Review UDP 2001-2011

Main Elements of PPG 17 (2002)	Contents of UDP Review Revised Deposit June 2003
Local standards, including quantitative, qualitative and accessibility aspects (para 7)	<p>Proposal R1/2 Local Assessments of Need. The Council will undertake local assessments of the need for sport and recreation facilities in line with the advice from Sport England and PPG17 and will set local standards for provision of facilities.</p> <p>Proposal R3/1 Standard of Playing Field Provision</p> <p>Policy R4 standards in relation to new development NPFA minimum standard applied until new standards are developed.</p>
Opportunity to remedy deficiencies in provision (para 12)	Policy R4 New and Improved Open Space - specific reference to youth activities and children's play space
Recognise and protect all open space sport and recreation facilities of high quality (para 11)	<p>Policy R2 Protection of Open Space</p> <p>Policy R3 Protection of Playing Fields</p>
Exchange use of one site for another to substitute for any loss due to development (para 13)	Policy R4 New and Improved Open Space
Overall benefit to sport if playing fields lost (but only where robust assessment of need has not been undertaken) (para 15)	<p>Policy R3 Protection of Playing Fields</p> <p>Refusal unless</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrable surplus • Does not affect quantity or quality of pitches • Loss would be replaced with better quality in suitable location • The proposal is for an indoor or outdoor sports facility of sufficient benefit to sport outweigh the loss of playing fields
Avoid development in open spaces (para 17)	All of the above policies particularly Policy R2 have a presumption against development of existing open spaces and where development does take place the Council will require appropriate compensatory measures. Policy R5 Allotment Gardens protects allotments.
Seek to enhance the value of existing facilities, for example by use of planning obligations. Lack of use is not absence of need (para 18)	This is referred to in Policy R2 Policy R3 Policy R4 para 9.2.9
Mixed use sport, recreation and leisure facilities to be in highly accessible locations (para 21)	Policy R1 Sport and Recreation Facilities Particularly focus on town centres and education facilities that are accessible by public transport and integrated with existing facilities. Also reference to Tudor Grange and North Solihull Sports Centres.

Stadia to have good access to public transport (para 22)	No specific policy relating to stadia but this could be covered under Policy R1
New and improved facilities in association with housing and other uses (para 23)	Policy R4 New and Improved Open Space makes specific reference to housing developments also covered by Policy IM1 Developer Obligations
Improve local plan open space network in conjunction with provision of new open spaces (para 24)	Policy R7 Rights of way and Cycling e.g. Proposal R7/3 Blythe Valley Walkway and Proposal C10/1 access to the countryside Policy T2 accessibility to new developments also refers to cycling and walking facilities and Policy T6 Cycling 'seek linkages with cycle ways and cycle routes outside of the Borough
Encourage open space sport and recreation facilities in the urban fringe (para 25)	No specific reference to Urban Fringe locations
Rural areas – new sports development to be located close to edges of country towns	Policy C7 refers to local employment and services contributing to viability of rural settlements but not specifically to sport. Policy C10 – existing facilities protected New development supported if it is in keeping with local landscape character, is compatible with the natural and historic environment and takes account of other rural area users.
Sports and Recreation Provision in Designated areas i.e. SSSI and AONB	Policy ENV11 development which is likely to have an adverse impact on the SSSI etc will only be permitted if the reasons for development clearly outweigh the nature conservation value.
Outdoor sport and recreation in the Green Belt; including modernisation of facilities to be allowed if openness maintained (para 30)	Protection of the Green Belt is a Principal Objective 'to maintain and protect the Green Belt of the Borough, particularly the strategically important Meriden Gap, in order to restrict the continued sprawl of the Conurbation and to meet other Green Belt Objectives'. Policy protecting the Green Belt C1 – re-affirming the designation and C2 Control of Development in the Green Belt.
Protect and enhance recreational rights of way (para 32)	Policy R7 Rights of Way and Cycling
Planning obligations to remedy local deficiencies and improve quality and quantity of provision (para 33)	Policy R4 New and Improved Open Space makes specific reference to housing developments also covered by Policy IM1 Developer Obligations

178. The wider principles of PPG17 are met by the Solihull Unitary Development Plan Review in the following ways.

Supporting urban renaissance

179. The UDP states that the Local Authority is concerned that ‘new development and the lack of or poor quality management is having an adverse effect on some parts of the Borough’s natural heritage’ (p32). The challenge for the future is to ensure that development protects and enhances the natural environment. The UDP states that local design guidance to protect and enhance the distinctiveness of the urban areas of the Borough will be based on a full assessment of their character and diversity and will be adopted as SPG.

180. The UDP supports the provision of recreational facilities in appropriate locations and recognises the positive role of the Green Belt in providing recreational opportunities. It includes a wide range of policies in relation to open spaces:

- The Environment.
- Countryside.
- Sport, recreation, leisure and the arts.

181. The UDP Review restated the three fundamental principles in the UDP, the key one being a commitment to the further protection and maintenance of the Green Belt within the Borough, particularly the strategically important Meriden Gap. These are supported by an Environment Strategy that sets out a strategic vision in response to the LA21 agenda.

182. The vision for the Borough in relation to the Environment Strategy is;

“A high quality sustainable environment ... which is recognised as being safe, attractive, accessible, open, fair, diverse, clean, healthy and which provides social and economic opportunities for all sectors of the community”

183. The UDP’s stated intention is that the policies and proposals in the Document will make a positive contribution to this Vision. (p4). The UDP contains the following policy areas in relation to the environment that are relevant to the preparation of a green spaces strategy.

Policy	
Urban design	ENV2
Crime prevention	ENV3
Conservation areas	ENV5
Important nature conservation sites	ENV10
Conservation of biodiversity	ENV11

River Blythe catchment area	ENV12
Wildlife species	ENV13
Trees and woodlands	ENV14
Contaminated land	ENV16
Water protection	ENV17
Control of development in the Green Belt	C2
Agricultural land	C4
Landscape Quality	C8
Recreation in the Countryside	C10
Sport and Recreation Facilities	R1
Protection of Existing Open Space	R2
Protection of Playing Fields	R3
New and improved open space	R4
Allotment gardens	R5
Waterways	R6
Rights of way and cycling	R7

184. Protection of existing open spaces is covered by Policy R2. Open space should be retained where it is of particular value or has the potential to be of value to the community, or where there is insufficient provision for a particular function in overall terms.

Health and well being

185. A number of different types of green spaces are necessary to contribute towards the health and well-being of different sectors of the community. Young children need both informal space to play and to equipped playgrounds. Older people benefit from being able to walk regularly and need safe, pleasant places to go, and many enjoy gardening, so allotment space can be valuable. A number of the green space policies within the UDP therefore contribute towards improving the health of the community.

Summary of green space policy and the UDP

186. The UDP is the key to successfully delivering the objectives of PPG17 in Solihull and many of these objectives are covered by policies and proposals in the Plan. However, there are a number of omissions and some policies will require amendment in the light of the findings of the Green Spaces Strategy. These will include a revision of local standards, and policies towards strengthening the network of high quality green spaces.

187. Areas of PPG 17 not covered by the UDP include paragraph 24, which states that Local Authorities should seek opportunities to improve the open space network, to create public space from vacant land and to incorporate open space within new development on previously used land including procurement of private land. There may also need to be a specific policy in relation to cemeteries and churchyards.

Inspector's Report into objections to Solihull UDP Review revised Deposit

188. Following the Public Local Inquiry into the Solihull UDP the Inspectors report was received and published by the Council in May 2005. In respect of the Inspector's recommendations there would be no changes of significance in the policies and proposals relevant to the preparation of the Green Spaces Strategy.

Moving towards the new Local Development Framework for Solihull

189. In the new system it is important that the interrelationships between different local development documents are clear, transparent and consistent. The ODPM advise that the main principles in establishing a clear chain of conformity are:

- All local development documents should be consistent with national policy, in this case with PPG17.
- All local development documents should be in general conformity with the Regional Spatial Strategy, which has development plan status.
- All development plan documents and supplementary planning documents should be in conformity with the core strategy. They should not contain policy that does not fit with the spatial vision, spatial objectives and policies outlined in the core strategy or with saved policies if a core strategy is not in place.
- Supplementary planning documents should state clearly which development plan document policies or saved policies they support.

190. Development plan documents include:

- Core strategy.
- Site specific allocation of land.
- Area action plans (where needed).
- Other development plan documents – such as thematic documents on housing, employment and retail development.
- Proposals map.

191. On commencement of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act in September 2004 the adopted UDP policies were automatically saved. The UDP Review once adopted, will supersede the current UDP and its policies can be saved for at least three years.

192. ODPM advice to local authorities on deciding which policies suggests that they should consider:
- Consistency with national planning policy and general conformity with regional planning policy.
 - Relevance to, effectiveness in terms of addressing local needs, issues and aspirations.
 - The likelihood of continued stakeholder and community support for the policy stance.
 - Evidence of the policies 'value' and 'deliverability'.
 - Value of maintaining consistent policy approaches from a long term perspective such as green belt and open space.

The Local Development Framework (LDF)

193. The government introduced a new planning system for developing and adopting planning policies and proposals, which took effect in September 2004, as part of the planning and compulsory purchase Act. Under the new system the Council will have a Local Development Framework, which is a folder of planning documents. The first document to be produced under the new system is the Local Development Scheme (LDS) which sets out the Council's work programme for producing planning documents to go into the LDF.
194. The Council's first LDS is now completed and establishes and explains the Council's intentions and timetable for progressing other LDF documents over the next 3 years. A vital part of this work involves background research and evidence to inform new planning policies proposals and the LDF policy documents. One of the studies identified in the LDS is the Green Spaces Strategy which will inform where necessary the review of planning policy and the production of Supplementary Planning Document(s).

Developer Contributions

195. Developer contributions linked with new residential, commercial, industrial, or retail developments are potentially a major source of both capital and revenue funds which can be used to support the development of green spaces and their associated facilities. Solihull has policies which enable S106 agreements to be made, but has not been particularly successful in achieving funding from these sources for green spaces. As this source of funds must be a major tool in achieving the Green Spaces Vision, the Green Infrastructure Plan and the local standards, the ability of Solihull to negotiate funding should be strengthened.

196. One of the key factors in ensuring that developers' contributions are used effectively is that the projects for which funding is sought are realistically achievable within the agreed timescales. The practicalities in achieving the identified new provision will therefore be a factor to be considered within each individual planning obligation agreement.
197. There are a number of different approaches available, and given below are some examples from other authorities.

Fareham Borough Council

198. This Council has adopted a detailed SPG which not only outlines the standards required but also the level of maintenance contribution required. The stages used by Fareham to determine contributions are:
- determining whether developments generate open space requirements (almost all new residential development does).
 - calculating the open space requirement using the 'ready reckoner' provided.
 - determining whether development exacerbates or creates open space deficiencies.
 - determining whether the provision needs to be on or off site.
199. The calculations at step one are determined by multiplying the number of proposed dwellings of a given house size (i.e. number of bedrooms) by the average household size for each dwelling and then multiplying by the standard of provision of each relevant form of green space.

South Gloucestershire Council

200. South Gloucestershire has produced a Developers Guide detailing the provisions to be secured by agreement. For residential developments over 10 dwellings and some commercial developments the following are to be considered by the developer:
- Public open space.
 - Play areas/equipment.
 - Youth provision.
 - Public art.

Sefton MBC

201. Sefton has produced SPGs on both landscape character, and Public Green Space and Development. The Green Space SPG sets out how the UDP policy in relation to public green space and development will be put into practice for development over 5 houses, and for large commercial/industrial/leisure developments where there is a shortage of green space. The precise requirements will be set out in individual site Development Briefs.

202. The local open space standards are 2.5ha per 1,000 population. Levels of requirements for green space are determined by multiplying average household size (2.2) by 25m², giving a requirement of 55m² for each new home. If development is over 20 houses then the 55m² has to be provided plus a financial contribution to the provision of a play area. Developments over 40 houses have to provide the 55m² green space plus 100m² (i.e. 2.5m² x 40) of equipped play space as a minimum.

Trafford MBC

203. Guidance has been produced to support UDP policies and the MBC have used census data and NPFA standards for baselining the standards and costs. Financial contributions are determined by multiplying residential capacity by standard costs of provision per person. The costs are to be reviewed annually. The same applies to determining maintenance costs per person.

Developers' contributions for Solihull

204. Based on the experiences of other authorities and of Solihull MBC itself, a tariff-based approach towards developers' contributions appears most appropriate. The options will however require further consideration in the drafting of the relevant SPD, including in relation to the type of development and the nature of the green space and related facilities to be provided.

Rural Open Space Standards

205. Solihull has a large rural area, with some significant villages and towns within it, in addition to smaller hamlets. It is necessary to provide within the local standards guidance on provision within rural areas, and to this end examples from a range of other authorities have been considered. The following show the different approaches that have been adopted.

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

206. A standard of 3.2 ha was adopted in the Local Plan in 1998. This exceeds the traditional national standard, and is applied across the local authority district irrespective of whether the area in question is urban (market towns) or rural. The authority covers part of the Peak District National Park. The District Council states that it supports the NPFA standard insofar as it relates to the provision of outdoor play space and the Staffordshire Structure Plan insofar as it relates to other open space uses. Since the Plan was adopted the Structure Plan has been revised. At the time the Local Plan was adopted the Structure Plan recommended a standard of 2.8 ha per 1,000 population. The Local Plans states that "in rural areas the small villages often do not require structural open space although usually there will be a need for incidental open space in new housing areas and a recreation space for the village."

207. The 3.2ha standard comprises:
- Playing fields 1.6ha
 - Children's play areas 0.6ha
 - Major open space 0.4ha
 - Incidental open space 0.6ha

North East Hants

208. The Local Plan states that open space provision for settlements of less than 1,000 people will be determined separately from the overall standard. They use the Six Acre Standard.

North Dorset

209. The local planning authority's view is that specific standards for the provision of playing fields in a rural district are difficult to apply, particularly given the balance of population.

Cornwall

210. This large rural authority applies a standard of 2.4 3 ha per 1,000 population.

North Devon

211. Following research into open space provision and standards, each main settlement was assessed and its requirements detailed, together with overall standards for green space. These are:

- Playing fields: a minimum standard of 1.2 ha per 1,000 population across the whole district and in settlements where there are major deficiencies, a minimum interim target of 0.7 ha is applied.
- Multi use games areas: using an average site area of 0.25 ha the number of multi use games areas required for the whole district was determined. A standard of 0.2 ha per 1,000 population has been adopted.
- Equipped Children's Play Areas: a minimum of one equipped play area should be provided for every 200 children aged less than 14 years. In North Devon this resulted in a standard of 0.15ha per 1,000 population across the district.
- Facilities for Young People: provision of such facilities to cater for people aged 14-24 years in settlement of over 1,000 inhabitants. This in North Devon resulted in a target of 0.03 ha per 1,000 population.
- Informal Open Space: as target of 2.5 ha per 1,000 population.

Rural standards for Solihull

212. Adoption of the same local standards across Solihull is important to ease understanding and negotiation. However, the requirements of a small hamlet are not the same as for an area with a high population, such as north Solihull. The proposed standards reflect the level of provision per 1000 people for different types of green space, and the usual catchment areas. A minimum population size has therefore been adopted and where appropriate, tailored to each green space type.

OTHER GREEN SPACE POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

Introduction

213. This section provides a summary of green space related policies and plans of Solihull MBC and others. Some of these have a formal place as adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance, others are best practice guidance.

A Strategy for Parks and Open Spaces in Solihull 1999-2004

214. This considers all parks and open spaces in Solihull, but its main focus is on the 14 Principal Parks (see Appendices 6 and 6a). The policy background is not specifically set out except in relation to the Environment Strategy, but it does refer to Council's key priority groups of the elderly, disabled and young, and other relevant strategies and plans. The objectives of the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy are for the Solihull environment to be: welcoming, accessible, clean, varied, attractive, and safe.

215. The strategy brings together substantial consultation with other strategies and relevant programmes within the Council as at 1999. The consultation, undertaken in 1998, included:

- 500 face-to-face interviews with local residents.
- written questionnaire (975 responses plus 50 other written comments received).
- parish councils.
- local interest groups.
- neighbouring authorities .

Key findings

216. The following key issues were identified:

- There is a need to reconsider the role of different types of park and open space, with some being more important for nature conservation, and others for activities and children's play.
- There is a need to manage conflicting interests and users.

- There are problems with vandalism and crime within the parks, and a concern about personal safety.
- Dogs and dog mess are problems.

217. The main conclusions from the public consultation exercise were:

- Places where young people can meet friends or socialise should be created.
- Schools and local organisations should hold local events in parks.
- Larger events should be staged in appropriate parks.
- All facilities in parks are valued - with gaps noted in the provision of cafes, BMX cycle tracks and skateboarding/roller-skating areas.
- Toilets are wanted in or close to parks. A small charge of 20 pence would be acceptable.
- Park Rangers or other park officials would greatly help to ease some of the personal safety concerns of some residents.
- Better lighting would be appreciated.
- Dog fouling is a problem and the provision of dog waste bins is needed.
- Cycling is supported in parks, providing it is properly managed.

Strategic policy recommendations

218. The Strategy has four strands to its strategic policy: Diversity, Maintenance, Promotion and Partnership.

Diversity

“The Council will recognise and nurture the individual character of the parks rather than seek Borough-wide uniformity.”

“The Council wants to establish a pattern of parks and open spaces across the Borough which meets the varied needs and aspirations of people.”

219. Broadly, the parks and open spaces in Solihull can be grouped under five headings (see Appendix 6)

- town centre/formal
- natural/informal
- recreation grounds

- mixed uses
- significant areas of open space

220. If satisfaction is felt with the form of the current park and its facilities, then the approach would be to maintain what currently exists. In the case of mixed-use parks such as Babbs Mill and Hillfield Parks, the challenge is to manage the diverse uses to avoid conflict. Elsewhere, the opportunity may be taken to shape new landforms and encourage development, for example where the land is detracting from the environment. In other cases the importance of the natural environment may suggest that a more informal approach be taken leaving part of the park relatively untouched or even returning part to nature. Individual Action Plans will consider the right approach for each park.

221. The Council will:

- Agree the right approach for each Principal Park, recreation grounds in general and significant areas of public open space through the park action groups.
- Prepare and implement, through the park action groups, Action Plans which apply the four strands of the strategy to Solihull's Principal Parks, recreation grounds and significant areas of public open space.
- Explore the potential for providing BMX cycle tracks and skateboarding/rollerblading areas within parks. Tudor Grange Park will be the focus for a feasibility study in relation to skateboarding/rollerblading.
- Pilot some of the suggestions arising from public consultation including:
 - meeting areas for young people
 - local events involving schools and local organisations
 - larger events in appropriate parks
 - designated dog exercise areas.

Maintenance

“The Council will maintain Solihull's parks and open spaces in a way that protects areas that need protecting and enhances areas that need improving.”

222. Maintenance costs take up a large amount of the Council's Parks Budget. It is important that this spending is targeted towards those features that are, firstly, in need of attention and, secondly, considered important by people. Auditing the current condition of the park environment and identifying people's needs and aspirations helps the Council set priorities. The Council consider that there are two aspects to maintenance; Protection and Enhancement.

223. Natural areas within parks may require special protection. A biodiversity audit underpins the Council's Nature Conservation Strategy. Where areas within parks are identified as important they will be protected. Where it is suggested that enhancement should occur, more trees and wild flowers will be planted. It will not always be appropriate to produce large areas of mown grass within parks and open spaces. Longer grass provides a more natural environment which promotes nature conservation.
224. Parks can play an important role within a wider chain of open space extending beyond the Borough boundaries. For example, the potential of a quality habitat creation scheme will be explored along the River Cole in the vicinity of Solihull Lodge. Wildlife corridors created by joining up open spaces are particularly important in urban areas.
225. The Council will:
- Assess the current condition of the parks environments highlighting trees and woodland, ecology, lakes, pools, streams, play equipment, sports facilities including pitches and tennis courts, litter bins, seating and toilets.
 - Prepare work programmes for all Principal Parks, which identify and prioritise areas for improvement.
 - Introduce dog waste bins into all parks, recreation grounds and significant areas of public open space.
 - Use methods of maintenance that are environmentally sound relying on best practice available according to current knowledge.
 - Encourage the creation and protection of links between parks and other green spaces to promote 'wildlife corridors'.
 - Implement the findings of the Biodiversity Audit - protecting areas that need protection and enhancing areas that need improvement.

Promotion

“The Council will promote Solihull's parks and open spaces to ensure efficient use of the Borough's resources including, where appropriate, the promotion of tourism.”

“Encourage civic pride by seeking wide recognition for the quality of Solihull's parks and open spaces, creating attractive floral displays and introducing imaginative public art.”

“Realise the potential that parks and open spaces can offer towards the creation of a healthy nation and making effective use of local resources.”

226. The Council will:

- Undertake safety audits in Principal Parks and carry out necessary improvements.
- Make a commitment to increase Council presence within parks and open spaces through Parks Rangers/Wardens.
- Aim for at least THREE annual events in each town centre/formal park and at least ONE in other parks.
- Publish information leaflets for each Principal Park.
- Publish a 'Walks in Parks' booklet.
- Explore the introduction of maps at main entrances to parks.
- Provide clearer links between town centre/formal parks and main areas of public activity with regard to signposting and improved entrances.
- Each town centre/formal park to become a showcase for horticultural excellence.
- Pursue Green Flag Status (parks equivalent to Blue Flag beaches) for all Solihull's town centre parks - Brueton/Malvern, Tudor Grange, Shirley and Meriden parks.
- Aim for at least ONE new item of public art to be introduced into all town centre/formal parks.
- Encourage the creation of links between parks and other green spaces.
- Manage cycling within parks including, where appropriate, the provision of dedicated cycling routes.
- Seek to secure safe and convenient access and movement through the park for people with disabilities.

Partnership

“The Council will be creative in its future ambitions for parks and open spaces in order to attract partnerships with local communities, voluntary organisations, public and private sector bodies.”

227. The views of local communities are vital. Feedback on the quality of service that Solihull Council provides in parks would help us meet local needs and make improvements. The Council is open to new ideas from the local community regarding the parks service it delivers. Community-

based projects can help to shape better park environments and assist in tackling wider issues within society such as vandalism, youth unemployment and drug abuse. Involvement in worthwhile projects can encourage people to feel a sense of ownership for their local park. The possibility of setting aside areas within the local park for local community groups and schools will be explored.

228. The recreational needs of the young, elderly and disabled sectors of the local community will be given particular attention. Schools provide an ideal opportunity for raising the environmental awareness of children and young adults. Managing nature conservation areas in parks for example, could provide children and young adults with a rewarding experience which delivers environmental benefits.

229. The Council will:

- Tap into existing community groups and use the parks action groups in order to shape the action plans of individual parks.
- Consider suitable ways of encouraging new ideas from local communities about the parks service.
- Aim for at least ONE new community-based project in all Principal Parks.
- Encourage local schools to contribute to the management of Nature Conservation Areas within parks.
- Consider the scope for introducing new developments into those Principal Parks where this approach is appropriate.
- Identify opportunities for sponsorship in each Principal Park.
- Pursue external funding including Section 106 contributions and Regeneration bids.
- Give careful consideration to requests from minority interest groups to use individual parks.

The Strategy for Parks and Open Spaces in 2005

230. Since the publication of the 1999 strategy, Solihull MBC has been implementing the proposals. The major achievements are:

- 3 parks awards Green Flag status (Malvern/Brueton, Elmdon, Shirley).
- 6 active Parks Action Groups.

- Establishment of a network of Neighbourhood Managers, and their links to the Parks Action Groups.
 - Provision of skate parks and other youth facilities in some parks.
 - More events, leaflets and publicity.
231. The key findings from the research undertaken for the Green Spaces Strategy suggest that the 1999 findings remain largely valid, and there are still calls for more rangers and more toilets, and concerns about cleanliness and safety. The effectiveness of the Parks Action Groups has been restricted due to the inability of Solihull MBC to fund many of these Groups' aspirations.
232. The strategic network of green spaces proposed by the Green Spaces Strategy reconfirms much of the 1999 strategy. The network of Principal Parks, Local Parks and Neighbourhood Green Spaces provides a strategic framework and rationale behind the provision of the variety of green spaces within Solihull.
233. The 1999 Parks and Open Spaces Strategy needs updating to recognise the progress made, and to propose practical measures to take forward the Green Spaces Strategy. The Action Plan also needs review.

Solihull's Countryside (2000)

234. This is a broad assessment of landscape types and current pressures on the countryside. There are also proposals for action for each landscape area.

Key findings

235. The key findings of this strategy were:
- WCC landscape guidelines for Arden (1993) describe the area as "an historic region of former wood pasture and heath, characterised by a dispersed settlement pattern, ancient woodlands, and mature hedgerow oaks".
 - The Green Belt policy has limited development, and the countryside is important strategic gap between Birmingham/Solihull and Coventry.
 - The countryside has a rich mix of species, especially along the River Blythe.
 - The countryside is mainly good-moderate quality agricultural land (mainly Grade 3).
 - There are many archaeological and historical buildings and remains.
 - There is a network of rights of way, cycle routes, and canal towpaths, which are all experiencing increased use.
 - Noise and light spillage are major issues.
 - There is increasing demand for other formal sports.

- More people travelling by car to countryside.
- Hedgerows best preserved in Hockley Heath Parish.
- Longer distance walks include; Solihull Way, Trans-Solihull Link, an east-west footpath across the Borough, River Blythe Walkway (being developed), and the Heart of England Way. The North Worcestershire Path ends at the boundary and links to Warwickshire and beyond.
- Golf courses, fishing lakes and playing fields are significant features.
- Earlswood Lakes (just outside boundary) needs linking to Solihull town centre by traffic-free routes, and schemes at the site are required to reduce the impact of traffic and car parking.
- The recently designated Blythe Valley Country Park will provide a mix of recreational opportunities and be linked to surrounding areas by Blythe Valley Walkway.
- Old sand and gravel workings could offer new recreational opportunities, with the establishment of off-road links.

Strategic policy recommendations

236. The strategic policy recommendations of the strategy were:

236.1. Maintain open and rural character

‘The Council will maintain the open and rural character of the countryside in its own right, and as part of the West Midlands Green Belt’.

236.2. Management and diversification

“The Council will encourage the sensitive and sustainable management of the countryside and guide farm diversification to uses which protect its character and openness”.

Including:

- Encourage the sensitive management of characteristic Arden features, traditional farm landscapes and key habitats.
- Promote small-scale sensitive farm diversification schemes, such as informal outdoor recreation proposals.
- Encourage farmers and landowners to take up incentives for new woodland planting and the management of existing habitats, and to contribute to the restoration of the Forest of Arden.
- Consider expanding the Forest of Arden planting initiative to include replacement of hedgerows.

236.3. Conservation and Enhancement

“The Council will conserve and enhance the natural environment of the countryside and its historic and archaeological assets.”
Including:

- Continue to protect the characteristic features of the Arden landscape through the UDP and Development Control.
- Use the Warwickshire Landscape Guidelines for the Arden to shape its management strategy for the countryside.
- Develop the existing partnership with WCC and Coventry CC to restore the Forest of Arden.
- Establish a Countryside Management project to develop this Strategy.
- Promote the extension of the Woodland Fringe planting initiative on the edge of the urban area and around the rural settlements.
- Identify and protect wildlife sites and corridors using the Habitat Biodiversity Audit information, the Nature Conservation and Woodland Strategies, and the UDP.
- Create and enhance Local Nature Reserves and County Parks.
- Conserve and enhance the natural environment of the River Blythe Corridor, in partnership with the Environment Agency, English Nature, Farmers and Landowners.

236.4. Realise the potential for recreation

“The Council will encourage greater use of the countryside for informal outdoor recreation and for formal recreational facilities, providing such activities do not harm the natural qualities, character and openness of the countryside.”

Including:

- Ensure that all footpath and bridleways are maintained and signed.
- Review the network of public footpaths and bridleways.
- Encourage farmers and landowners to take up incentives in return for providing access to their land.
- Promote the use of the public footpath network by publishing leaflet detailing walks.
- Develop the Blythe Valley Walkway and Trans-Solihull Link.
- Ensure that the Heart of England Way is maintained and signed to a standard appropriate to its status as a regional long-distance footpath.
- Continue to work with volunteer groups to maintain the public footpath network.
- Provide quality, lightly-trafficked routes which are cycle and rider friendly for easy access to the countryside.
- Promote cycling as a leisure activity by publishing leaflets detailing rides to the countryside, tourist and heritage destinations, and recreational facilities.

- Support British Waterways Lapworth Loop initiative to improve access for cyclists to canal towpaths.
- Support the Countryside Agency's Greenways initiative by working with adjoining authorities to identify suitable routes and with landowners to develop and maintain them.
- Encourage new and expanded recreational facilities in the countryside which protect its character and openness.
- Support British Waterways Earlswood Lakes initiative to manage the impact of visitors.
- Ensure that the Blythe Valley Countryside Park is delivered in accordance with UDP policies and proposals and enhance links to surrounding urban areas.
- Create and enhance Local Nature Reserves and Country Parks.
- Explore the potential for a major new outdoor recreational facility on old mineral workings through the Meriden Sands initiative.
- Promote the benefits of new woodland planting to farmers and landowners as part of the restoration of the Forest of Arden.

236.5. *Maintain Local Distinctiveness*

"The Council will maintain existing settlements as attractive and distinct places within the countryside and ensure that any new development is sympathetic to its local character".

236.6. *Promotion and Education*

"The Council will encourage people to care for and enjoy the countryside in a responsible way by raising public awareness and understanding of countryside issues."

Including:

- Raise awareness of countryside issues in Solihull through the Strategy and Countryside Management Project.
- Promote and support the services offered by groups such as the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust and Solihull Conservation Volunteers.

236.7. *Partnerships and the Community*

"The Council recognises that many people contribute to the quality of the countryside and will develop new and existing partnerships and involve the community through the Local Agenda 21 process."

Including:

- Conserve and enhance the natural environment of the River Blythe corridor, in partnership with the Environment Agency, English Nature, Farmers and Landowners.
- Promote the planting of woodlands by local businesses.

236.8. *Resources*

“The Council will provide resources and support towards the initiatives in this Strategy and the annual action plans and seek support from a variety of sources and partners”.

237. The local objectives for each area of Solihull are summarised in Appendix 7.

Summary

238. Solihull’s Countryside Strategy is a useful document providing an overview of the landscape character of the area and main policy objectives for each. The main findings and strategic proposals are still valid, and inform the Green Spaces Strategy. There is however no Action Plan associated with the Strategy which would show the priorities for investment.

Restoring the Region’s Wildlife – The Region’s Biodiversity Strategy for the West Midlands 2005

239. This document sets out the strategic direction for the next five years of biodiversity conservation in the West Midlands. It provides a broad framework for action through the five key challenges and their associated actions, which will be delivered through a coordinated regional response led by the West Midlands Biodiversity Partnership.

240. The five key challenges are:

- Maintaining and improving the condition of habitats, species and ecosystems.
- Developing an area based approach to restoring wildlife.
- Monitoring the condition of habitats, species and ecosystems.
- Re-connecting and integrating action for biodiversity with other environmental, social and economic activity.
- Coping with the impacts of climate change.

241. The strategy recognises that biodiversity has intrinsic worth but is equally important for the contribution it makes to people's quality of life. Biodiversity also plays a vital role in underpinning some of our most important economic sectors. The tourism industry relies heavily on a high quality environment, rich in wildlife, to attract visitors and customers, and the quality of the environment has also been shown to be a significant consideration for those deciding where to locate new businesses.
242. International, national, regional and local legislation, conventions and obligations relate to the wildlife of the region. These include protecting and conserving internationally and nationally designated sites, and meeting land-use planning and other legislative obligations. The regional tier in particular has a role to play ensuring appropriate coverage of biodiversity in the three major strategies – the Regional Sustainable Development Framework, the Regional Spatial Strategy and Regional Economic Strategy, as well as in the range of other regional plans, programmes and strategies. At the local level it is important that appropriate connections are made between local biodiversity action plans, which set out priorities for local areas, and significant policy documents such as local development frameworks and community strategies.
243. The Strategy describes the links with biodiversity and suggests potential activities for the following sectors:
- Agriculture
 - Water and Wetlands
 - Forestry and Woodlands
 - Towns, Cities and Development
 - Business
 - Tourism
 - Recreation and Access
 - Health
 - Transport.
244. The setting of and reporting on biodiversity targets is an integral part of the biodiversity action plan process. The UK BAP contains national targets for priority habitats and species whilst at the county level ranges of species and habitat targets and priorities have been established by LBAP partnerships.
245. Within towns and cities, the objectives include to:
- Implement the policies in the Regional Spatial Strategy, paying particular attention to those relating to restoring degraded areas and creating high quality environments, greenery, urban green space and public spaces, and biodiversity enhancement areas.
 - Ensure that adequate survey work is undertaken prior to the early stages of planning and that new development supports biodiversity.

- Manage urban green space for wildlife in conjunction with its other functions.
- Include biodiversity in the development of green space strategies as an important means of linking new urban green space to the wider countryside, helping to encourage the spread of species.
- Develop green space strategies, using English Nature's standards.
- Use good practice guidance such as the Royal Town Planning Institute's Planning for Biodiversity and the Town and Country Planning Association's Biodiversity by Design.
- Incorporate sustainable drainage systems in new developments where possible.
- Incorporate biodiversity protection, restoration or creation in regeneration schemes.
- Take into account linkages between urban, urban/rural and rural areas of biodiversity value and address specific issues around the management of green-space in the urban fringe.

Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Local Biodiversity Action Plans

246. A number of different Local Biodiversity Habitat and Species Plans have been produced which should be used to guide the local management of different types of green space. These have a number of actions for each Plan, and examples include:

- School grounds
 - Develop an easy to use biodiversity survey and circulate to schools for pupils to complete themselves.
- Canals
 - Ensure that any canal site meeting the relevant criteria is notified as a SINC.
- Churchyards and cemeteries
 - Ensure that all SINC churchyards have management plans.
- Hedgerows
 - Use new hedgerows to link habitats of existing biodiversity value where opportunities arise.
- Built environment
 - Survey and record protected species within the built environment.

247. The Green Spaces Strategy's proposals for the quality of green spaces include an overall objective to manage the areas in accordance with the LBAPs.

Nature Conservation in Solihull (1999)

248. This strategy provides an overview of the main habitat types within Solihull, such as woodlands, hedgerows, grasslands, canals, rivers and streams. Proposals for policy and action are given under the following headings:

248.1. Protection

Including the designation of Local Nature Reserves and UDP policies relating to wildlife corridors and protected species.

248.2. Creation and Enhancement

Expanding and improving wildlife habitats, and encouraging new planting in accordance with the Forest of Arden strategy.

248.3. Management

Preparation of management plans for Solihull MBC owned land, and support to landowners to do the same.

248.4. Impact of Development

Ensuring that the impact of new developments on the environment is considered, both in policy terms, and for individual applications at the planning stage. Developing new habitats in association with new developments.

248.5. Access

Giving people access to a variety of natural open spaces with at least one within 1000m of home. Increasing the number of Local Nature Reserves.

248.6. Promotion and Education

Encouraging local communities to develop and manage local natural habitats, and involve people in the preparation of Action Plans.

248.7. Information, Audit and Monitoring

Monitor change in Solihull's wildlife, and play a full part in the Habitat Biodiversity Audit.

248.8. Resources

Allocate funding and staff. Encourage local community involvement and the support of landowners and farmers.

248.9. Partnership and the Community

Play an active role in Project Kingfisher. Support volunteers involved with woodland and other management.

249. The Strategy includes a map with designated wildlife sites and wildlife corridors, which have now been integrated into the UDP proposals map. An updated version of this is provided as Map 9.

Summary

250. The policy principles contained within the Nature Conservation Strategy remain valid, but there is need for updating to take account of the new regional plan, LBAP proposals and information from ground survey work. There is a particular need to revisit the wildlife corridors identified in the 1999 strategy.

Environment Strategy 1998-2003

251. The scope of this strategy, now out of date, is the general environment, taking account of international and local policies, including Agenda 21. It provides strategic recommendations for other strategies, but does not include specific projects.

Urban Forestry Strategy (draft) 2004-2009

252. This document addresses trees within the urban areas; along highways, in parks and open spaces, on private land including gardens, and within housing areas. Its policy background includes LA21, the other local strategies such as the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy, and the Nature Conservation Strategy.

253. The strategic recommendations have the objective of maintaining and enhancing tree cover in urban areas of Solihull, whether land is in public or private ownership. There is encouragement to use native species in accordance with the Forest of Arden landscapes, and there is support for the voluntary Tree Wardens.

Woodland Strategy for Solihull (2000)

254. The aim of this document is to 'protect, manage, and enhance Solihull MBC woodlands with and for the benefit of Solihull residents, recreation, nature conservation and visual amenity'. Its measures include:

- Protecting and managing woodlands for wildlife.
- Creating and improving woodlands.
- Providing public access.
- Using woodlands for education.
- Developing partnerships with the local community and volunteers.
- Enhancing biodiversity in the woodlands, and on adjacent land.

255. The strategy notes that there are:

- 61 woodland Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation.
- 1 woodland Site of Special Scientific Interest.
- 5 woodland Local Nature Reserves.
- 21 Solihull MBC woodland sites, varying in size from 0.5 to 11 hectares.

256. Woodland sites are recorded on Map 10, and Solihull MBC woodlands on Map 15.
257. The principles of the Woodland Strategy remain valid, but the Strategy requires updating to guide action for this type of green space in Solihull.

Warwickshire Landscapes Guidelines – Arden (1993)

258. This document provides a detailed landscape character assessment for Solihull, showing on a map the different sub-areas, such as the ‘Arden Parklands’ area around Hampton-in-Arden, the ‘Ancient Arden’ landscapes around Meriden, and the ‘Wooded Estatelands’ around Dorridge. The document provides specific landscape policy guidance for each part of the Arden landscape, and these have in turn become incorporated into UDP policies and other strategies and plans of Solihull.
259. This report is now out of print and there is an urgent need to update it, revisiting the policies, and translating the mapping onto a GIS system, which can then be made generally accessible.

Solihull Cycling Strategy (2003)

260. The Cycling Strategy considers both utility and leisure trips, and it adopts the National Cycling Strategy target of 8% increase in cycling trips between the years 2001 and 2012. Priority 1 is utility cycling, including for work and school. These may use green spaces as links to other networks. Priority 2 is leisure cycling, including access to open space.
261. It proposes a few strategic links, including the National Cycle Network Route 53, and use of canal towpaths. It also suggests that a feasibility study should be undertaken on the Balsall Common and Berkswell Greenway. Some progress has been made on actions from the strategy, but progress has been slower than anticipated.
262. Since the cycling strategy was published, the full cycling map of Solihull has been produced, with all of the cycling routes marked, both on and off road. There is now a need to update the Cycling Strategy’s Action Plan to identify key strategic routes, which will in turn allow long term planning and effective implementation.

Walking Strategy for Solihull

263. The vision for the Walking Strategy is:

‘To create an environment and culture, where walking is regarded by everyone as the primary means of making local journeys and a recreational activity which leads to a healthier, more enjoyable and sociable life’.

264. The strategy recognises that although there is a good network of off-road footpaths in the northern urban area, the problems with anti-social behaviour discourages use, and paths are being closed. The southern urban part of Solihull has a much poorer network of footpaths than the north. The problems in the urban areas are being addressed with the involvement of the Neighbourhood Managers.
265. There are 211 km of public rights of way, mostly in the rural areas. These are primarily used for recreation. The Council has adopted Best Value Indicator targets relating to signposting and waymarking, obstructions and surface conditions.
266. Solihull MBC has agreed to pursue sustainable transport routes for cycling and walking, and will identify key routes for enhancement. It promotes walking for all ages, including through the safer routes to schools initiatives, and healthy living campaigns. The strategy also suggests that art could be used to enhance the walking environment.
267. The walking strategy provides part of the rationale behind the strategic route proposals suggested by the Green Spaces Strategy.

PART 2

THE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN, LOCAL STANDARDS, AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

INTRODUCTION TO PART 2

THE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN

Development of a Green Infrastructure Plan

268. The Green Space Infrastructure Plan comprises of: the hierarchy of parks and green spaces; strategic links, informal and wildlife sites; and, sites with specific local standards. The links between these are illustrated by Figure 5.
269. The hierarchy delivers the network of publicly accessible spaces, from the smallest areas of informal green space within new developments up to the Principal Parks. These spaces will often also be the location for facilities such as children's playgrounds and may include areas of natural green space or even a Local Nature Reserve. The spaces are linked by both strategic routes and wildlife corridors, and all have unrestricted public access.
270. The strategic links, informal space and wildlife corridors are the more informal parts of the green space infrastructure. They may exist on their own, for example the canals, or be located within a park or other green space. Some of these sites will have unrestricted access, others may have restricted access.
271. The sites with specific local standards are for the more formal provision of green space facilities. Some of this provision will have unrestricted access, for example children's playgrounds or provision for teenagers and young people, where they may be located within the hierarchy of parks and green spaces. Other sites may have restricted public access, such as members-only football clubs, or allotment sites, and these will then be provided separately.
272. The assessment of the Green Space Infrastructure has been undertaken on an area or 'Zone' basis, but the standards also provide guidance on the provision of green space at the site level. Where it is proposed to lose any green space to development, detailed analysis will be needed to assess the impact of the proposal on the provision of green space locally, using the proposed standards as benchmarks. Consideration will also need to be given by developers to ways in which current identified deficiencies could be addressed either on-site, or through off-site mitigation measures.

Local standards

273. The local standards have been derived from a number of factors, including:

- A quantitative and qualitative assessment of different types of green spaces, their features and facilities.
- Consultation with stakeholders and residents on issues and priorities.
- A review of existing policies and strategies.
- Comparison with benchmark and other authorities.
- Identification of best practice.
- National and regional 'standards' from national agencies and others

274. Each of the proposed specific local standards are considered separately, and each follows a similar sequence:

- The current situation
 - users
 - ownership and management
 - policies and strategies
 - audit findings
 - comparison with best practice and national standards
 - issues and priorities from the consultation, and financial issues
- Proposals
 - local standard for Solihull
 - management arrangements
 - financial – resourcing the facilities or spaces, both capital and revenue
- Implications
 - the impact and issues related to the adoption of the proposed local standard

275. The local standards considered as separate sections are:

275.1. *Children's Playgrounds*

The provision of equipped children's playgrounds, both Local and Neighbourhood provision.

275.2. *Provision for Teenagers and Young People*

Skate parks, teenage meeting places and Multi Use Games Areas.

275.3. *Other Outdoor Sports*

Space for sports such as tennis, athletics and bowls. Also provision for Gaelic Football. This standard applies primarily to new developments.

275.4. *Allotments*

Allotments and community gardens, both statutory sites and others.

275.5. *Grass Playing Fields*

Provision for football, rugby and cricket primarily on community sites, but also considering the importance of school playing fields.

276. Local standards have however also been derived for the following, but these appear under the Strategic Links, Informal and Wildlife Sites sub-section:

276.1. *Internal/Informal Green Space*

Provision of informal space within new developments to support best design practice.

276.2. *Accessible Natural Green Space*

Areas with unrestricted public access which meet English Nature's definition of 'natural areas'.

276.3. *Local Nature Reserves*

Provision as hectares per 1000 people of these designated wildlife areas.

Resourcing the Proposals

277. This section recognises the importance of partnerships in resourcing the implementation of the Strategy. It emphasises the long term nature of the Strategy, and the steps to achieving funding for the proposals.

Implementation Plan

278. This sets out the actions necessary to achieve both the local standards and the green infrastructure plan. It also summarises the key findings for each zone and prioritises the actions necessary for each of these areas of Solihull.

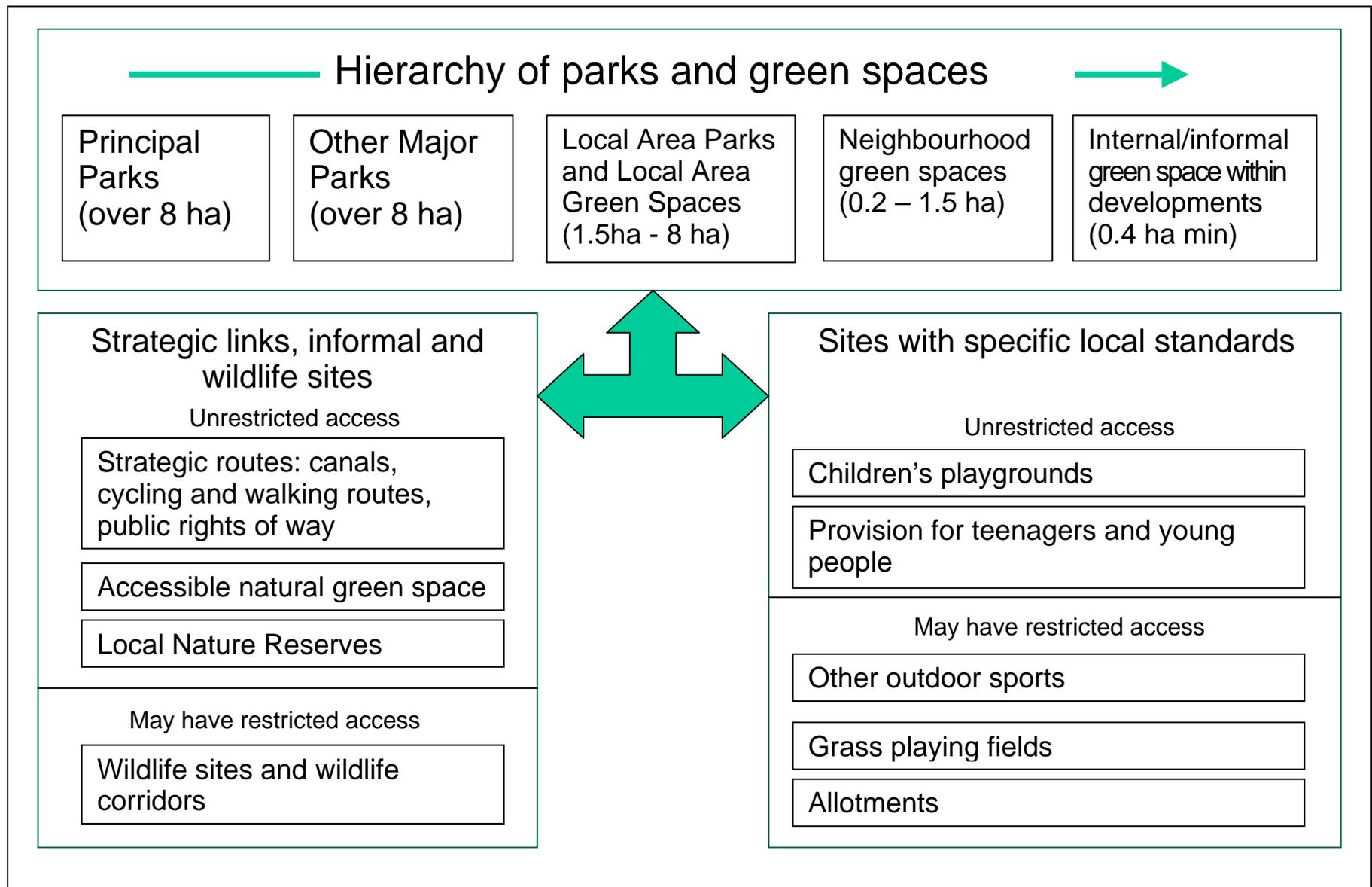


Figure 5: Green Space Infrastructure

THE HIERARCHY OF PARKS AND GREEN SPACES

Introduction

279. This section describes the network of green spaces for Solihull, and provides standards and policies for their maintenance and enhancement. It also addresses the strategic links between the green spaces, and considers the provision for wildlife.

Guiding principles

280. The guiding principles of these proposals come from Solihull's Corporate Plan, the strategies for health, crime and education, the environment, countryside and similar documents. Details of these are contained in sections 'The Importance of Green Space' and 'Other Green Space Policies and Strategies'.

281. The following headings from the Corporate Plan provide a useful structure to summarise these principles. The paragraphs under each heading summarise how green spaces can contribute towards the corporate objectives.

A Brighter Future for our Children

282. Providing children and young people with good quality accessible facilities (playgrounds, schools, playing fields, skate parks and multi-use games areas) and more informal spaces, including small areas of green space within residential areas, and informal meeting areas for teenagers. Supporting young people in developing their interests in positive activities, and tackling anti-social behaviour to enable all young people to use the spaces and facilities.

Improving the Quality of Life

283. Providing a variety of clean, safe and welcoming green spaces within easy reach of everyone. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment and habitats for wildlife. Keeping Solihull's attractive image by retaining the wooded feel of the area and by making sure that the local character of the area is maintained. Designing and redesigning green spaces to make them attractive and discourage crime.

Closing the Gap of Inequality

284. Ensuring that everyone has access to good quality local green spaces, particularly those who are least able to travel. Making a priority those areas that are most 'cut-off' from the wider countryside, and also ensuring that the rural areas have sufficient provision of facilities, particularly for young people.

Treating People as Individuals within a Diverse Community

285. Making all facilities accessible to those with disabilities or impairments, and supporting individuals to develop new interests and skills. Encouraging everyone to have a healthier lifestyle, walking, cycling and making other use of the green spaces through targeted promotional programmes and other support.

Good Value Services

286. Managing the Principal Parks in Solihull as the flag-ship sites, but also improving the management of all green spaces. Aiming for the 'Green Flag' award for all the Principal Parks, and using the same criteria for more local spaces. Encouraging and supporting direct involvement of the local community in managing their spaces and facilities, through the Parks Action Groups, Residents Associations, and conservation volunteer networks, and sports clubs. Targeting capital and revenue funding at the most important priorities.

The hierarchy of parks and green spaces

287. The hierarchy of parks and green spaces is described below, from the smallest areas up to the Principal Parks.

287.1. Internal/Informal Green Space

A minimum of 0.4 ha per 1000, with a minimum area of 0.2 ha, for all settlements of over 300 people. The design quality of these spaces should follow the guidelines in 'The Green Infrastructure Plan'. This standard applies to new developments only.

287.2. Neighbourhood Green Spaces

Areas between 0.2 and 1.5 ha, with at least 0.2 ha of space within 400 m of all settlements with more than 300 people. Where an area greater than 1.5 ha is provided within 400 m, this standard will have been met.

287.3. Local Area Parks/Local Area Green Spaces

Areas between 1.5 and 8 ha within 1 km of all settlements with more than 300 people. Where an area greater than 8 ha is provided within 1 km, this standard will have been met.

287.4. Principal Parks and Other Major Parks

Areas over 8 ha within 2 km of all settlements of over 5000 people.

- 287.5. *Sustainable routes*
Traffic-free routes such as canal towpaths, cycle routes, walking routes, and bridleways.
- 287.6. *Wildlife corridors and wildlife sites*
These areas will also contain both local and strategic areas of accessible natural green space, and Local Nature Reserves.

Existing policies, strategies and plans

288. The UDP policies set the framework for the provision of green and open space, but they do not indicate a hierarchy of provision.

UDP First Review

289. The relevant policies are:

POLICY R2

The Council recognises the value of open space used for recreational and other uses and will not permit the loss of existing open space through development, where it is of value for formal and informal recreation, urban quality, nature conservation, visual amenity, and strategic purposes, or as a community resources. The Council will protect and enhance the character and quality of parks and public open spaces in the Borough.

Where development takes place, the Council will require appropriate compensatory measures for the loss of existing recreational facilities and open space.

POLICY R4

The Council will require provision for and maintenance of appropriate open space and recreational facilities as an integral part of all new housing developments in accordance with the following criteria:

- (i) The provision of public open space shall be in accordance with the National Playing Fields Association's minimum standard of 2.4 ha per 1000 population, until such time as the local standards referred to in Proposal R2/1 have been adopted. In circumstances where no provision is required for children's play areas and youth facilities, more generous provision than the minimum standard will be expected. Where possible, such provision should protect and enhance existing landscape features;*
- (ii) In circumstances where the provision of new open space is not appropriate and in the interests of more efficient use of urban land, provision for appropriate alternative local facilities of equivalent value, such as improvements to the quality of existing parks and open spaces;*
- (iii) In areas where there is a shortage of children's play areas, as identified in the Play Area Strategy for Solihull, the provision of new children's play areas, or a contribution towards their provision in the area; and*

- (iv) *The provision of facilities for youth activities or a contribution towards their provision in the area.*

In accordance with PPG17 the Council will also seek the provision of new open space as part of proposals for significant commercial and industrial development within the Borough.

Where appropriate, the provision of open space and recreational facilities will be sought through the use of Section 106 Agreements.

Comparison with other authorities, and best practice

290. Sefton Council has adopted a 'General Open Space' figure of 0.9 ha per 1000, which appears to include children's playgrounds and space for youth. It has also given a minimum size for green spaces as 0.1 ha. Sefton is one of the CIPFA family group of authorities.
291. Cambridge has a figure of 0.8 ha per 1000 for 'informal open space', and Staffordshire Moorlands has a figure of 0.6 ha per 1000 for 'incidental open space'. Harlow uses a figure of 0.3 ha per 1000 for informal green space.
292. There is no national standard, but a figure of around 0.4 ha per 1000 for Internal/Informal Green Space is emerging from best practice for new developments.

Issues and priorities from consultation

293. The consultation discussions considered amenity green spaces in Solihull. PPG17 defines such areas as having a primary purpose of hosting informal activities close to home or work, or enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas. These areas therefore include many of the green spaces in Solihull those areas deemed as; Internal/Informal Green Space, Neighbourhood Green Spaces and Local Area Parks/Local Green Spaces.

Household survey

294. "Amenity green space" was specifically addressed in the household survey, and the questionnaire gave the examples of Beechcroft Openspace and Streetsbrook Openspace. Of those responding to the survey, 37% considered the areas satisfactory, while 9% were dissatisfied. However, 54% either had no view or did not know if they were satisfied with these spaces.

295. When comparing the answers across the zones in relation to amenity green space, there are some notable differences from the average:
- There are higher levels of satisfaction than the average in Zone 2 (54%) and Zone 3 (49%).
 - There is much less satisfaction in Zone 6, where the figure falls to 20%.
296. Amenity green spaces are used less than other green spaces, but a third of people in the Borough use the spaces at least occasionally, with slightly higher usage by people over 51 years of age. The main concerns of the people using these areas are cleanliness, personal safety, and the quality of landscape/planting/grass maintenance.
297. When asked about overall priorities for investment, the amenity green spaces are about the 5th priority, higher than sports facilities, cemeteries and allotments, but lower than all other types of green space.

Other consultation

298. The following issues arose during the other consultation discussions.
- Small, informal areas of open space should be included as part of any new development but must be sensitively located and in particular cater for the needs of teenagers. Very small areas should be avoided, as they are difficult to manage.
 - The north of the Borough has large amounts of “amenity” land, used for screening, creating road boundaries etc, but very little open space which actually meets the needs of the local community.
299. In summary, although the amenity green spaces are important, there are problems with maintenance on very small areas, and this together with a fear of crime, are the primary reasons why people do not use them as much as some other spaces.
300. The spaces in the north of the Borough are a particular problem, and where relevant should be reviewed as part of the current North Solihull Regeneration project.

Elements of the hierarchy

301. The hierarchy has local spaces and facilities, and those of a strategic nature.
302. The ‘local’ spaces and related facilities are considered to be:
- Internal/Informal Green Space
 - Neighbourhood Green Spaces
 - Areas of Accessible Natural Green Space within 300m
 - Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP)

303. The 'strategic' spaces and related facilities are considered to be:
- Local Area Parks/Local Area Green Spaces
 - Principal Parks
 - Other Major Parks
 - Strategic Routes (selected walking and cycling routes, some bridleways, canals)
 - Accessible Natural Green Space of 10 ha or more
 - Local Nature Reserves
 - Wildlife corridors identified by the Nature Conservation Strategy
 - Neighbourhood Equipped Play Areas
 - Skate Parks and other provision for young people
 - Grass playing fields
 - Other sports facility provision
 - Allotments

Internal/Informal Green Spaces

304. Internal or Informal Green Space, are important elements of both townscapes and villages. Where there has been new development, these areas are part of the planned internal space, contributing to local landscapes. Internal green space includes all green spaces with a minimum size of 0.2 ha with unrestricted public access, but excludes areas with other specific uses including those areas designated as green belt, LEAPs and NEAPs, playing fields, allotments, areas that are Accessible Natural Green Space (as per the Strategy definition), and designated wildlife sites.
305. The users of the Internal/Informal Green Spaces are usually the people living very close to them as they form part of the local street pattern. The use is mostly for informal play or casual recreation.
306. The majority of these spaces within urban areas are managed by Solihull MBC, but the spaces within the villages are often managed by the relevant parish council. Some of the space within urban areas are managed by the relevant town council.
307. The cost of maintaining smaller areas of green space is high. Where new Internal/Informal green space is provided as part of a developer's agreement, a sufficient commuted sum is required to ensure its long term maintenance.
308. These spaces are not regularly patrolled by the Ranger service and usually have no links to the local voluntary Parks Action Groups. If they are a nature reserve, then there may be some volunteer involvement through practical management.

Neighbourhood Green Spaces

309. These areas of unrestricted public access are between 0.2 and 1.5 ha in size, and should be available within 400 m of all homes in settlements of greater than 300 people.
310. Where the villages or parts of the town are older, then these spaces have developed over time and may include village greens. They may contain; informal horticultural features, equipped children's playgrounds, nature conservation areas, informal green space, possibly a mini or junior football pitch, and artistically designed features or elements of public art. The design of these areas should follow generic good practice, and should be part of the local network of traffic-free walking and cycling routes. These areas should also contribute to wildlife conservation by appropriate management measures.
311. The current network of green spaces is illustrated by Map 35, which shows that most of the authority is covered, with the exceptions of parts of Zones 1, 2 and 3.
312. The management of the Neighbourhood Green Spaces is primarily handled by Solihull MBC. Some spaces are owned by parish and town councils, and are managed by contract with Solihull MBC. A small number of spaces are owned and managed directly by the parish and town councils.
313. The cost of maintaining smaller areas of green space is high. They are often subject to litter and flytipping, and the Council is unable to deal with all of the problems as they arise. There is a need to develop fewer but larger areas of green space, and to review the future of areas less than 0.2 ha. The smallest areas of green space (less than 0.2 ha) could possibly be considered for development if they do not have intrinsic wildlife value or form part of the walking and cycling network.
314. Another management issue that has arisen during the Green Spaces Strategy work is a concern that the parish and town councils are sometimes not sufficiently consulted about how the spaces are managed. More communication is needed, and a key link is the Neighbourhood Manager. A strengthening of the Neighbourhood Managers' role would be welcomed by many of the consultees.
315. At present there is limited involvement of the local communities in the management of these spaces. Some of the Neighbourhood Managers have occasional schemes with nearby schools and local residents, but these have not been self-sustaining. In some areas the Residents Associations have been more involved. Although the management of the spaces is likely to continue to be by Solihull MBC, it is important to involve the local communities more, in order to build feelings of 'ownership' and unlock more volunteer time. The initiatives of the Neighbourhood Managers and the parish or town councils should be encouraged and have greater financial support.

Local Area Parks/Local Green Spaces

316. These are areas of unrestricted public access are larger than 1.5 ha but smaller than 8 ha, and should be available within 1 km for all settlements greater than 300 people. These areas are considered strategic green space and they can vary in character. They may contain informal horticultural features, nature conservation areas, equipped playgrounds, provision for teenagers and young people, formal sports areas, informal green space areas, and artistically designed features or elements of public art. They should also be part of the local network of traffic-free walking and cycling routes. The design of these areas should follow generic good practice, and they should also contribute wildlife conservation by appropriate management measures.
317. All of the Borough meets this standard, with the exception of Berkswell (see Map 34).
318. The management mechanisms and community involvement issues identified in association with the Neighbourhood Green Spaces apply equally to the Local Area Parks/Local Green Spaces.

Principal Parks

319. The Principal Parks of Solihull are strategic green space and all have unrestricted public access, and are greater than 8 hectares in size. They may contain formal gardens, informal horticultural features, nature conservation areas, equipped children's playgrounds, skate parks or other provision for young people, formal sports facilities, and artistically designed features or elements of public art. They should be linked by, and contribute towards, the traffic-free network of routes for walking and cycling. A Principal Park should be available within 2 km of all settlements of 5000 population or over. All parks should have the Green Flag award.
320. Most of Solihull and the other major settlements fall within 2 km of a Principal Park, with the exception of the far north and the western edges of Lyndon and Olton (see Map 32). These deficiencies could be addressed by 'upgrading' one of the other larger parks in Lyndon or Olton. A new area is required in Castle Bromwich, and opportunities should be considered if they arise.
321. The Principal Parks are managed by Solihull MBC and some have Parks Action Groups supported by the Neighbourhood Managers. These Parks Action Groups have been valuable in drawing in the community, but are not wholly representative of the users of the parks. Young people are particularly poorly represented. The continuation and strengthening of the Parks Action Groups will be important to unlock external funding in support of parks improvements. They are also important for local consultation on specific proposals. However, efforts need to be made to ensure that the Parks Action Groups are more representative, and that ideas which emerge from them can be implemented.

322. The role of the Neighbourhood Managers is again crucial in the further development and continuation of the Parks Action Groups. Parks Action Groups should be established for all of the Principal Parks to support the Green Flag standard. In the short-medium term, except for perhaps one Group, these Groups are unlikely to become self-sustaining and will require the on-going support and secretariat of the Neighbourhood Managers. Groups should, where appropriate, be encouraged to extend their remit to the Other Major Parks and other green spaces.
323. The planning policies should be strengthened to ensure that all developments contribute towards the Principal Parks as areas of strategic green space.

Other Major Parks and Major Green Spaces

324. These areas all have unrestricted public access and are greater than 8 ha in size. They may contain similar features to the Principal Parks but can have a less formal character, with more nature conservation interest. This category can include Recreation Grounds (which are mainly football pitches with open access), and the green space between houses which are part of a larger landscape feature, village greens, accessible woodlands, and natural green space over 8 ha. Blythe Valley Country Park also falls within this category. These parks contribute towards the network of green spaces of over 8 ha and they should also be linked by, and contribute towards, the traffic-free network of routes for walking and cycling. These parks should be managed using the Green Flag principles, but will not generally be submitted for an award.
325. Earlswood Lakes, a British Waterway site, is just outside the boundary of Solihull but is a major attraction for Solihull residents. There are issues associated with the increasing number of visitors to the site, and Solihull has already offered support to the partnership managing the site to seek improvements, (UDP proposal R6/3). Earlswood Lakes have a long term importance for Solihull, and support can be justified as the site will fulfil a gap in the larger parks provision for the southwest corner of the Borough.
326. Olton Mere, another British Waterways site, currently has restricted public access. Solihull MBC has already identified the site as a potential joint project to develop more public access, and this would be consistent with the objectives of the Green Spaces Strategy. (UDP proposal R6/4).
327. The Other Major Parks of Solihull have no Parks Action Groups. Where there are no local groups able to take on this role, the Parks Action Group linked to the nearest Principal Park should be encouraged to expand their remit to include these areas.
328. The management of these Other Major Parks is by Solihull MBC, and this arrangement is likely to continue.

Strategic links, informal and wildlife sites

329. The following relate to the strategic routes and wildlife corridors, and to the more informal space such as Accessible Natural Green Space and Local Nature Reserves.

Strategic routes

330. The purpose of the strategic routes is to provide traffic-free opportunities, particularly for cycling and walking. These routes should provide for both utility and leisure journeys. They should link the green spaces and facilities with other main interest points, including the main shopping centres. The routes should be complemented, by secure cycle parking in key locations.

331. The network of traffic-free routes in Solihull is incomplete, and there are a number of major barriers to movement, particularly the motorways, major roads, railway lines, and airport. The north is particularly restricted, but there are problems with gaps in the routes throughout the Borough. There are particular problems linking the main Solihull shopping centre with cycling and walking routes, and the network of traffic-free cycle routes in rural Solihull is poor.

332. The UDP First Review policies are:

R7 RIGHTS OF WAY AND CYCLING

The Council will promote the benefits of walking and cycling as recreational pursuits by:

- (i) Protecting and enhancing the accessibility of existing routes, such as footpaths and bridleways, walks in parks, canal towpaths, town centre and village walks, green ways and recreational cycle routes; and*
- (ii) Identifying and prioritising the key new walking and cycling routes within the Borough and working to implement them when considering improvements to the network.*

Where appropriate, developers will be expected to contribute to the provision of new walking and cycling infrastructure through the use of Section 106 Agreements.

T16 CYCLING

The Council will promote the maintenance and improvement of Solihull's Strategic Cycle Network and will seek linkages with cycle ways and cycle routes beyond the Borough boundaries.

Developers will be required to make proper provision for cycling in new developments proposals. This will include links to the strategic cycle network, where appropriate, and the provision of secure cycle parking facilities. Financial contributions may be necessary in accordance with Policy IM1.

T17 WALKING

Developers will be required to recognise walking as an appropriate mode of travel and make proper provision in new developments to provide safe secure and attractive routes for pedestrians as an alternative to car use for short journeys. This will include links to the footpath network where appropriate. Financial contributions may be necessary in accordance with Policy IM1.

The Council will promote the maintenance and improvement of the network of footpaths and public rights of way in Solihull and will seek linkages with pedestrian routes outside the Borough boundaries in order to create opportunities for leisure including access to the countryside and the canal system.

333. The UDP policies are relevant and will assist the implementation of the Green Spaces Strategy. They may require strengthening as part of a review to ensure that the strategic routes receive developers' contributions from all developments.
334. The consultation work undertaken as part of the Green Spaces Strategy has demonstrated the importance and concerns about the 'green corridors'. About half of respondents to the household survey were satisfied with the green corridors, but 26% are dissatisfied, and there are particular concerns in Bickenhill, Kingshurst and Fordbridge, Olton, and Castle Bromwich. Overall, green corridors are the third most important priority for investment, behind parks and gardens and children's play facilities.

Canal routes

335. The objective for the canal towpaths in the urban areas is to have them all surfaced and accessible for walking, cycling and disabled access. The access points to the canal level need to be suitable for disabled users.
336. A high proportion of the canal towpaths within the urban areas have now been surfaced, and are providing good quality traffic-free routes for walking and cycling. However, the access points are sometimes steep and not usable by people with disabilities or children's buggies. It is British Waterways' objective to surface all of the remaining towpaths in the urban area, and to make the access points more accessible. British Waterways can offer 25% of the capital costs of the work, but would need to meet the remainder of the capital costs from other sources.
337. The current quality objective for the surface of the towpaths in the rural areas is to a level suitable for walking with boots or stout shoes. Most of the rural towpaths meet this level. If the surface was upgraded, there might be some opportunities to introduce more cycling on these routes, but this may be restricted because of conflicts with angling.

338. The quality of the canal network is also economically important as it also brings tourists to Solihull. The combined lockage figures at Lapworth and Knowle suggest approx 6500 boats pass through Solihull Borough each year, bringing in 26,000 visitors.

339. The UDP Policy R6 is relevant:

POLICY R6 WATERWAYS

The Council, in conjunction with British Waterways, will seek the greater exploitation of the recreational potential of the waterways in the Borough for both waterborne and other users, whilst safeguarding their heritage and natural environment. Development adjoining the canals will be required to protect and enhance the amenity of the canal corridor, and where feasible to improve public access to the use of the canal. Where appropriate, developers will be expected to contribute to towards the improvement of the canal corridor through the use of Section 106 Agreements.

340. The UDP proposals include the development of a canal strategy, and contributions towards improvements of the towpaths. (Proposals R6/1, and R6/2). However, this policy may require strengthening to ensure developers' contributions are made available from all developments, as part of the strategic network of routes.

341. The Strategy objectives for canals are therefore in line with UDP policies:

- to ensure that all of the towpaths are fully accessible and available for walking and cycling in the urban area.
- to ensure that the towpaths in the rural areas are walkable at all times of the year.
- to explore and develop wherever possible, cycle routes along the rural canals.

342. British Waterways has the management responsibility for canals and their towpaths.

Cycle routes

343. The Strategy has identified strategic cycling routes, including the established and proposed new sections of National Cycle Network route 53, the Greenway from Balsall Common towards Kenilworth, and a number of other smaller links. The complete map of cycling routes has recently been produced for Solihull, and it is now appropriate for these to be reviewed and priorities for investment identified. The Solihull Cycling Forum is a valuable advisory body in this respect.

344. Proposal R7/1 from the UDP recognises the need for a strategy for walking and cycling.

Walking routes

345. Most of the walking routes are public rights of way, which are legal highways and are protected by complex legislation. Solihull currently has a single Rights of Way Officer who has responsibility for reaching the authority's general targets for signage, obstructions etc., in addition to dealing with the complex legal discussions about changes to the network. This limits the authority's ability to act proactively.
346. The main strategic route is the Heart of England Way, which runs across the east side of the rural area of Solihull. The other route which is also identified in the UDP is the Blythe Valley Walkway (Proposals R7/2 and R7/3). Other than these routes, the most important routes are those shared with cycling, particularly the canal towpaths. There are however a large number of public rights of way (totalling 211 km) mostly within the rural area, and these could form the basis of more medium-long distance leisure routes.
347. There is a need for the authority to strengthen its work in this area and to maximise the opportunities offered by the rights of way network to provide for leisure walking. The first priority is to produce a Rights of Way Improvement Plan with the involvement of volunteers, in order for the authority to determine both the short-term and longer-term options that are available.
348. There are also opportunities to link walking routes to open access areas of farmland, which have been made available as part of grant-aid schemes, such as Countryside Stewardship.

Bridleways

349. The statutory bridleway network in Solihull is very small and fragmented. These routes are open to walkers, horse riders and cyclists, but they are so poor as to be of limited worth.
350. The legal opportunities for extending bridleways as part of the public rights of way network are extremely limited. Solihull MBC should therefore concentrate efforts to provide short links where this would make an existing bridleway more useful, and in working with farmers, landowners and horse riding groups to develop permissive or paid-for routes for riders, cyclists and walkers. These routes might be developed as part of agri-environment grant aid schemes. The opportunities to extend the legal and permissive routes for riding should be considered within a Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Accessible Natural Green Space

351. The Accessible Natural Green Space proposals arise from policies promoted by English Nature. These are areas both considered 'natural' and which have unrestricted public access. The first task for this assessment was to determine a definition of 'natural' as nothing specific has been recommended by English Nature. The definition used for Solihull is as follows.

'Natural' is space with generally low intervention by man e.g. woodlands, scrub, semi-improved grassland, ponds, river and canal sides, wetlands and geological features. These areas also include statutory designated wildlife sites such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Local Nature Reserves (LNR), non-statutory selected wildlife sites such as Sites of importance for Nature Conservation (SINC), and Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIG). These all have a 'high' natural status.

352. The 'natural' areas, based upon the Phase 1 Habitats Code Survey was used as the baseline. This survey is now somewhat dated, and some changes to the natural environment have occurred at the local level. However, the overall results remain valid. The map showing the 'Natural' areas is Map 4.

353. The next step was to determine the size of the minimum area to be considered for this standard. It was agreed that an area of 30 x 30 m (0.09 ha) was a minimum realistic size for Solihull, and reflect the extent of the mapping undertaken to date, and be a realistic minimum size for the this type of space.

354. The definition of 'accessible' has been taken to be areas with unrestricted access. Although many areas appear on the 'Natural Areas' map (Map 4), many are not available for public use. It was therefore necessary to overlay Map 5, Accessible Green Space, with the results of Map 4, Natural Areas to determine which areas are 'Accessible Natural Green Space'.

355. The standards for Accessible Natural Green Space which have been promoted by English Nature as part of their 'Space for Nature' report are:

- Accessible natural green space within 300 m of home (no minimum size).
- 1 accessible 20 ha site of natural green space within 2 km of home.
- 1 accessible 100 ha site of natural green space within 5 km of home.
- 1 accessible 500 ha site of natural green space within 10 km of home.

356. Of these only the first two are relevant, as there are no 'natural' sites of 100 ha plus within Solihull.

357. The Woodland Trust's document of 2004 entitled 'Space for People, Targeting action for woodland access' also suggests standards for accessible woodland. These 'standards' have been assessed by the Woodland Trust for the 2001 population of Solihull Borough and for the West Midlands as a whole, with the following results.

Figure 6: Woodland Trust access standards for Solihull

Woodland Trust Access Standard	% of Solihull population within 'standard'	% of West Midlands population within 'standard'
No person should live more than 500m from at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 2ha in size	3.57%	9.42%
There should also be at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 20ha within 4km of people's homes.	8.80%	54.66%

358. The Woodland Trust have further calculated that if all the private woodlands within Solihull were made fully accessible almost 40% of the current population of Solihull would fall within this standard. However, a further 174ha of woodland scattered across the Borough would be required, to meet the 500m standard. This substantial additional provision of woodland is unrealistic within Solihull, and the Woodland Trust's 'standards' have not been adopted. Instead, there is a strategic objective of creating more accessible woodland sensitive to the landscape characteristics of the Forest of Arden.

Smaller areas of Accessible Natural Green Space

359. The following was tested: Accessible Natural Green Space areas greater than 0.09 ha within 300 m of home for settlements over 300 population.

360. About 40% of the urban area is covered by this standard and there is little provision in the more rural areas of the authority. (see Map 18).

361. Changes to the management of small parts of parks and other green spaces to favour nature conservation and to accord with the principles of the Biodiversity Action Plan, would enable this standard to be achieved across most of Solihull. There would be limited impact on the management costs of such a change.

362. It is therefore proposed to adopt a local standard of:

362.1. One Accessible Natural Green Space area greater than 0.09 ha within 300 m of home for all settlements having a population greater than 300.

363. There is currently no UDP policy for accessible natural green space, although some of the existing topic strategies promote the standard.

Larger areas of Accessible Natural Green Space

364. Four sites in Solihull are Accessible Natural Green Space over 20 ha in size. When considered together and with a 2 km catchment, they only cover the east side of central Solihull and parts of Dorridge and Knowle. It appears that there is no realistic way of meeting this 20 ha standard within Solihull, even in the longer term, therefore alternative sized areas have been tested. Following testing the following standard is proposed:
- 364.1. One Accessible Natural Green Space area of 10 ha or greater within 2 km catchment of home for all settlements having a population of greater than 5000.
365. This strategic space standard gives a coverage of much of Solihull, with the exception of the western parts of Shirley East and Shirley West, north west Lyndon, Balsall Common, and the NEC area.
366. Opportunities should be taken to develop sites of at least 10 ha of Accessible Natural Green Space, as and when they arise, either by through new sites, or by extending existing sites. A planning policy setting out this standard is required, and all developments should contribute to these areas as part of the strategic network of green space.
367. The management of Accessible Natural Green Space areas is generally by Solihull MBC, with some volunteer support, particularly in relation to the Local Nature Reserves.
368. Although there are few areas of Accessible Natural Green Space of over 20 hectares within Solihull, opportunities should be encouraged which may provide more of this size and type of area. Such opportunities might arise in relation to farm diversification, or perhaps mineral restoration.

Wildlife sites and corridors

369. The current designated wildlife sites, and the wildlife corridors as identified in the Nature Conservation strategy, are illustrated in Map 9. One of the purposes of the Green Spaces Strategy is to further wildlife conservation, and these sites are therefore an integral part of the Strategic Vision, Map 38.
370. The designated wildlife sites are the most important natural habitats, but they are only a small part of the story. Many other smaller areas contribute towards the conservation of wildlife in Solihull, and the more that similar types of local environment can be linked by 'corridors' of similar habitat, the more successful the conservation measures can be. The wildlife corridors marked on the map are therefore only the most important ones. There are many others, such as ancient hedgerows and ditches.

371. The UDP First Review policies are:

ENV11 IMPORTANT NATURE CONSERVATION SITES

The Council will protect areas of national and local importance for nature conservation for their contribution to biodiversity. Proposals for development in or likely to affect Sites of Special Scientific Interest will be subject to special scrutiny. Where such development may have an adverse effect on a SSSI, either directly or indirectly, development will be permitted only if the reasons for the development clearly outweigh the nature conservation value of the site itself and the national policy to safeguard the network of such sites.

Development likely to have an adverse effect on a Local Nature Reserve, Site of Special Importance for Nature Conservation or Regionally Important Geological Site will be permitted only if the reasons for the development clearly outweigh the need to safeguard the nature conservation value of the site.

Where development is permitted, the Council will consider the use of conditions or planning obligations to provide appropriate mitigation or compensation measures.

ENV 12 CONSERVATION OF BIODIVERSITY

The Council will seek to conserve and enhance the biodiversity of the Borough, including its rivers, canals and their towpaths, other natural corridors, and sites and features that form part of the wildlife network and habitats identified in the Warwickshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan. Developers will be expected to take full account of the nature conservation value of land outside designated sites and to maximise the potential for habitat creation and enhancement.

372. The proposals outlined under this policy include the continuation of Project Kingfisher in the Cole Valley.
373. The UDP policies continue to be relevant, but could benefit from further strengthening by ensuring that all developments maintain the natural wildlife corridors within the sites, and that developers' contributions also support the improvement of the strategic wildlife corridors.
374. The household survey has demonstrated the importance people attach to wildlife areas. Many people use these areas at least occasionally, more than they do amenity green space. The greatest percentage of regular use is in Zone 6, which has a relatively large area of wildlife sites and woodlands. The concerns expressed in the survey were similar to those for Parks and Formal Gardens, namely cleanliness, safety, and landscaping/planting/grass maintenance. Overall wildlife and woodland areas come as the fourth priority for investment, behind parks and gardens, play areas and green corridors.

Local Nature Reserves

375. English Nature has produced a proposed local standard for Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), which has also been adopted regionally as a key biodiversity target. This is one hectare of Local Nature Reserve per 1000 population.

376. The current provision of LNRs across Solihull varies according to the character of the area. The following table illustrates this point, with the least provided being Zone 1, and the best provided being Zone 6.

Zone	Area per zone (hectares)	Zone population (2001)	Area of LNR per 1000 (hectares)
1	5.2	36376	0.14
2	27.7	23385	1.18
3	14.6	34644	0.42
4	15.7	22801	0.69
5	38.5	31711	1.21
6	93.0	50601	1.84
Total/average	194.7	199518	0.98

377. The UDP proposal ENV 11/3 states that Solihull MBC will “establish new Local Nature Reserves, in conjunction with English Nature”. The explanatory text suggests that new sites will be sought in areas that are ‘deficient’.

378. Although overall the current provision of LNRs within Solihull almost fulfils the proposed standard, the authority would wish to add to the stock of LNRs as opportunities arise, particularly in areas with a current low level of this type of site. The standard for LNRs proposed is therefore:

378.1. A minimum of one hectare of Local Nature Reserve per 1000 people.

379. The management of these areas is primarily the responsibility of Solihull MBC, but there is a strong history of conservation volunteers. These are currently being supported by the Local Nature Reserve Officer. However, as with many similar volunteer groups, the average age of participants is increasing and the numbers of volunteers is decreasing. Efforts need to be made to attract new volunteers to support the practical management of the LNRs.

Generic design good practice

380. CABE Space has highlighted the need for good design of green spaces in a number of their advisory documents. The criteria for the design of green spaces will form part of development briefs for new areas of residential, commercial or industrial developments. The following points however should be incorporated within the design guidance.

381. Green spaces should:

- General characteristics
 - Be part of a network of green spaces providing traffic segregated routes through residential or other areas with links to bus stops and walking and cycling routes.
 - Designed to create a sense of place and provide a setting for adjoining buildings, with 'sun traps'.
 - Be 'cared for' in their general appearance.
 - Have views out of or across the space, ideally to local landmarks.
- Accessibility
 - Be traversed by hard surfaced paths, where appropriate, which are suitable for wheelchairs, wide enough for two wheelchairs to pass, and broadly following desire lines (but avoiding straight lines wherever possible).
- Planting and biodiversity.
 - Have a good balance of mown grassed areas, in varying sizes (large enough for informal recreation such as kickabouts or mini-soccer where appropriate) and mixed indigenous and ornamental species, and ages of trees or shrubs, but with a predominantly open character.
 - Have a range of habitat types – i.e. woodland, ponds, grasslands, and hedgerows.
 - Have buffer or shelter planting as necessary.
- Facilities and features
 - May incorporate provision for children or teenagers but such facilities should not be central to or the main focus of the spaces.
 - Have adequate litter bins.
 - Have signs indicating that dog fouling should be picked up and disposed of responsibly.
 - May incorporate public art or heritage features (e.g. statues).
 - Have seats, in both sunny and shaded areas.
 - Have adequate safety measures adjacent to potentially dangerous areas of water (e.g. rivers and canals).
 - Have path lighting where appropriate.
 - Have passive surveillance from nearby properties, but in a way that respects the privacy of occupants.

CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUNDS

Introduction

382. This section considers the provision of children's equipped playgrounds in Solihull, in particular the provision of Local Equipped Play Areas (LEAPs) and Neighbourhood Equipped Play Areas (NEAPs), as based on the National Playing Fields Association standards.

Current situation

Users

383. Children's playgrounds cater primarily for the under 12s. In 2001 Solihull had a slightly lower population of this age group compared with the national average for the under 12's, accounting for 14% of the total resident population, compared with a national figure of 16%.

384. The proportion of under 12s in each zone in Solihull however varies (see Figure 7). For example, in Zone 6, 17% of the population is under 12, with the highest numbers in Kinghurst and Fordbridge, and in Smiths Wood. At the other extreme, Silhill ward has the fewest u12s, although the average for the Zone was 13%. This means that the demand for playground provision varies across the authority.

Figure 7: Population of under12s for equipped children's playgrounds

Age	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4	Zone 5	Zone 6	TOTAL
0 - 4	1,845	1,168	1,767	1,285	1,664	3,467	
05-Sep	2,136	1,490	2,235	1,500	2,111	3,991	
Oct-14	2,253	1,656	2,392	1,548	2,357	4,235	
TOTAL u12 years	4,591	2,998	4,491	3,189	4,271	8,628	28,168

Total population each zone	36,376	23,385	34,644	22,801	31,711	50,601	199,518
% of u12 years each zone	13	13	13	14	13	17	14

385. The population of Solihull is anticipated to remain constant over the next few years, although there will be new housing. New development of family units usually results in an in-migration of young adults, with a following peak in young children. It is likely that these development areas

will require specific local provision of playgrounds to meet the new demand. Over the rest of Solihull, it is likely that the population will age, resulting in a slight fall in demand for children's playgrounds. This is taken into account in the proposed standard.

Ownership and management

386. All of the Local Equipped Play Areas (LEAPS) and Neighbourhood Equipped Play Areas (NEAPs) are owned and managed by Solihull MBC. There are also some play areas owned and managed by the parish councils, but these are of a lower standard.

Existing policies, plans and strategies

ODPM: Research on developing accessible play space (2004)

387. This report suggests that the implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 for play provision is important but this must be done flexibly and with imagination to make play spaces fully inclusive. The best designed local provision often results from local discussions with families.

UDP First Review

388. The relevant policy is:

POLICY R4 NEW AND IMPROVED OPEN SPACE

(iii) In areas where there is a shortage of children's play areas, as identified in the Play Area Strategy for Solihull, the provision of new children's play areas, or a contribution towards their provision in the area;

Play Area Strategy 2003-2013

389. This strategy considers the provision of facilities for children and young people up to 17 years. In this section reference is only made to those sections of the 2003 strategy that apply to equipped play areas. Issues and proposals relating to provision for older children and teenagers is addressed in the section 'Provision for Teenagers and Young People'.

390. Much of the background research for this 2003 publication was undertaken in 1998, linked to the work on the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy, but with additional consultation with Residents' Panels. The research showed that children's playgrounds, with seating and areas for ball games, were the most important facilities in parks.

391. Key findings of the Play Area Strategy:

- There were 32 sites with children's play equipment.
- Solihull MBC sites are only located within the built up area of Solihull.
- In rural areas, provision is primarily by parish councils.
- All of the 14 Principal Parks have play equipment.
- Others sites are on recreation grounds and larger areas of open space.
- There are significant gaps in LEAPs and NEAPs in parts of the Borough. The north is largely covered, but south has gaps in provision.
- There are some overlapping catchments.
- Some sites are poor and with poor play value (based on NPFA criteria).
- Most Solihull MBC sites are fenced to exclude dogs.
- Dickens Heath has no provision for over 4 years.
- In 1999/2000 the Council agreed a 3 year programme of investment for both capital and revenue.
- There are problems with anti-social behaviour in some play areas, plus drugs and alcohol abuse.

The Strategic policy recommendations

392. The following recommendations are from the Play Area Strategy:

- Adoption of NPFA standards for LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs.
- "To create play areas in Solihull that are welcoming, safe, attractive, accessible and meet the needs of children and young people in a balanced and fair way across the Borough".
- Equity
 - Target 1: Commence implementation of a new play area classification by April 2003 and complete on a phased basis by January 2013.
- Community Safety
 - Target 2: Implement safety measures in play areas and report to Environment and Leisure Cabinet annually.
 - Target 3: By 2003 Park Ranger Service on all Premium play area sites. The service to be linked to education, community safety and community involvement.
 - Target 4: Annual reductions in the number of recorded incidents of antisocial behaviour and other crimes such as drug and alcohol abuse in Solihull's play areas.
- Environmental Enhancement
 - Target 5: By 2013 implement environmental enhancement programme on all play area sites.

- Target 6: To attract new sources of funding each year to support the work programme.
- Accessibility and Social Inclusion
 - Target 7: By 2013 implement improved public accessibility to all play area sites.
- Funding would be considered under the following headings:
 - Capital/revenue budget.
 - Leasing (of sites and equipment).
 - Sponsorship/Advertising.
 - Regeneration.
 - Rationalisation.
 - Partnership.
 - Developer Contributions.

Local Standards proposed by the Play Area Strategy

393. The following local standards are proposed in the Play Strategy:

- Use of NPFA standards for LEAPs, NEAPs and LAPs.
- Introduces concept of 4 categories of provision:
 - Category 1 = Premium site = provision of NEAP and young people provision (therefore provision for all ages up to 17 years).
 - Category 2 = Neighbourhood site = NEAP.
 - Category 3 = Community site = LEAPs and LAPs.
 - Category 4 = Local = others to address gaps in provision.
- LAPs, LEAPs and NEAPs to be visible from surrounding public places.

Action plan and updating

394. A detailed action plan was provided with estimated costs. Some new and improved provision has been made but the action plan has generally progressed more slowly than anticipated.

Summary of the Play Area Strategy

395. This is a good current strategy, with its main weaknesses being the reliance on the 1998 parks research, and slow progress on its action plan.
396. The NPFA standards for LEAPs (400 m catchment) and NEAPs (1000m catchment) accessibility and hierarchy are well accepted nationally, and are appropriate as the standard for Solihull. However, there is need for an additional elements; a standard of provision per 1000 population, and possibly play value linked to provision for people with disabilities or

impairments. There is also a need to consider standards of provision in the rural areas.

397. The proposal for LAPs is now not being progressed, as this has been incorporated into the design guidance for green space.
398. This strategy needs some updating to support any bids for external funding, grant aid or negotiations for developers' contributions.

Audit findings

399. The location of Local Equipped Play Areas (LEAPs) and Neighbourhood Equipped Play Areas (NEAPs) are mapped on Map 12. These are based on the National Playing Fields Association categorisations and are:
 - 399.1. *Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP)*
This should comprise a 1000 sq.m. activity area with a 30m buffer zone, a minimum of eight pieces of equipment and a 600 sq.m. hard surfaced area.
 - 399.2. *Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP)*
This should comprise a 400 sq.m. activity area with a 20m buffer zone and at least five pieces of equipment.
400. The current provision is listed in Figure 8 below.
401. Also recorded on Map 12 is the location of other play areas, primarily those provided by parish or town councils. These do not meet the NPFA standards but do fulfil some local needs.
402. The best provided zone for equipped children's play areas is Zone 6, where there are 1.3 play areas per 1000 children under 12 years. The least well provided are Zones 3 and 4, where there is less than one play area per 1000 children under 12 years. (see Appendix 8).
403. LEAPs and NEAPs were both mapped with a 400 m catchment to determine the overall geographical spread of play facilities (see Map 28). The map shows that there are many areas that have no access to any play provision within 400 m, although there are some overlapping catchments in the north.
404. The actual boundaries of the play sites have not been accurately recorded on the GIS mapping system. It has therefore been assumed that the size of the areas is the minimum allowed for the National Playing Fields Association standards for LEAPs and NEAPs.
405. The quality of the LEAPs and NEAPs were assessed as part of the Play Area Strategy using the NPFA Play Value assessment, but these have not been reviewed.

Figure 8: Current LEAPs and NEAPs

ZONE	LEAPS	NEAPs
1	Elmdon Heath Elmdon Coppice Elmdon Park	Olton Park Barn Lane Rec
2	Lode Heath/Hermitage Road	Malvern/Brueton Park Tudor Grange Park
3	Palmers Rough Colebrook Playing Fields	Shirley Park Hillfield Park
4	Brookside POS	Marston Green Lavender Hall
5	Dorridge Park Hanbury Road Jobs Close Dickens Heath Bentley Heath	
6	Kingshurst Park Cole Bank Park Mull Croft	Bluebell Rec Chapelhouse Forth Drive Babbs Mill Meriden Park Lanchester Park Burton Farm, Tamar Drive Beechcroft

LEAPs

406. The mapping exercise shows that at least twice the current number of LEAPS would be needed to deal with the gaps in geographical provision within the urban area, and the coverage in the rural areas is poor.
407. The current provision of LEAPs per 1000 population was calculated on a zone basis. This shows that there is 0.003 ha per 1000 people based on the 'standard' minimum size LEAP activity area.

NEAPs

408. The NEAPs were mapped with a 1000m catchment (Map 29). This shows a good spread of NEAPs in the north, but significant gaps in provision in many other parts of Solihull. There are no NEAPs in Zone 5.
409. The provision of NEAPs per 1000 population was calculated on a zone basis, with the result that current provision of NEAPs (activity area alone) averages at 0.008 ha per 1000 population.

Comparison with other authorities, and best practice

410. Many local authorities have adopted the NPFA standards for LEAPs and NEAPs for accessibility and the hierarchy of play sites, including those that have already undertaken a PPG17 assessment. There are no other 'national standards' used so widely.

411. The quantity of play sites per 1000 population is more variable and is not consistently included within other authorities' standards. The Play Area Strategy undertook a comparative exercise that showed the following in relation to the CIPFA family group:

Ratio of play areas per 1000
population aged 0-15 years

Solihull	1 : 1299
Dudley	1 : 1093
Sefton	1 : 823

412. Of the other 20 authorities used for comparison, only four had a worse ratio than Solihull. These were Coventry, Greenwich, Bexley and Harrow. No comparison was made with Birmingham.

413. The provision of playgrounds in rural areas has been addressed in a number of different ways by other authorities. Some authorities have simply listed the priority settlements for new provision, as for North Devon. Others have suggested a minimum number of residential units before on-site provision is required, as for Barnsley.

414. The other aspect of local standards considered for adoption by some authorities is that of a minimum Play Value. These authorities include Harlow who recently completed their PPG17 assessment. However the issue of Play Value is contentious, and has yet to be as fully established as the LEAPs and NEAPs standards for accessibility and size. The NPFA is the leading organisation, but the guidance is not provided in a published form. The 2004 ODPM report on accessible play areas also appears to suggest that the Play Value criteria need more consideration, particularly in relation to provision for children with impairments.

Issues and priorities from consultation

Household survey

415. The household survey showed that play areas, together with space for children and for young people, are amongst the most important facilities for the younger age groups. They are the most frequently used spaces by households where the person responding to the survey was under 35 years, and there is still a high level of use by the households where the respondent to the survey was 35-50 years. All age groups, including pensioners, made some use of play areas.

416. Overall, although 37% of people were satisfied with the play areas, 33% were dissatisfied. There were very high rates of dissatisfaction with the play areas in Kingshurst and Fordbridge (70%), and Chelmsley Wood (51%).

417. Comparison between zones is useful. This shows:

Zone	% satisfied with play areas/space for youth	% dissatisfied with play areas/space for youth	% stating that play area/space for youth is the highest priority for action
1	36	30	18
2	36	26	13
3	36	31	20
4	28	36	17
5	31	34	23
6	28	47	26

418. Those people with children under 12 years consider play areas for young children as one of the highest priorities, with 51% wanting improvements. When asked what were the priorities for action, more play areas for younger children and improved play areas for young children were the highest priorities for those aged under 35, and still a high priority for those aged 35-50 years.

419. For the household survey overall however, a higher priority was given to 'more facilities for older children/teenagers', which consistently came within the top four priorities across each of the Strategy zones. This suggests that although there are serious concerns about the play area provision, the highest priority for action is connected with providing more for the older children/teenagers, and hopefully, as a consequence, reducing levels of vandalism and misuse of playgrounds.

420. The key issues arising from the stakeholder consultation meetings included a lack of provision within play areas for people with disabilities, and concern about poor play provision in the rural areas.

421. The recent consultation work has therefore reconfirmed the findings from the Play Area Strategy research, and given some additional focus as to the priorities for investment. However, this should be linked to measures to reduce levels of misuse of the sites provided through positive initiatives for the older children and teenagers.

Financial issues

422. At 2005 prices the cost of new LEAPs is around £30,000, and a new NEAP around £50,000, excluding site acquisition. The anticipated lifetime of new facilities should depend upon the level of use and the level of regular maintenance, however the level of misuse and vandalism is a key factor. The budget for play areas must therefore reflect both capital and maintenance/replacement costs.

423. All LEAPs and NEAPs are currently provided by Solihull MBC, and almost all of these are within the urban areas. The cost of developing and maintaining playgrounds to LEAP and NEAP standards in the more rural areas has been beyond the finances of the parish councils alone. At present there are limited partnerships with the parish councils, and no general capital or revenue support to them from Solihull MBC which would enable the parishes to develop such facilities.
424. The use of developers' contributions to date has not been maximised. For example, although there is major residential development in the Dickens Heath area, the agreed new play facility will only cater for toddlers. This provision falls well short of the proposed local standard.

Proposals

Local standard

425. Taking into account the factors identified above, the following local standard is proposed for equipped playgrounds.
- 425.1. LEAPs with a maximum catchment distance 400 m from housing in all settlements greater than 500 population. Minimum provision of one LEAP per 4300 population in urban areas. The LEAP should be inclusive, providing for people with a range of abilities and disabilities.
- 425.2. NEAPs with a maximum catchment distance of 1000 m in all settlements of greater than 1000 population. Minimum provision of 1 NEAP per 8600 population in urban areas. The NEAP should be inclusive, providing for people with a range of abilities and disabilities.
- 425.3. Where a NEAP is provided, this can take the place of a LEAP if it is within 400 m.

Management

426. The management of LEAPs and NEAPs should remain the primary responsibility of Solihull MBC, unless a site is developed in association with a statutory partner such as a parish council, in which case the responsibility could be the partner's confirmed by a long term legal agreement.
427. Where developers provide LEAPs and NEAPs as part of their developers' contributions, these sites should be managed long term by either Solihull MBC or by the parish or town council.

Financial

428. Solihull MBC should consider developing formal partnerships with the parish and town councils to support the development of new LEAPs and NEAPs in areas falling below the standard. This partnership could apply to both the capital and revenue costs of these facilities.
429. Developers' contributions should be sought towards the provision of new facilities, or the improvement of existing sites where there is already sufficient provision. Commuted sums should be linked to the sites for long-term maintenance. These sums should reflect the average maintenance/replacement costs of the facilities within the relevant Strategy zone.

Implications

430. In order to fulfil the proposed local standard, the total number of LEAPs in Solihull would need to rise from 15 to around 46, and the number of NEAPs from 16 to around 23 sites.
431. The priorities for new or improved provision of LEAPs are: north Solihull, Hockley Heath, Cheswick Green, Balsall Common, and much of the urban area of Solihull. Around 31 new sites might be required.
432. The priorities for new or improved provision of NEAPs are: Hockley Heath, Cheswick Green, Meriden, Dickens Heath, Balsall Common, Hampton in Arden, Dorridge. It may be able possible to upgrade one of the LEAPs in Dorridge. About 7 new NEAPs may be needed.
433. The approximate capital cost of providing new LEAPs and NEAPs to meet the proposed standard, assuming that Meriden requirements can be provided through a single NEAP and one of the sites in Dorridge can be upgraded (for £8,000) is around £1 million at 2005 prices. (see Appendix 9).
434. The achievement of this level of capital investment will need to be a long term goal of the Strategy, and will only be met through a combination of a number of potential funding sources, including grant aid, lottery funds, and developers' contributions. The capital allocated to new provision must be supplemented by adequate revenue funding to ensure effective long-term maintenance of sites.
435. Alongside any new provision of equipped playgrounds, need to be initiatives to reduce levels of vandalism and misuse of the sites. These initiatives might include more rangers and better policing, a 'parks watch' type scheme or youth or sport development schemes as diversionary activities for older children and teenagers.

436. An updating of the Play Area Strategy will be key to unlocking funding from grant aid and other external funds such as lottery. The updating should include prioritisation of the provision of play areas and the confirmation of capital and maintenance costs of provision, the latter by zone.
437. The Council's UDP policy will require review and strengthening to incorporate the proposed local standard for play, in addition to referring to the (updated) Play Area Strategy.

PROVISION FOR TEENAGERS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Introduction

438. This section considers the provision of facilities for teenagers and other young people, and their use of the green spaces within Solihull. The facilities considered in this section include skate parks and multi-use games areas (MUGAs).

Current situation

Users

439. Young people's facilities are particularly aimed at the teenage age group, but includes those from 12 years upwards.

440. The percentage of people aged 12 to 17 years in 2001 across the zones varied slightly, from 7% in Zone 1 up to 9% in Zone 6.

Ownership and management

441. All of the facilities specifically provided for young people, such as skate parks, are owned and managed by Solihull MBC.

Existing policies, plans and strategies

UDP First Review

442. The relevant policy is:

POLICY R4 NEW AND IMPROVED OPEN SPACE

The provision of facilities for youth activities or a contribution towards their provision in the area.

The justification provided in the UDP includes:

“Both the Council’s Sports and Recreation Plan and the Solihull Crime and Disorder Strategy identify a need for youth activities. Such facilities could include skateboard and BMX parks, basketball hoops and shelters.”

Play Area Strategy 2003-2013

443. This strategy written in 2003, specifically addressed the need for better provision for those aged 13-17 years as it had identified that there was limited provision for this age group. The strategic policy recommendations included:
- A commitment to creating meeting areas for young people in agreed locations as an alternative to street gatherings.
 - Provision of diversionary activities for young people in conjunction with the 'Parks Strategy'.
444. It recommended that the young people's meeting areas should be designed after detailed consultation with local young people, but that there should be no set format.
445. However, the Play Area Strategy did propose a number of categories of play provision, of which Category 1 sites were to provide play provision for the under 5s, up to provision for those around 17 years. These were termed 'Premium Sites'.
446. Some of these Premium Sites were to have/did have skate parks, for which there were 2 categories:
- principal sites – expected to draw young people from a wide area. Significant provision with good public transport links, ideally located next to sports facilities. Wide range of equipment from 'beginner units' to fast, highly challenging ramps to allow the full range of skill levels to be catered for within the park.
 - local sites – 4-6 pieces of equipment including half or quarter pipe, jump ramp and grind rails.
447. Since the adoption of the Play Area Strategy, there has been the completion of the Principal Skate park at Tudor Grange, and there is now some facility provision for young people within all of the Green Spaces Strategy zones, with the exception of Zone 1.
448. The provision of Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs) to date has been on an opportunistic basis, and they are not supported by any programmes of sports development or other youth programmes. There is a need for a clearer strategy of provision associated with long-term programmes of opportunities for young people.

Audit findings

449. The sites of skate parks and other youth provision are identified on Map 30. There is at least one site per Strategy zone with the exception of Zone 1.
450. Multi-Use Games areas are provided at:
- Bentley Heath.
 - Shirley Park.
 - Bluebell Recreation Ground.
 - Burtons Green.
 - Marston Green Park.
451. A further MUGA is proposed for Hillfield Park, to be in place by early 2006.
452. In addition there are basketball courts at Babbs Mill, Chapelhouse (also has a kick-about area with kickwall), and Cole Bank Park (also has a kick-about area with 2 kick walls).

Comparison with other authorities, and best practice

453. Some authorities have been specific in their provision for teenagers and young people, for example Cambridge which requires one Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) per 3000, and includes outdoor youth provision within the local standard figure for play facilities. Other authorities have been less specific, with an approach similar to that already adopted by Solihull within the UDP.
454. There are no 'national standards' for youth provision, although Sport England amongst others has previously provided a 'model' for youth provision in relation to the Outdoor Basketball Initiative.

Issues and priorities from consultation

Household survey

455. The household survey showed the level of concern about provision for young people. In relation to overall improvements sought for green space within Solihull, 'More facilities for older children/teenagers' came out the highest of all. When considered by individual zone, it again came out as the highest priority for Zones 4 and 5, and was within the top 4 priorities for each of the other zones.
456. These priorities are likely to be related to the main concern about the general use of green spaces; that users often feel unsafe, or that there is anti-social behaviour by others.

Overall across the authority, this is the second most important reason for people not using green spaces as much as they would like, and it is the main reason within Zones 1 and 6.

Consultation meetings

457. The themes emerging from the wider stakeholder meetings reflect the results of the household survey. These were:

- There is a need to better provide for young people, particularly in the north and rural parts of the authority. Positive provision for girls is particularly important.
- There is a reasonable network of skate parks and other 'young people's' provision across much of the authority area, but these facilities do not appear to be fully meeting the needs of young people. Other initiatives may need to be identified which will encourage positive uses of green spaces and facilities by young people.
- Crime and the fear of crime are the main reasons why people do not use the green spaces as freely as they would like.
- There is a need to be flexible in the provision of new facilities for young people, to both reflect the needs of the local young people themselves, and management/anti social behaviour concerns of the local communities. In some places, a shared play site (as envisaged by the Play Area Strategy) is appropriate, in others separate sites may be better. The nature of the provision needs to reflect the needs of the young people locally, and they need to be involved in the design process.

458. The views of young people themselves, canvassed via the Youth Council in April 2005 showed the value young people placed on their green spaces, and also the problems from their perspective. Their positive comments were:

- That areas of natural green space are important to many young people.
- Parks provide an opportunity for active recreation and give young people a place to meet.
- That the skate parks are well used.

459. Their concerns included:

- Vandalism
 - Damage to play equipment and other street furniture, and the fact that repairs are often not undertaken sufficiently quickly.

- Safety and security
 - Many young people feel unsafe when using parks because some areas are taken over by “gangs”. Whilst these gangs are often few in number they are highly visible and are often those responsible for much of the vandalism which takes place.
 - It was felt that all young people are being viewed as part of these groups when in fact the majority are law abiding and wish to use open spaces for legitimate purposes.
- Litter and dog mess
 - This was an issue in both natural areas and formal parks.
- Some lack of facilities
 - More benches, shelters and toilets were requested although there was a recognition that these would need to be sensitively placed in order to avoid them becoming havens for drug users.

460. The Youth Council’s proposals included:

- More Rangers/community wardens.
- Greater police presence/closer co-operation with the police.
- Improved/increased street furniture.
- Improved maintenance/repair procedure for equipment.
- Involve young people more in the design and location of facilities.
- Increased lighting was seen by some as important, but others expressed concern that it would encourage groups to congregate.

461. In summary, the consultation exercises suggest that positive opportunities for young people are amongst the highest priorities for green space provision and management. The issue of anti-social behaviour impacts upon everyone using these areas, and there is a real fear of crime.

462. There is a reasonable spread of facilities for young people, although more could be done. Perhaps more important is a combination of other positive support for young people and more diversionary activities, together with better policing and a strengthened ranger service.

Financial issues

463. All the skate parks and other youth provision are provided and managed by Solihull MBC. The cost of provision depends upon the site and the facilities provided.

464. The revenue budgets for youth work, sports development and the ranger service are limited. Currently there is no scope to increase these services to help tackle the anti-social behaviour and provide positive activities for all young people.

Proposals

Local standard

465. Taking into account the current provision and the issues identified above it is proposed that the current level of provision is maintained as:

- 465.1. Skate and other youth provision: one site per zone. Details of provision to be determined on a site-by-site basis.
- 465.2. Multi-use games areas to be provided according to future MUGA strategy.

Management

466. It is proposed that these sites remain under the management of Solihull MBC, unless there is a formal partnership with the relevant parish or town council to provide and manage these sites.

Financial

467. The priorities for teenagers and young people are to:

- improve the scope of positive opportunities for young people, particularly through community development and youth work initiatives.
- maintain and enhance the existing network of facilities.
- develop multi-use games areas linked to youth development programmes.

468. Developers' contributions for all types of development should therefore be sought towards these objectives.

Implications

469. The clear priority in terms of provision for teenagers and other young people is the need for positive opportunities, which may not always be specifically green space or site related. The funding for this may come from a variety of sources, including reallocation of some budgets within the authority, from external grant aid, or from developers' contributions. The latter will require more detailed consideration, as the setting up of an independent body such as a Community Development Trust may be more effective than seeking developers' contributions towards general programmes of work within Solihull MBC.

470. The priorities emerging from this section also suggest some clear priorities for partnership working between local agencies, including the Police. These may need further development via the LSP and other inter-agency discussions.

471. The level of maintenance of current facilities has been identified as an issue, and may require additional revenue budget to address effectively. There is also some need for additional capital investment for specific facilities particularly within the rural areas. This new provision needs to be sensitive to local circumstances and reflect the views of local young people, as well as others within their communities.
472. The UDP policy should be retained but expanded to justify developers' contributions towards community development, particularly aimed at young people.
473. The provision of Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs) needs further detailed consideration, ideally through a topic strategy which links current and future provision with programmes of youth development.

OTHER OUTDOOR SPORTS

Introduction

474. This section provides the justification for the provision of space for sports such as bowls, athletics and tennis. It excludes the provision of synthetic turf pitches. It also acknowledges the importance of the Gaelic Football site on Catherine de Barnes Lane. Provision for football, cricket and rugby is dealt with under 'Grass Playing Fields'.
475. Golf courses are specifically excluded from this section for the purposes of the Local Standard, as they take large areas of land, and all of the courses are privately owned, with the exceptions of a putting green in Shirley Park, and pitch and putt course in Tudor Grange Park. The success or otherwise of golf courses depends upon the supply and demand for the sport, and the quality of management of the courses.

Current situation

Users

476. The users of sports sites varies according to the sport itself, for example most of those using athletics tracks are likely to be young, while those attracted to bowls are likely to be older.

Ownership and management

477. The ownership and management of sports facilities varies according to the type of facility, and the sport itself. Ownership may be local authority, sports club, private members club, or parish or town council.

Existing policies, plans and strategies

UDP First Review

478. The relevant policies are:

POLICY R1 SPORT AND RECREATION FACILITIES

The Council will support the provision of a range of new and improved sports and recreation facilities, and the consolidation and improvement of existing facilities, providing that:

- (i) Any major facilities are located in or on the edge of town centres, or at education centres,*
- (ii) Other facilities are accessible to their potential users, and where appropriate capable of being served by public transport and integrated with existing facilities; and*
- (iii) Any development accords with Environment and Countryside policies of this Plan.*

Proposals for major facilities outside the town centres and education centres will not be permitted, unless it can be demonstrated that there are no alternative opportunities within or on the edge of town centres, and the proposed location is highly accessible by public transport.

Proposal R1/2 LOCAL ASSESSMENT OF NEED

The Council will undertake local assessment of the need for sport and recreation facilities, in line with advice from Sport England and PPG17, and will set local standards for provision of facilities.

479. There are no sports specific strategies or recreation plans for Solihull MBC that address the requirements for, or standards of, provision of facilities such as bowls or tennis.
480. The larger facilities, such as athletics tracks, need to be considered on a sub-regional basis, and the modelling provided by Sport England is the best guide to these requirements. The Sport England model is currently available for the major built facilities including sports halls, pools, athletics tracks and synthetic turf pitches. An additional reason for not specifically including synthetic turf pitches within the open space standard is that most of these are now being located on school sites, and there are already a number available to the community within and on the boundaries of Solihull.

Audit findings

481. The location of synthetic turf pitches and their availability to the community is illustrated by Map 27. The Gaelic Football site on Catherine de Barnes Lane is identified on Map 16, which shows all grass playing fields. This site has two pitches with changing, clubhouse and car parking.
482. Other sports facilities, such as outdoor bowls, have not been specifically recorded for the Green Spaces project, but will be added to the Council's database as part of the GIS work on the Implementation Plan

Comparison with other authorities, and best practice

483. Sefton Council, one of the CIPFA family group of authorities has adopted 0.4 ha per 1000 people for sports excluding pitch based sports, but the other CIPFA family group authorities have not adopted any specific figure.
484. The National Playing Fields "Six Acre Standard" includes 0.4 ha per thousand population for sports other than pitch-based sports. This allowance applies only to sites in long-term secure community use.

Issues and priorities from consultation

485. The household survey did not differentiate between grass playing fields and other sports such as bowls, therefore direct interpretation of the findings are not possible. However, in general terms, the following points emerge:

- Overall 30% are happy with the sports facilities, whereas 22% are dissatisfied.
- There are high levels of dissatisfaction in Meriden, Chelmsley Wood, Kingshurst and Fordbridge, Olton, Knowle and Blythe.
- Outdoor sports facilities are used by about 5% of the population across all age groups, but the highest level of use overall is in Zone 6 at 9%.
- The priorities for investment for sports (including pitch sports) are medium-low for most respondents to the survey.

486. The provision of space for sports other than grass playing fields, did not emerge as an issue at the various consultation meetings.

Financial issues

487. There are no specific financial issues associated with these uses of green spaces. The costs of provision and of maintenance will depend upon their ownership and management. There are however some general issues associated with vandalism which can impact upon provision.

Proposals

Local standard

488. As there is no specific evidence to suggest particular levels of provision per 1000 population, but there is need to provide for space for a variety of activities, the following standard is proposed, based on 0.4 ha per 1000 for outdoor sports (excluding grass pitches) and 0.016 per 1000 ha for Gaelic Football (based on existing 2 pitches each 1.58 ha). This excludes provision for golf and the provision of synthetic turf pitches.

488.1. Other outdoor sports: 0.42 ha per 1000 in new developments.

Management

489. The management of sports facilities should continue to be on a site-by-site basis, reflecting the nature of the sport and the involvement of clubs.

490. Where one use ceases, for example a tennis club, the sites should be reused for sport, recreation or other green space use rather than developed.

Financial

491. There are no financial implications with this standard.

Implications

492. The standard allows for long-term flexibility of provision. The standard is not a minimum, and there may be areas of the authority that currently have more space than this standard, which is primarily a guide for new developments.
493. There will be fluctuations in the demand for different sports over time, reflecting demographic changes and trends in different sports. Sites that become underused should therefore be made available for other sports activities, or be used for wildlife or other green space use, rather than being allowed to be lost to development.
494. The UDP policy should be retained and expanded to include both the proposed local standard, and to protect this type of space from development.

ALLOTMENTS

Introduction

495. This section considers the provision of allotments within Solihull, those owned and managed by both Solihull MBC and others.

Current situation

Users

496. Solihull MBC undertook a survey of allotment plot holders on the authority's sites during 2004. The survey has valuable information which can be extrapolated to the other allotment sites in Solihull. The plot holders are:

- 71% male.
- 62% over 60 years; 32% 41-60 years, and 6% under 40 years.
- 75% not in full employment.

497. Of those responding to the survey 98% said that they were likely to retain their plot the following year, and on the Solihull MBC sites there is an average occupancy of 86%, but with 100% occupancy on 8 out of the 13 sites. There has been a 14% increase in occupancy since January 2004.

Ownership and management

498. Solihull currently has 13 allotment sites, of which 5 are Statutory allotments, and 5 are managed by the Allotment Association (see Appendix 10). Although Solihull MBC would like the remaining 8 to become self-managed, there is reluctance amongst the plot-holders to move in this direction.

499. There are also 6 sites owned and managed by the parish and town councils, and one site (Gospel Lane) which is owned and managed by Birmingham City Council, but which falls within the Solihull boundary. All of the allotment sites are available to local residents, including the Birmingham City Council site.

500. There is one Community Gardening scheme at Kingshurst Allotment site, which resulted from an initiative of the plot holders at the site. The scheme is supported by Solihull MBC as part of their grant-aided Green Scheme, and it works with people at risk, the unemployed, and excluded young people. The scheme started in 2003 and is now half-way through.

Existing policies, strategies and plans

UDP First Review

501. The relevant policy is:

POLICY R5 ALLOTMENT GARDENS

The Council will protect the existing allotment sites in the Borough and support the establishment of new sites where demand exists.

Development of allotment sites for other uses will be supported only where a site is substantially disused, there is no proven demand for allotments in the area, and the loss of open space would not result in a deficiency in the area.

502. There is no allotment strategy for Solihull either for the Council's sites or others, and no long-term plan for investment. Investment is currently determined annually.

Audit findings

503. Map 7 shows the current provision of allotments, and Map 7a shows the same sites with a 1000m catchment. Although the exact boundaries of the allotment sites have not been plotted accurately, current provision of space per 1000 people can be estimated. This is given in Figure 9.

504. This table illustrates that some wards have no allotment provision, and others have only limited allotment provision per 1000 people.

505. Using a catchment of 1000 m, illustrated by Map 7a, it is clear that some catchment areas overlap e.g. in Zone 1, but there are significant gaps in provision, particularly St Alphege, Balsall Common, and the north of Castle Bromwich.

Comparisons with other authorities, and best practice

506. None of the CIPFA family group of authorities have specific standards for allotments. Two other authorities which have are Harlow at 0.3 ha per 1000, and Cambridge at 0.4 ha per 1000.

507. There is no 'national standard' but best practice suggests a number of points for quality as well as appropriate levels of provision.

Figure 9: Allotment space per 1000 people

Ward	Zone	Hectares per 1000 population	Hectares per 1000 population
Elmdon	1	0.25	0.27
Lyndon	1	0.12	
Olton	1	0.46	
Silhill	2	0.12	0.05
St Alphege	2	0	
Shirley East	3	0.14	0.08
Shirley South	3	0.12	
Shirley West	3	0	
Bickenhill	4	0.03	0.04
Meriden	4	0.12	
Blythe	5	0.2	0.13
Dorridge & Hockley Heath	5	0.12	
Knowle	5	0.08	
Castle Bromwich	6	0	0.03
Chelmsley Wood	6	0.07	
Kingshurst and Fordbridge	6	0.05	
Smiths Wood	6	0	
Whole Authority			0.12

Issues and priorities from consultation

Household survey

508. Less than 1% of the respondents used allotments or community gardens most frequently of all green spaces. This low level of use meant that most respondents did not consider allotments a high priority, and many were unable to offer a view on them.

Solihull Allotments Survey 2004

509. This survey was directed at the Solihull MBC sites plot holders and undertaken in October 2004. A full copy of this survey is provided at Appendix 11, but the key points were:

- Most respondents were satisfied with their plot.
- For those not satisfied, the main concerns were (in priority order)
 - Weeds.

- Security.
- Vacant Plots.
- Water Supply.

Wider importance

510. Whilst allotments may not be a high priority for the majority of the population they are clearly important to those who use them. Allotments have the potential to play an increasingly significant role in helping to meeting government objectives on healthy living, they provide opportunities for active pass times but also give people the means to eat healthily at little cost. Innovative schemes have also involved encouraging the use of allotments by asylum seekers thus helping to encourage community cohesion.

511. Allotments are also significant for wildlife, and their importance is recognised by the Habitat Action Plans being developed as part of the Biodiversity Action Plan.

Financial issues

512. Allotments are a low budget priority for Solihull MBC. They bring in some revenue, but cost more to provide than the total of revenue raised.

Proposals

Local Standard

513. Based on the findings from the audit, best practice, and the other considerations outlined above, the following local standard is proposed.

513.1. Allotments: 0.3 ha per 1000 population with minimum total allotment area of 0.5 ha, which includes ancillary facilities. This is equivalent to 10 plots of 0.015 ha each per 1000. Where population exceeds 1000, sites to be within 1000 m of housing.

513.2. Quality:

- Each plot on new sites should be 150 sq m (0.015 ha).
- Sites to have 28 plots, with minimum total allotment area of 0.58 ha.
- Sites to have ancillary facilities, including:
 - main concrete track 3m wide.
 - dividing grass paths 1.2m wide.
 - hammerhead turning area.
 - 4 car parking spaces.
 - sites for 3 locker units (each 7m x 5m).
 - 2 disabled raised plots (each 7.5m x 2m) on concrete hardstand (8m x 10m).
 - toilet.

- 7 standpipes (4 to 1 ratio).
- hardstand area with retaining wall.
- New sites should be provided on relatively flat ground, which is free of flooding, ideally with a slight southern slope.
- The soil for new sites should be of a good agricultural grade.

Management

514. Solihull MBC's long-term objective of self-management for all Solihull MBC allotment sites is consistent with trying to encourage local community involvement in green spaces. This also has the advantage of increasing the likelihood of achieving external funding for site improvements. The support to existing self-managed groups should therefore continue, together with support to those not yet self-managing to become so.
515. The parish and town sites should remain in their control unless a formal partnership is developed with Solihull MBC.
516. New sites developed in association with development should be managed long term by allotment associations, with the support of Solihull MBC or the parish/town council.

Financial

517. Allotment sites can be largely self-financing but existing sites may require additional investment to improve their quality and ancillary facilities.
518. Where there is sufficient allotment capacity within 1000 m of new development, then developers' contributions should be directed towards their improvement. Where there is insufficient capacity or existing sites are more than 1000m away, developers' contributions should be sought towards new sites. There is a need for a commuted sum in all cases to support long-term management.

Implications

519. The standard proposed for allotment space recognises the very high level of use of most sites in Solihull. Those sites with higher rates of vacancy are those that suffer most from anti-social behaviour and vandalism.
520. Figure 10 below shows the amount of additional allotment space needed for each zone, based on the proposed local standard. It is recognised that it is unlikely that the standard will be possible to achieve in the short, or even medium term, in many parts of Solihull. However, opportunities should be sought to improve the provision as and when they arise.

521. There is a need for a detailed allotment strategy, encompassing both the Solihull MBC sites and those owned and managed by the parish and town councils. This should identify relative priorities for new and improved provision and will be the basis for any negotiations with developers. The strategy should consider the opportunities for more community gardening schemes, and encourage the formation of an allotment group representing all of the allotments within the authority.

Figure 10: Additional allotment space required

Zone	Total allotment area needed (hectares)	Current allotment area (hectares)	Additional allotment area needed (hectares)
1	10.9	9.8	1.1
2	7.0	1.2	5.8
3	10.4	2.8	7.6
4	6.8	0.9	5.9
5	9.5	4.1	5.4
6	15.2	1.5	13.7
TOTAL	59.9	20.3	39.5

522. An allotment strategy could also form the basis for partnership working with the PCT and other key agencies, unlocking funding and opportunities connected with health and nature conservation that have yet to be fully explored.

523. The UDP policy will need to be reviewed to incorporate the proposed standards for allotments.

GRASS PLAYING FIELDS

Introduction

524. This section considers the provision of grass playing fields for the sports of football, cricket and rugby. It updates the 2003 Playing Pitch Assessment and Strategy. The details in this section are provided by sport, although there are general statements and a final summary local standard that combines the different sports into a single figure.

Current Situation

Users

525. The primary users of playing fields for sport are people aged 6 to 55 years, mostly boys and men playing football, cricket and rugby. The age bands for the different sports vary, but the following table provides a summary.

Football	Minis	Under 10 years There are u7s, u8s, u9s, but for the purpose of the Strategy, these have been considered together.
	Junior	10 - 15 years
	Senior	16 - 45 years There are players over 45 years but their numbers are low. Sport England use 45 years as the maximum.
Cricket	Junior	11 - 17 years
	Senior	18 - 55 years
Rugby	Mini	8 - 12 years
	Junior	13 - 17 years
	Senior	18 - 45 years There are players over 45 years but their numbers are low. Sport England use 45 years as the maximum.

526. Nationally, football as a sport is growing at the mini and junior levels, estimated at about 10% growth from present levels in the period up to 2011. Growth is slower at the senior level, and is expected to be at about 5% over the period up to 2011 due in part to junior players moving into

adult teams. Additional anticipated growth is from greater football participation by girls and women, assuming that the facilities are available to allow this growth, and from veterans' football. There is a higher rate of growth of the game on synthetic surfaces, particularly in the smaller-sided leagues, often based on commercial 5-a-side facilities.

527. Cricket in Solihull is strong with 55 senior and 13 junior teams. The sport nationally is fairly static in terms of rates of participation, and this appears likely to be reflected in Solihull.

528. There are currently 70 rugby teams within 7 clubs. The sport of rugby is growing slowly, with a gradual increase in the number of girls' and women's teams in addition to boys' and men's teams.

Existing policies, strategies and plans

UDP First Review

529. The relevant policy is:

POLICY R3 PROTECTION OF PLAYING FIELDS

Development that results in the loss of, or would prejudice the use of, all or any part of a playing field, or land last used as a playing field, or land allocated in the Plan for use as a playing field will not be permitted, unless one of the following apply:

- (i) It can be demonstrated that there is an established surplus of playing field provision and other forms of open space in the area;*
- (ii) The proposal does not affect the quantity or quality of pitches or adversely affect their use;*
- (iii) Any loss would be replaced by playing fields of an equivalent or better quantity and quality and in a suitable location; or*
- (iv) The proposal is for an indoor or outdoor sports facility of sufficient benefit to sport to outweigh the loss of playing fields.*

Playing Pitch Assessment and Strategy 2003

530. This strategy considered grass and synthetic turf pitches for the sports of football, rugby union, cricket and hockey. The 2003 strategy used the current Sport England standard methodology for playing pitch strategy work, with the exception that the results and recommendations were for the whole authority rather than for sub-areas within the authority.

531. The 2003 report included a list of clubs and teams playing the various sports within its Appendix 6. This list was then used to calculate the Team Generation Rates and the balance in supply and demand for pitch space. The recommendations of the 2003 report were based upon this analysis.

532. A quality assessment was made for the 2003 report of the Solihull MBC managed pitches and education sites. However no assessment was made of the private/voluntary club or parish council pitches, which together provide at least half the total number of pitches available to the community within Solihull.
533. The following recommendations from the 2003 report relate directly to the Green Spaces Strategy. Others are provided in the 2003 document, but these relate to issues such as club development.

Strategic Planning

- Develop a consistent approach across the borough to the designation of informal recreational land, and the relationship between these, and potential key pitch sites.
- Develop a hierarchy of pitch and ancillary facility provision for the borough linked to sports development/performance.
- Seek to develop the overall use of education pitches for community use and, in so doing, develop appropriate support to facilitate access and use especially for junior teams.
- Promote the overall value and benefits of playing pitch provision, and its contribution to open space in the local area.

Facility Development

- Seek to improve the overall quality of existing and new ancillary accommodation, with a particular emphasis on the need to provide adequately for juniors and women, girls and disabled users. This should take into account the lack of access to quality Solihull MBC provision in the north of the Borough.
- Redress the overall imbalance in current provision between under-utilisation of senior football pitches and the current deficiency in junior pitches across the Borough. This should be done by a combination of re-designating existing accessible pitches and developing access to school facilities which do not currently facilitate community use.
- Ensure playing pitch and public access requirements are addressed at the initial stages of any future developments.

Operations

- Ensure that a constant review is undertaken on all Parks pitches to ensure that they are safe to use and do not have significant amounts of glass, stones or litter.

- Ensure that there is closer monitoring of the Grounds Maintenance contract to ensure that pitches are re-instated properly at the end of the season, and that pitches have 100% grass coverage at the start of the following season.
534. These strategic policies from the 2003 remain valid, but need supplementing by other policies, which take account of the other types of provider.
535. To address the site information weaknesses of the 2003 report, a partial review was commissioned in January 2005 as an element of the Green Spaces Strategy. This work considered the balance in supply and demand across the authority, and sought to gather information on the quality of the parish and private/voluntary club pitches.

Updating the 2003 report

536. The 2003 report was reviewed using data collected by a combination of postal questionnaires, telephone interviews and site visits. It focussed upon the supply of pitches and ancillary facilities but did not include a review of the 2003 teams data.
537. The independent sports clubs do not have the same long term security of use as Solihull MBC or parish council sites, but play a major role in the overall network of provision within Solihull. A discussion was held with Sport England about how best to consider these sites. It was agreed that they should be treated as being in 'secure community use' for the purposes of the Strategy. However, there needed to be a caveat about the possible loss of these sites in the future.
538. Solihull does not have 2005 population data by age/sex/ward, and the authority's demographic forecasting is limited to total populations within each ward. It is not possible therefore to do robust assessment of Team Generation Rates (TGR) rates for 2005, or a detailed forecast for the future demand for each age group (and therefore pitch size) within each zone of the authority.
539. With the limitations on the data in relation to current teams and demographic profiling, the following methodology was adopted to assess the balance in supply and demand for pitches in Solihull. This adapts the standard Sport England methodology, and provides both the playing pitch area requirement per 1000 population, and an assessment of future balance in supply and demand for the whole authority, and for each zone.

540. For each sport (football, rugby, cricket):

- STEP 1 Based on 2003 report calculate using the whole-authority TGR rates, the number of teams generated in each zone area for each sex and age group.
- STEP 2 Estimate the growth in the game based on the 2003 report forecasts.
- STEP 3 Calculate the future number of home matches and demand for pitch space at peak time (based on percentage of games at peak time from the 2003 report) for both whole authority and each zone.
- STEP 4 Calculate the future total pitch space requirements for each zone based on the size of each pitch (mini, junior, senior) and the number of home matches, with some additional capacity for friendlies and maintenance.
- STEP 5 Calculate pitch space currently available for each zone.
- STEP 6 Compare for each zone the amount of pitch area available, and the total demand for pitch area which will be required in the future.
- STEP 7 Calculate total playing field area currently available in each zone
- STEP 8 Calculate total playing field area needed to meet demand within each zone based on teams information from Appendix 6 of the 2003 report.
- STEP 9 Calculate area per 1000 population for whole authority and for each zone, based on both number of teams identified in Appendix 6 of the 2003 report, and on actual pitch space currently available.
- STEP 10 Identify where sites are shared between sports to eliminate double-counting.

Audit findings

541. All of the grass playing fields have now been identified and are recorded on Map 16. This map shows the whole site where pitches are situated, rather than the pitches themselves, which are too small to be identified at A3 or A4 map size.

Issues and priorities from consultation

Household survey

542. The household survey did not differentiate between grass pitch sports and other outdoor sports facilities. The following points from the survey are however pertinent, and also appear under the section applying to Other Outdoor Sports. In considering these comments, the high level of responses from older people should be borne in mind.

- Overall 30% are happy with the sports facilities, whereas 22% are dissatisfied.
- There are high levels of dissatisfaction in Meriden, Chelmsley Wood, Kingshurst and Fordbridge, Olton, Knowle and Blythe.
- Outdoor sports facilities are used by about 5% of the population across all age groups, but the highest level of use overall is in Zone 6 at 9%.
- The priorities for investment for sports (including pitch sports) is medium-low for most respondents to the survey.

Other consultation

543. Other consultation discussions and previous reports have highlighted the following:

- The quality of pitches on “private” sites is generally good and does not require further action.
- The quality of pitches on Solihull MBC sites (according to 2003 study) appears to be generally of a lower standard, with over two thirds of sites identified as “satisfactory” or “poor”.
- The quality of changing rooms on private sites is an issue. While a number of sites have relatively “good quality” changing rooms they did not score highly because of a lack of provision for disabled and women users.
- There may be a need to redesignate some senior pitches to provide more mini and junior sites.

General findings

544. The following are the general findings from the updating of the playing pitch assessment and strategy.

- Anecdotal evidence suggests that the number of teams identified in the 2003 report appears significantly less than actually exist. The work updating the sites information has resulted in the identification of a number of clubs and teams not recorded in the ‘Appendix 6’ of the original report. However a full review of team information did not form part of the playing pitch strategy review brief.

- A large proportion of the playing fields for all of the sports are located on the eastern fringe of the Solihull urban area, and there is a lack of space for sport within the urban areas generally.
- The significant variations in the age structure of the Solihull will require flexibility in the mixture of pitches provided.
- There is a significant difference between the quality of the pitches and changing rooms of Solihull MBC compared to those of the private/voluntary club sector. However, provision for women and disabled users is of concern throughout (see Appendices 12, 13 and 14).
- The quality of changing provision on Solihull MBC sites is generally poor, with three having been demolished/decommissioned since the 2003 survey.
- Although the sports make use of some school sites, particularly junior and mini football, there are no formal long-term agreements for the use of grass pitches at schools. These sites are therefore potentially at risk.

Sports specific findings

Football

545. The key findings for football are:

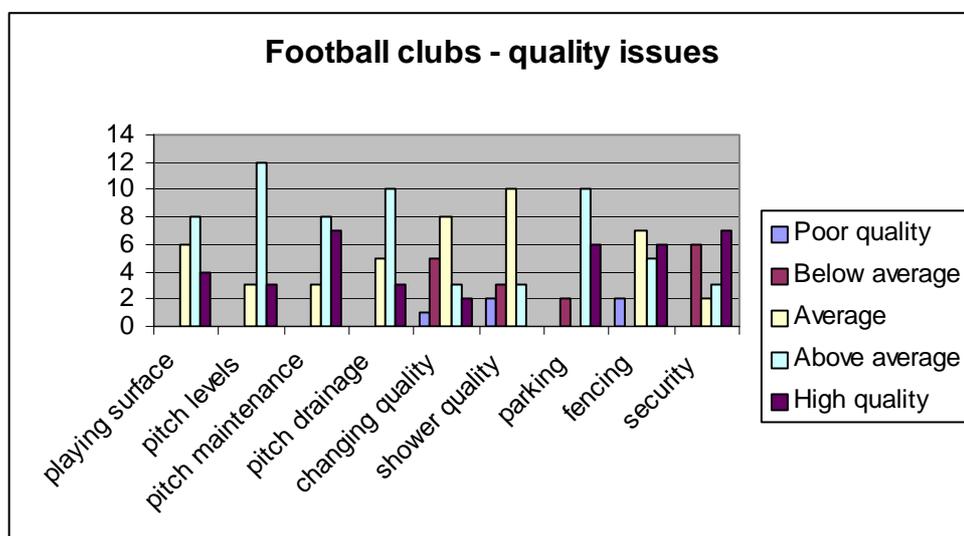
- This is the most important grass pitch sport with a large number of teams from all age groups.
- The sport is primarily male, but there are some girls' and women's teams.
- A large number of the sites providing for football are 'private club' or parish sites. These provide:
 - 45% of all senior pitches
 - 93% of all junior pitches
 - 85% of all mini pitches
- There are 18 "private" football sites and of these all but 5 are directly managed by the clubs who use them. This has resulted in generally high quality, well maintained pitches, however the quality of changing rooms and showers is less good, with limited provision for people with disabilities and women.

- The total amount of pitch space available to the community for football (excluding school sites used informally) is approximately 148 ha, which probably equates to around 222 ha of playing field space.
- A large number of the independent sites are outside the urban area, with primarily the Solihull MBC sites in the urban area.
- Of the 15 Solihull MBC sites 5 are single pitches sites.
- There is some use of school sites by community clubs, but there are no formal agreements with the schools that make this use secure in the longer term. If the current use of school sites can be formalised and secured, then this is likely to meet the majority of need from mini and junior football.
- There is a large area of playing pitches in Zones 4 and 5 around Bickenhill, Blythe, Knowle, and Dorridge areas. These provide much of the resource for the sport in Solihull. There is also 'surplus' playing field area in Zones 1 and 3, but there are insufficient pitches to meet local demand in Zone 2. There is a lack of pitch space in Zone 6.
- The anecdotal evidence collected during the review suggests that there is a lack of pitch space for all the junior and mini age groups. There have been fewer comments about the senior pitches, which may confirm the analysis that there is some surplus provision.
- Based on the 2002/03 teams data, *with the secure community use sites only* (i.e. excluding schools) and an estimated increase in take up of the sport as envisaged by the 2003 report, the balance in supply and demand for pitches is as follows. The full analysis is provided in Appendices 15,16, 17 and 18.
- Overall
 - A 'surplus' of 43 ha of pitch space.
 - A deficit of pitch space of around 4 ha of pitch space in Zone 2, and around 4.4 ha in Zone 6.
 - 'Surplus' pitch space in Zones 1,3,4 and 5 with the largest 'surplus' being in Zones 4 and 5.
- Mini football
 - Overall a balance in pitches available.
 - A lack of pitch space in Zones 1, 2, 3 and 6, but of less than 1 ha each.
 - A slight surplus of pitch space in Zones 4 and 5, which balances the deficit from the other zones.
- Junior football
 - Overall a lack of 26 pitches equating to 8.5 ha of pitch space across the authority.
 - A lack of pitch space in Zones 1,2,3 and 6, with the worst being in Zone 6 with a deficit of around 5.5 ha of pitch space.
 - A surplus of pitch space in Zones 4 and 5 of around 6 ha.

- Senior football
 - Overall a surplus of senior provision equating to 37 pitches, the equivalent of 51 ha of pitch space.
 - A lack of pitch space in Zone 2, of one pitch.
 - An approximate balance in supply and demand for Zone 6.
 - A surplus of pitch space in Zones 1, 3, 4 and 5, with the highest levels of surplus being in Zones 4 and 5.
- If all community use at school sites was made secure this would address many of the problems associated with mini and junior football provision. The analysis was repeated including schools, and the findings are provided at Appendices 19 and 20.

546. The following graph illustrates the quality issues on the club sites.

Results from the club surveys on quality issues



Comparison with other authorities, and best practice

547. Some authorities have provided a specific local standard for football, but most have included it within a general figure for pitch based sports.
548. Pitches and changing provision should ideally meet Football Association, Football Foundation and Sport England guidance in terms of quantity and quality. There are no national standards in relation to the accessibility of pitches but Sport England would ideally like to see a maximum of 1000 m travel distance to mini and junior sites.
549. In some areas of the Borough this is not possible, largely because of the geography of the area. However improving the availability of sites should be a priority if and when opportunities arise.

550. Single pitch sites can be valuable to smaller communities, but they are inflexible and cost more to maintain. Current best practice strongly encourages the development of multi-pitch sites, often with a variety of pitch sizes together with appropriate changing and other ancillary facilities. Current best practice also suggests that football sites should be fenced, and that they should not be located within parks.

Financial issues

551. The cost of maintaining pitches to ensure that they can provide for at least 2 matches per week is expensive, and annual maintenance needs to be supplemented by a rolling programme of major pitch renovation works. Costs of maintaining pitches are increased where sites have general public access, due to the need for constant litter removal and restoration of damaged areas.

552. The cost of maintaining changing rooms at many of the Solihull MBC sites is high, primarily due to vandalism. This has led to the closure of some changing rooms, with the consequent impact on the sport's ability to attract women and girls, and even potentially the ability to hold league fixtures on some sites.

553. The largest proportion of the cost of maintaining football facilities falls to the voluntary club sector, due to the high number of sites in their ownership and management. However, the location of these sites in the more rural areas together with good fencing, reduces the general levels of vandalism and other misuse.

Football proposals

Local standards

554. It is proposed that the following elements are included within the overall local standard for grass pitch space.

554.1. Football: 1.1 ha per 1000 population

554.2. New provision linked to development should be within the relevant Zone.

554.3. The policy of protecting all existing playing fields should be retained until such time as a full review of the 2002/03 teams information has been undertaken.

554.4. A minimum size for new sites should be 4 ha.

554.5. The design and quality standards for pitches and ancillary facilities should follow the national guidance of the Football Foundation, Football Association and Sport England.

Management

555. It is appropriate to support the existing ownership and management arrangements, with the high proportion being voluntary/private club based. However, as there is a need to improve some of the clubs' facilities, there is an opportunity to develop more formal partnerships between Solihull MBC and the clubs, to deliver sports development programmes in exchange for support for the facility improvements.
556. New provision should be managed by Solihull MBC or by the appropriate parish or town council, possibly on a lease arrangement with a club.

Financial

557. There is a need to substantially increase the capital and revenue budgets to improve the Solihull MBC sites. However, this needs to be linked to other measures aimed at reducing anti-social behaviour and vandalism. Fencing of sites should be considered where possible.
558. Developers' contributions should be sought towards improving sites where there is sufficient capacity, and new provision where there is a lack, particularly within Zone 6.
559. Where an objective is to secure community use at a school site, this is likely to bring revenue costs to the authority.

Football – implications

560. The priorities for investment should be:
- To secure the long-term community use of schools currently used on an informal basis, particularly for minis and juniors.
 - More pitch space in Zones 6 and 2.
 - Some redesignation of pitches from senior to junior use in Zone 1.
 - Improving quality of Solihull MBC pitches.
 - Improving private sites to ensure that, as a minimum, changing facilities meet DDA requirements and provide at least one female changing area.
561. The future of single pitch sites should be reviewed. If they are used infrequently and are poorly supported by the local community, alternative green space uses should be considered.

Cricket

562. The main findings from the updating work are:

- This is an important grass pitch sport with around 55 senior and 13 junior teams.
- The sport is primarily male with only one senior women's team.
- The total amount of pitch space for community use for cricket (excluding any school sites) is approximately 41 ha, which probably equates to around 62 ha of playing field space.
- There may be a small amount of use of school sites by community clubs, but there are no formal agreements with the schools that make this use secure in the longer term. Schools have therefore been excluded from the current analysis.
- Of the 22 pitches in Solihull, 19 are club or parish sites.
- If the teams information contained in the 2003 report is correct:
 - Overall the balance in supply and demand for cricket pitch space is approximately in balance.
 - Much of the pitch area is located in Zones 4 and 5 around Bickenhill, Blythe, Knowle, and Dorridge areas.
 - There is a significant lack of pitch space in Zone 6 (approximately 5 pitches) and Zone 3 (3 pitches).
 - A full copy of the analysis is provided in Appendices 21,22 and 23.
- Although this analysis suggests that the teams information from 2003 is reasonably accurate on a whole authority basis, it would be valuable to revisit the information to determine the actual level of demand from each zone for the sport. In particular, to assess the amount of pitch space which is really required for Zones 6 and 3.
- As the analysis based on Appendix 6 is somewhat uncertain, it is recommended that the current level of playing pitch provision be initially adopted as a base for the new local standards. The area of grass playing pitches in secure community use for cricket equates to an average of 0.2 ha per 1000. However, an allowance must be made for playing field margins, landscaping, car parking and changing facilities, which should be an additional area equivalent to 50% of the pitch area. This provides a draft local standard of 0.3 ha per 1000 population.

Comparison with other authorities, and best practice

563. Some authorities have provided a specific local standard for cricket, but most have included it within a general figure for pitch-based sports. Pitches and changing provision should ideally meet Sport England guidance in terms of quantity and quality. This means balancing supply and demand within each of the zones, and provision of good quality sites. In some areas of the Borough this is not possible largely because of the geography of the area. However improving the availability of sites, possibly by developing new clubs in association with schools, should be a priority.

Cricket proposals

Local standard

565. It is proposed to include this within the general standard for grass playing fields.

565.1 Cricket: 0.3 ha per 1000 population

565.2 New provision linked to development should be within the relevant Zone.

565.3 A minimum playing field area for new provision should be 3 ha.

565.4 Pitches and ancillary facilities should meet the standards set down by Sport England and the Governing Body for cricket.

Management and financial implications

566 These are the same as for football. If new clubs are developed on schools sites, these must be protected by formal use agreements.

Implications

567 The priorities for investment should be to explore the development of new cricket clubs in Zone 6 and Zone 3, possibly linked to school sites. The regeneration of the north of the Borough may also offer opportunities to provide new sites for cricket.

568 "Private" clubs generally have good quality pitches but their changing facilities are often of a poor quality or have no provision for disabled users and women. Solihull MBC should consider establishing a grant aid scheme to support the improvement of changing rooms on such sites.

569 The policy of protecting all existing playing fields should be retained until such time as a full review of the 2002/03 teams information has been undertaken.

Rugby

570 The main findings from the updating work are:

- This is an important grass pitch sport with around 70 teams.
- The sport is primarily male, but there is one girls' and two women's teams.
- The total amount of pitch space for community use for rugby (excluding school sites) is approximately 32 ha, which probably equates to around 48 ha of playing field space.
- There may be a small amount of use of school sites by community clubs, but there are no formal agreements with the schools that make this use secure in the longer term.
- All except for one senior pitch (in Shirley Park), the provision for this sport is on club sites.
- Only two mini pitches have been identified in the recent pitch survey. This suggests that the mini game is predominantly played on the senior pitches.
- If the teams information contained in the 2003 report is correct:
 - Overall the balance in supply and demand for rugby pitch space is approximately in balance.
 - Much of the pitch area is located in Zones 4 and 5 around Bickenhill, Blythe, Knowle, and Dorridge areas.
 - There is also a slight 'surplus' in Zone 1.
 - There is a significant lack of pitch space in Zone 6 (approximately 8 ha)
 - There is an approximate balance in demand and supply for Zones 2 and 3.
 - A copy of the full analysis is provided in Appendices 24, 25 and 26.
- Although the analysis suggests that the teams information from 2003 is reasonably accurate on a whole authority basis, it would be valuable to revisit the teams information to determine the actual level of demand from each zone for the sport. In particular, to assess the amount of pitch space which is really required for Zone 6.

- As the analysis based on the 2002/03 report is somewhat uncertain, it is recommended that the current level of playing pitch provision be initially adopted as a base for the new local standards. The area of grass playing pitches for rugby equates to an average of 0.16 ha per 1000. However an allowance must be made for playing field margins, landscaping, car parking and changing facilities, which should be an additional area equivalent to 50% of the pitch area. This provides a draft local standard of 0.24 ha per 1000 population.

Comparison with other authorities, and best practice

- 571 Some authorities have provided a specific local standard for rugby, but most have included it within a general figure for pitch-based sports.
- 572 Pitches and changing provision should ideally meet Sport England guidance in terms of quantity and quality. This means balancing supply and demand within each of the zones, and provision of good quality sites. In some areas of the Borough this is not possible, largely because of the geography of the area. However, improving the availability of sites, possibly by developing clubs in association with schools, should be a priority.

Rugby proposals

Local standard

- 573 It is proposed to include the following within the standard for grass playing fields.
- 573.3 Rugby: 0.24 ha per 1000 population.
- 573.4 New provision linked to development should be within the relevant Zone.
- 573.5 A minimum size for new sites should be 4 ha.
- 573.6 Pitches and ancillary facilities should meet the standards set down by Sport England and the Governing Body for rugby.
- 573.7 The policy of protecting all existing playing fields should be retained until such time as a full review of the 2002/03 teams information has been undertaken.

Implications

- 574 The policy of protecting all existing playing fields should be retained until such time as a full review of the 2002/03 teams information has been undertaken.

575 Based on this analysis the priorities for investment for rugby should be:

- To explore the development or expansion of a rugby club in Zone 6, possibly linked to school sites.
- To develop additional pitch space in Zone 1.

Summary of Local Standards for Grass Playing Pitches

576 The following local standard combines those for football, cricket and rugby.

576.3.1 Grass playing field space: 1.64 ha per 1000 within relevant 'Zone'.

576.4 New provision linked to development should be within the relevant Zone.

576.5 Minimum playing field size for new sites should be 4 ha, unless the provision is specifically for cricket, when a site of 3 ha is acceptable.

576.6 Pitches and ancillary facilities should meet the standards set down by Sport England and the relevant Governing Body.

576.7 The policy of protecting all existing playing fields should be retained until such time as a full review of the 2003 teams information has been undertaken, and a full reassessment of the balance in supply and demand for each of the sports has been produced to confirm the local standards.

SUMMARY OF PART 2

577 The Vision for Green Spaces is:

‘Solihull aims to provide attractive, high quality, accessible green spaces that are managed and developed, recognising local character, to meet the diverse needs of our community. They should be safe, clean and maintained in a sustainable way, becoming an important element of every day life, for the future enjoyment of all.’

578 The Green Infrastructure Plan provides a structure for the network of green spaces, features and facilities, which will help to deliver Solihull’s vision and the policy principles behind the corporate priorities for Solihull. It brings together the specific local standards for green spaces for facilities such as children’s play and allotments, into a wider framework, which includes:

- Internal/Informal Green Spaces.
- Neighbourhood Green Spaces.
- Local Area Parks/Local Area Green Spaces.
- Principal Parks and Other Major Parks.
- Sustainable routes; canal towpaths, cycle routes, walking routes, and bridleways.
- Wildlife corridors and wildlife sites.

RESOURCING THE PROPOSALS

Introduction

- 579 The character and wide ranging use of green spaces means that there are a large number of different funding opportunities, linked with a range of different objectives. For example, funding is available for conservation measures, sport, education, health initiatives, and environmental improvements.
- 580 The realisation of the proposals and specific projects contained within the Strategy will depend upon strong partnerships between Solihull MBC, and other agencies and organisations. Many of these bodies have funding available to achieve their corporate objectives, and if projects can be developed in partnership, funding can potentially be unlocked from a number sources. The success of the Implementation Plan is therefore largely dependant upon the ability of Solihull MBC to strengthen existing links and develop new partnerships.
- 581 Many of the proposals will be a partnership at the local level with the relevant Parish or Town Council and/or with voluntary interests. For example, a playing field may be owned by the Parish but leased to a sports club, who then seek grant aid support from Solihull MBC and outside sources to improve the changing facilities. There must be agreement between each of these parties for the proposal to be successful.
- 582 At least as essential as the capital investment in a new or upgraded green space or related facility will be sufficient revenue to ensure its long-term management. In some situations there may be some revenue generation from hiring (as with sports pitches), or from car park charges. However, for most green spaces there is no revenue generation, and the long term management costs must be met by either the Parish/Town Council or Solihull MBC.

Developers' contributions

- 583 A significant source of funding towards specific projects and programmes is linked to the growth and regeneration of Solihull. If the existing UDP policies can be used to their full extent and strengthened where indicated, and if they can be supported by a Supplementary Planning Document, it should be possible to generate significant amounts of money from developers. The Green Spaces Strategy provides the robust research, and proposes priorities for investment. The next stage will be to confirm these through further consultation with the community and stakeholders.

External grant aid

584 Grant aid for specific projects is also available. This is a fast-moving picture, and it will be necessary for project champions to determine relevant grant-aid opportunities as new projects emerge. There are a number of specialist websites providing this service, including Grant Finder (www.grantfinder.co.uk), and CABE Space.

585 Whatever external grant aid is considered, the main considerations for any project will be:

- The need for direct involvement of the community to benefit from the proposal.
- The long term mechanism for maintaining community 'ownership' of the project.
- Some partnership funding. For community projects this should be from the community itself in addition to other support.
- A long term 'business' plan showing the ways in which the project/ programme/ facility will be maintained.

586 In addition to these general points, it is worth noting that:

- The North Solihull Regeneration area is able to attract significant amounts of capital and revenue funding from a large number of external grant schemes.
- That many grant schemes will allow 'partnership funding' from private sector companies.
- That many grant schemes will allow money from 'developers' contributions' as partnership funding.
- That all schemes will require 'exit' routes for long term sustainability of the project.
- That all projects will need 'professional' support to turn a 'vision/idea' into a practical project which can then bid for funding. This 'professional support' may be voluntary, but most time this will not be the case.
- Most capital projects will need professionally qualified input e.g. Quantity Surveyors. The costs of such advice usually have to be met by the grant applicant prior to any submission, whether successful or not.
- Private sector companies may be prepared to offer financial support, or free professional support, for projects as part of community sponsorship, marketing or staff training.

- In brief, there is potential for significant funding of a range of projects in Solihull however, there is a need for Solihull MBC to make an effective case for funding specific projects or programmes of investment, and for the Council to support the voluntary sector to enable them to play a stronger role in long-term management of green spaces and facilities.

587 The following are some of the main potential sources of grant aid currently or soon to be available.

Big Lottery Fund

588 The Big Lottery Fund has recently announced a series of new programmes, which will come on stream in late 2005/early 2006. Its programmes divide into two broad areas: demand-led and strategic.

589 Demand-led programmes will encourage organisations and groups to develop their own ideas and local solutions for funding. The strategic programmes will focus more on the type of outcomes the Fund wants to achieve, although the Fund will still encourage local solutions to local needs.

590 The context for all BLF programmes is its mission ..”to improve communities and the lives of people most in need”.

- Each programme has three key themes:
- supporting community learning and creating opportunity
- promoting community safety and cohesion
- promoting well-being.

591 These themes are supported by four outcomes:

- people having better chances in life, with better access to training and development to improve their life skills
- stronger communities, with more active citizens working together to tackle their problems
- improved rural and urban environments, which communities are better able to access and enjoy
- healthier and more active people and communities.’

592 The following programmes of most likely relevance to Solihull.

Children’s Play

593 Budget – up to £155million. Launch date – early 2006

594 80 per cent of the money will be used to develop free, open-access, supervised play provision in the areas of greatest need. The remaining 20 per cent will be divided between:

- an innovation fund which will develop innovative practice in planning, design and delivery; and
- a regional support and development infrastructure.

595 This programme will support activities that are self-directed, creative and fun. The programme aims to:

- create, improve and develop children and young people's free local play spaces
- develop innovative practice
- create a support and development infrastructure
- promote the long-term strategic development of play provision
- promote a long-term positive change in attitude regarding the importance of children's play
- ensure that all relevant local stakeholders engage in the development of play strategies.

Environmental Programmes

596 Budget – up to £354 million. Up to £90 million for a joint parks programme with Heritage Lottery Fund. Up to £264 million focusing on community spaces and access to the natural environment.

597 The Parks programme will aim to:

- provide better parks which are accessible to all and relevant to the needs of their communities
- increase community involvement and pride in parks
- improve safety
- increase the number of skilled rangers, conservation officers and volunteers
- ensure long-term maintenance and management by local authorities and communities.

598 The community spaces strand will aim to enable communities to come together to improve their local environment and reclaim the spaces around them. Access to the natural environment will aim to involve communities in creating, restoring or preserving wildlife rich spaces and improving access to these spaces, creating the capacity for healthy living and education.

Wellbeing Programmes (Healthy Lifestyles Initiatives)

599 Budget - up to £165 million (£45 million for healthy eating projects).
Launch date - March 2006

600 The Healthy Lifestyles Initiative will aim to:

- increase participation in physical activity including travel
- educate communities about healthy eating
- develop early intervention approaches to common mental health problems

Football Foundation

601 Football Foundation funds applications with a 50% target level of grant support. The appropriate level for each individual project will be decided on the merits of the case but normally the applicant is required to provide matching contributions; in exceptional cases higher levels of support, up to a ceiling of 90% will be available. Funding is available to refurbish or construct changing rooms, grass and artificial pitches and clubhouses for community benefit across the country. The Foundation has a fast track system for schemes of under £10,000. Additional funding is available for maintenance equipment, specialist ground staff, coaching schemes or project coordinators, however this funding is only available when linked to capital schemes.

Barclays Spaces for Sport

602 This scheme is a partnership between Barclays, The Football Foundation and Groundwork. Over 100 sports sites will be created across the UK every year during the three year £30m programme. It is however not an open application process. Groundwork UK will work with their trusts, plus other agencies to identify potential projects.

Sport England

603 Sport England invests in projects which help people start, stay and succeed in sport. There are two funding streams – community investment and national

Community Investment Fund

604 Within the West Midlands, Sport England have £7.5m to distribute over the next five years from the Community Investment Fund (CIF). This equates to £1.5m per year.

605 To deliver the West Midlands Regional Plan for Sport, they have decided to operate both an open and solicited application process on a 30/70 split. This means that, annually, £1.05m will be available to solicited projects and £0.45m will be available under the open application process with the consequence that large grants for individual projects are extremely unlikely to be supported.

606 In the West Midlands, priority for funding will be linked to the delivery of the Regional Plan for Sport, and given to projects that:

- Offer the best return on investment by increasing and retaining sports participation by using existing facilities and infrastructure.

- Demonstrate integration with either health, education or community development to achieve the increased participation/retention.
- Address inequalities in sport through targeting at least two (preferably more) of the following target groups:
 - young people.
 - people over 45.
 - black and minority ethnic groups.
 - people with disabilities.
 - women.
 - socio economic groups within the top 20% most deprived communities
- Actively develop an appropriately trained, mentored and sustainable workforce (e.g. volunteers, coaches, community/sports development workers) to develop participation and skills.
- Demonstrate financial viability and are sustainable beyond the initial investment. Only projects with a clear exit strategy demonstrating and ongoing and sustainable increase in participation and skills will be supported.
- Are not requesting awards greater than £200,000
- Have partnership funding worth at least 65% of the total cost.
- Can clearly show how they will achieve their key outcomes at a local, sub-regional or regional level.

National funding stream

607 Sport England are investing £130 million in 30 key sports. This investment is distributed in conjunction with the national governing bodies plus a range of national partners. There are 10 English priority sports, 10 UK/GB priority sports and 10 English development/world class sports. Details of these sports are available on Sport England's web site.

Summary

608 A range of potential funding is available to support green spaces and their many uses. All will require robust reasoning for investment, a key part of which this Green Spaces Strategy will provide. There is however a need to develop the strategic priorities further by topic strategies and work with the local communities. These are identified in the Implementation Plan.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Introduction

609 The following Implementation Plan draws together the key themes from the Green Spaces Strategy, together with specific proposals and priorities for each zone that have emerged during the strategy process. Much of the implementation of the Green Spaces Strategy will depend upon close cooperation across Council departments, and also more involvement by the community in the management and decisions about local environments. A cross-departmental steering group would be appropriate as an implementation mechanism. The Group could be chaired either by a senior officer, or by the relevant Portfolio holder.

Implementing the proposals

610 The proposals are grouped into the main areas for action:

- Generic
- Planning
- Management
- Sport and Leisure
- Zone proposals

611 It is intended that the Green Spaces Strategy will undergo a review in 2010, and progress on its implementation will be formally reported on an annual basis. The Implementation Plan will inform the annual work programmes of each of the Council's departments, and the Council will encourage its partners to adopt complementary programmes and projects.

Generic

612 The following actions are cross-agency and cross-departmental:

- 612.3 GIS – make the computer mapping of green spaces fully available to all parts of authority, and keep records up to date. Transfer remaining paper records, and add information as appropriate, including sites of other outdoor sports such as bowls and tennis.
- 612.4 Council Plan – recognise contribution of green spaces within each of the Objectives and apply specific targets.
- 612.5 LSP Strategic Framework and Action Plan for Reducing Health Inequalities in Solihull – Action Plan – strengthen potential of green space to contribute to the objectives.

- 612.6 Crime and Disorder Strategy – recognise and address the issues of anti-social behaviour in green spaces. Support the development of innovative ‘parks watch’ type schemes.
- 612.7 Effective and inclusive consultation – take practical steps to include everyone in the community, particularly young people and those with different interests and abilities, in discussions about the local implementation of specific green space proposals and projects.

Planning

613 The following actions primarily relate to planning issues:

- 613.3 Review UDP policies in the light of Green Spaces Strategy.
- 613.4 Produce a new policy to support the Green Infrastructure Plan.
- 613.5 Produce new policies or clarify existing to ensure that developers contribute to strategic green space in addition to local provision. The strategic provision includes:
- Local Area Parks/Local Area Green Spaces
 - Principal Parks
 - Other Major Parks
 - Strategic Routes (selected walking and cycling routes, some bridleways, canals)
 - Accessible Natural Green Space of 10 ha or more
 - Local Nature Reserves
 - Wildlife corridors identified by the Nature Conservation Strategy
 - Neighbourhood Equipped Play Areas
 - Skate Parks and other provision for young people
 - Grass playing fields
 - Other sports facility provision
 - Allotments
- 613.6 Produce and revise current green space standards in line with local standard proposals, particularly for:
- Accessible Natural Green Space areas (smaller areas and larger).
 - Children’s playgrounds - incorporate the proposed local standard for play, in addition to referring to the (updated) Play Area Strategy.

- Teenagers and young people – retain existing policy but add policy for developers' contributions towards community development programmes.
 - Other Outdoor Sports – new standard for Other Outdoor Sports: 0.42 per 1000, and strengthen policy to retain sites.
 - Allotments – add new standard of 0.3 ha per 1000.
 - Internal/Informal Green Space: a minimum of 0.4 ha per 1000, with a minimum area of 0.2 ha.
 - Grass playing field space: 1.64 ha per 1000 within relevant 'Zone'.
 - All local standards to incorporate quality criteria.
- 613.7 Ensure that the design of new developments follows current best practice, such as that from CABI Space and the Countryside Agency takes into account existing local wildlife corridors e.g. hedges and ditches.
- 613.8 Develop an SPD to implement the Green Spaces Strategy as part of Solihull's Local Development Framework, particularly to unlock developers' contributions for residential, commercial and industrial developments.
- 613.9 Consider introduction of a policy to potentially release very small sites (less than 0.2 ha) for development.
- 613.10 Update and review the topic plans and strategies for:
- Play Areas – categories of play provision, play value, Action Plan.
 - Countryside Strategy – Action Plan with timescales and priorities for investment. Alternatively review and retain as policy guidance only.
 - Nature Conservation – update generally, and review wildlife corridors in particular. Produce Action Plan for priorities.
 - Arden Landscape Guidelines – update and map areas onto GIS system.
 - Rights of Way, including footpaths and bridleways.
 - Cycle Strategy, identifying strategic routes, and secure cycle storage points.

613.11 Produce new topic strategies, involving key local interest groups, for:

- Allotments.
- Canal strategy, including quality and accessibility of both urban and rural canals, and options to introduce cycling.

613.12 Undertake a joint study with English Nature (or its successor body) to enhance the nature conservation status of the River Blythe corridor.

613.13 As opportunities arise, encourage the development of more areas of accessible natural green space of at least 20 ha in size.

Management

614 The following actions primarily relate to the management of the green spaces.

614.3 Seek an increase in the SMBC revenue budget to increase the overall levels of maintenance to green space and associated facilities in Solihull, responding to the concerns in the household survey.

614.4 Review overall grounds maintenance and management and associated budgets against priorities emerging from Strategy.

614.5 Consider increasing the capital and revenue support given to the Parish and Town Councils for their provision and management of green spaces and related facilities.

614.6 Review the management of parish/town council areas and confirm that current management mechanisms reflect local desires.

614.7 Keep under review the level of supervision of skate parks and play areas to reduce levels of anti-social behaviour.

614.8 Update and review the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy.

614.9 Neighbourhood Managers – consider strengthening their role and giving them greater ability to make management decisions for Green Space. Encourage more work with Parks Action Groups and other local community groups.

614.10 Parks Action Groups – establish better mechanisms to fund agreed Park improvements. Establish Parks Action Groups for each of the Principal Parks, and encourage them to take a

broader remit to encompass Other Major Parks in the vicinity together with Local Parks and other green spaces.

614.11 Local Nature Reserves – continue to support volunteer groups to encourage new participation.

614.12 Allotments – continue to encourage greater self-management and expansion of the community gardening scheme to other sites with the involvement of volunteers where possible. Consider the transfer of relevant sites to the ownership/management of Parish or Town Councils.

Sport and Leisure

615 The following actions primarily relate to the sport and active recreation use of green spaces

615.3 Playing pitch strategy – review the teams information and update/confirm the proposed local standards for grass playing fields.

615.4 Secure mini and junior football use of school sites, and develop cricket and rugby opportunities at schools.

615.5 Develop formal partnerships with football, cricket and rugby clubs to support facility improvements in return for sports development initiatives.

615.6 Seek increased budgets for playing fields, both capital and revenue.

615.7 Update and review the topic plans and strategies for:

- Leisure and Cultural Strategy – strengthen recognition of green spaces and the need to enhance and maintain them
- Physical Activity Strategy – review and include sports and active recreation provision within the green spaces, including playing fields and other sports. Development of school-club links for pitch based sports

615.8 Produce a new topic strategy for the provision of Multi-Use Games Areas.

Zone summaries

- 616 These zone summaries provide an overview of each area of the Borough. The assessment of sufficiency or otherwise is based on: the amount, location and quality of existing facilities, the issues raised during the consultations with local residents and others, 'national standards' where they exist, and best practice from other authorities.
- 617 The priorities and specific projects proposed will help set the green spaces agenda over the next few years, but they will only be achieved through partnerships with other bodies, and with the support of the local communities themselves.
- 618 A fuller analysis of the current green space provision within each zone is provided in the Zone Action Plans at the end of this document.

Zone 1 – Lyndon, Olton and Elmdon

- 619 The total amount of accessible green space per thousand people in this Zone is close to the average for the Borough, but there are significant differences between the wards, with Olton having amongst the least amount of green space of all wards, and Elmdon having amongst the most.
- 620 There is a need to make the existing green spaces cleaner and safer, and to provide more local green space opportunities in some areas, together with more children's playgrounds, provision for teenagers and young people, and some playing field space for rugby. A new Principal Park is needed in the area, and priorities should also include work with British Waterways to achieve greater public access to Olton Mere and the canal. The National Cycle Route 53 will be an important strategic route, but improvements are also needed to the other cycle networks in the area. Where possible some of the management regimes for areas of green space should be changed to improve wildlife habitats, and make more 'natural areas'. A new Local Nature Reserve should be developed if the opportunity arises.

Zone 2 - Silhill and St Alphege

- 621 This zone has huge contrasts in its character. Overall it has the second greatest amount of publicly accessible green space per thousand for the whole of Solihull, with St Alphege ward having the second highest amount of space per thousand compared with the other wards. At the same time, Silhill is the worst provided ward of all, in terms of the total amount of accessible green space.
- 622 There is a need to make the existing green spaces cleaner and safer, and also to provide more Local Equipped Areas for Play, and around 6

ha of new allotment space. Securing the informal community use of school sites for mini and junior football would largely overcome the lack of pitch space for football, although there may be a need to remark some senior pitches for junior use. The provision of one or more Multi-Use Games Areas should be considered, and any provision linked to programmes of positive activities for young people and site management. There is a need to improve the cycle network, linking the Town Centre with other areas including green spaces, and also to extend and improve the wildlife corridors and other 'natural areas'.

Zone 3 – Shirley East, Shirley West and Shirley South

623 The total amount of accessible green space per thousand population in this Zone is the lowest for the whole of Solihull, but provision within the area varies from the lowest in Shirley East (2.87 ha per 1000) to over 5.1 ha per 1000 in Shirley South. However, the distribution of the spaces which are accessible means that most people have access to green space within 400 m.

624 Although increasing the amount of green space in Shirley East and Shirley South should be a long term objective, the immediate priorities are to provide more children's playgrounds and more allotment space, and to develop a new area of green space of at least 0.2 ha in Shirley South. Priority should also be given to improving the canal corridor, and cycle and walking routes. The wildlife corridors need strengthening, and should include more areas of 'accessible natural space'. Additional LNR designation should be considered if opportunities arise.

Zone 4 – Bickenhill and Meriden

625 This large area of Solihull is primarily rural, although it also hosts the NEC and airport, and has a number of large villages within it. This is an important area for sport, with a large number of sport sites located in the area, providing for people from across Solihull. Several of the priorities for action relate to Balsall Common which needs more playgrounds, new allotments, a large area of accessible natural green space, and improvements to the Greenway. Other priorities include more playground provision for Hampton-in-Arden, and a local area park/local area green space for Berkswell. Improvements to the cycle routes and other rights of way are a high priority, as are nature conservation opportunities and new native woodlands.

Zone 5 – Blythe, Dorridge and Hockley Heath, and Knowle

626 This area is primarily farmland, but it also has the main points of residential growth for the Borough. There is currently a large amount of accessible green space in Blythe, with about the Borough average for Dorridge, and a low amount of space in Knowle.

627 The priorities for action are similar to Zone 4, namely; more playgrounds, more allotment space, and the need to make formal links with the sports clubs in the area. There is also a need for an additional local area park/local green space near Cheswick Green. The support of Solihull MBC to the improvement of Earlswood Lakes is welcomed by British Waterways and its partners. The canals are also important as strategic routes and wildlife corridors.

Zone 6 – Castle Bromwich, Chelmsley Wood, Kingshurst and Fordbridge, and Smiths Wood

628 The total amount of accessible green space per thousand people for the Zone falls slightly below the average for Solihull, but this masks large differences between the wards. Smiths Wood has only 2.4 ha of space per thousand, with Castle Bromwich being little better. However both Chelmsley Wood and Kingshurst and Fordbridge have a large amount of space, 7.5 ha and 5.8 ha per thousand respectively. The major issues however for this Zone are concerned with the design of the space. There are a large number of small, poorly designed and poorly linked spaces that people are frightened to use, and which cost large amounts of money to maintain.

629 The overriding priority is therefore to seek ways to enable the redesign of some of the green spaces within the Zone. These new spaces should be; larger, provide more for sport, more local playgrounds, and have areas of 'natural green space'. They should be well linked by safe cycling and walking routes to other spaces, and to the town centres and new residential areas. Opportunities should be taken to expand and develop the Kingfisher Project along the River Cole. New allotment space should also be provided. Safe cycle links should also be made with North Warwickshire and Birmingham, as well as to the south of the Borough. The physical works need to be matched by programmes of youth and community development to tackle the problems of anti-social behaviour in the area.

SUMMARY

630 Solihull Council is committed to providing high quality green spaces that meet the needs of its communities, and this Green Spaces Strategy will help to deliver this objective. The Strategy process has included a detailed audit of existing green spaces, their features and facilities, consultation with residents, interest groups and stakeholders, evaluation of the current policies and practices within Solihull, and comparison with national standards and best practice.

631 The Strategy includes a Green Space Infrastructure Plan that sets out the hierarchy of parks and green spaces, strategic links and wildlife sites, and sites with specific local standards. The Implementation Plan and Zone Action Plans set agendas for action which will deliver the vision of;

“Attractive, high quality, accessible green spaces that are managed and developed, recognising local character, to meet the diverse needs of the community. They should be safe, clean and maintained in a sustainable way, becoming an important element of every day life, for the future enjoyment of all.”

ZONE ACTION PLANS

The Zone Action Plans provide an overview of how each area of the Borough currently compares to the proposed green space standards. The assessment of sufficiency or otherwise is based on: the location and quality of existing facilities, the issues raised during the consultations with local residents and others, 'national standards' where they exist, and best practice from other authorities.

The priorities and specific projects proposed will help set the green spaces agenda over the next few years, but these will only be achieved through partnerships with other bodies, and with the support of the local communities.

ZONE 1 - LYNDON, OLTON AND ELMDON

GREEN SPACE	LOCAL STANDARD (for Zone, unless otherwise stated)	CURRENT PROVISION	COMPARISON WITH STANDARD	PRIORITIES FOR ACTION
Children's Playgrounds	Local Equipped Area for Play within 400 m of all houses in settlements more than 500 population. Minimum of 1 LEAP/ 4300 in urban areas	3 LEAPs	The existing provision does not sufficiently provide for the population. There are gaps in the geographical spread of provision, and some people have no playgrounds within 400 m. The catchments of the 2 NEAPs overlap.	Provide additional sites: 5 LEAPs and 2 NEAPs. Review location of sites to provide a better geographical spread. Ensure all sites provide good play value, including for children with disabilities.
	Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play within 1000 m of all houses in settlements of more than 1000 population. Minimum of 1 NEAP/ 8600 in urban areas.	2 NEAPs	Overall there are too few sites to provide for the number of children in the area.	
Provision For Teenagers And Young People	Skate and other youth provision: one site	none	There is no provision for teenagers and young people	Develop new provision for teenagers and young people, and give them more support for positive activities through programmes of activity. Consider development of new MUGA site(s).
	Additional provision of Multi-Use Games areas: to be confirmed			
Allotments	0.3 ha/1000	0.27 ha/1000	The best provided area for allotments within Solihull, and close to the standard. Some current sites have vacancies.	Achieve 100% uptake at existing sites, and reduce problems identified e.g. anti-social behaviour. Introduce a community gardening scheme.
Grass Playing Fields	1.64 ha/1000	1.46 ha/1000	Overall sufficient space for football and cricket in secure community use, but lack of pitch space for rugby.	Undertake some remarking of senior football pitches to junior use. Develop of more pitch space for rugby

GREEN SPACE	LOCAL STANDARD (for Zone, unless otherwise stated)	CURRENT PROVISION	PRIORITIES FOR ACTION
Neighbourhood Green Space	Areas of unrestricted public access between 0.2 and 1.5 ha, with at least 0.2 ha of space within 400 m of homes in all settlements with more than 300 people.	Most people have access to green space, but there are gaps on the western side of Elmdon.	Develop three small areas of green space to complete the coverage.
Local Area Parks/Local Area Green Spaces	Areas of unrestricted public access between 1.5 and 8 ha within 1000 m of all settlements with more than 300 people.	Everyone in this zone has access to local area parks within 1000 m	Improve the quality of existing provision.
Principal Parks	Areas of unrestricted public access of over 8 ha within 2 km of all settlements of over 5000 people. These parks have a wide range of facilities for everyone.	Most of the zone has access to a Principal Park, except the western side of Lyndon and Elmdon.	Improve the quality of existing provision, and provide one additional Principal Park. Achieve Green Flag status for Elmdon Park.
Other Major Parks	Areas of unrestricted public access of over 8 ha. These large parks may contain similar features to the Principal Parks, but tend to have a less formal character, and often more nature conservation interest.	There are four large parks in the Zone Olton Mere is also located in this area. It provides for sailing and but has restricted public access.	Upgrade of one of the other large parks to Principal Park status Work with British Waterways to improve public access to Olton Mere.

Strategic routes	These include the canals and their towpaths, and the most important cycling and walking routes.	Part of the National Cycle Network passes through Zone 1 (Route 53), as do a number of other traffic-free and segregated cycle routes. The canal towpath is an important multi-user route. Overall the network of routes needs improvement, particularly in Olton.	Complete the National Cycle Network Route 53. Improve the canal towpath and its access points, to make it fully accessible for walkers and cyclists, and for disabled users.
Accessible Natural Green Space	Accessible Natural Green Space area greater than 0.09 ha within 300 m of home for all settlements having a population greater than 300. 1 accessible 10 ha or greater site of natural green space within 2 km catchment of home for all settlements having a population of greater than 5000.	Only part of the Zone has access to the smaller areas of natural green space within 300 m of home, with the most notable gaps being on the northern sides of Lyndon and Olton. Most of the zone has access to the larger areas of natural green space within 2 km, with the exception of the north west corner of Lyndon.	In areas of deficiency in the smaller spaces, change the management of small parts of parks and other green spaces to favour nature conservation, according with the principles of the Biodiversity Action Plans. If an opportunity arises, develop a larger area of accessible natural green space in the north west of Lyndon.
Wildlife corridors	These link areas of similar types of natural habitat, and link the designated wildlife sites with the wider areas.	This area has fairly limited wildlife space, particularly in Lyndon, although there are two main wildlife corridors (the canal and railway). There are more natural areas, woodland and wildlife sites in Elmdon.	Support management of the canal and railway embankment as wildlife corridors. Seek opportunities to make new linked habitats through adoption of Biodiversity Action Plans at the site level e.g. on school and allotment sites.
Local Nature Reserves	A minimum of 1 hectare of Local Nature Reserve per 1000 people (authority wide)	Current provision for the zone is 0.14 ha/1000, which is the lowest within the Borough. There is one site which is part of Elmdon Park	Develop new LNR sites when opportunities arise.

ZONE 2 - SILHILL AND ST ALPHEGE

GREEN SPACE	LOCAL STANDARD (for Zone, unless otherwise stated)	CURRENT PROVISION	COMPARISON WITH STANDARD	PRIORITIES FOR ACTION
Children's Playgrounds	Local Equipped Area for Play within 400 m of all houses in settlements more than 500 population. Minimum of 1 LEAP/ 4300 in urban areas	1 LEAPs	The existing LEAP provision does not sufficiently provide for the population. There are gaps in the geographical spread of provision, and some people have no playgrounds within 400 m. The catchments of the 2 NEAPs overlap.	Provide additional sites: 4 LEAPs Ideally review location of the NEAP sites to provide better geographical spread. Ensure all sites provide good play value, including for children with disabilities.
	Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play within 1000 m of all houses in settlements of more than 1000 population. Minimum of 1 NEAP/ 8600 in urban areas.	2 NEAPs	Overall there are too few sites to provide for the number of children in the area.	
Provision For Teenagers And Young People	Skate and other youth provision: one site Additional provision of Multi-Use Games areas to be considered	1 site	The Tudor Grange skate park fulfils this standard, but there may be a need for a MUGA(s), possibly at a different location.	Consider development of new MUGA site(s).
Allotments	0.3 ha/1000	0.05 ha/1000	There are no allotment sites in St Alphege. The Lode Heath site in Silhill has 100% occupancy	Develop new allotment provision, with the highest priority being St Alphege ward. A total of around 6 ha are needed to meet the standard.
Grass Playing Fields	1.64 ha/1000	0.89 ha/1000	Insufficient space for football in secure community use. Sufficient provision for cricket and rugby.	Need to make more secure the informal community use of school sites for mini and junior football, or find new community use sites equating to around 4 ha.

GREEN SPACE	LOCAL STANDARD (for Zone, unless otherwise stated)	CURRENT PROVISION	PRIORITIES FOR ACTION
Neighbourhood Green Space	Areas of unrestricted public access between 0.2 and 1.5 ha, with at least 0.2 ha of space within 400 m of homes in all settlements with more than 300 people.	Most people have access to green space, but there are gaps on the western side of St Alphege.	A small area of green space should be developed which will complete the coverage.
Local Area Parks/Local Area Green Spaces	Areas of unrestricted public access between 1.5 and 8 ha within 1000 m of all settlements with more than 300 people.	Almost everyone in this zone has access to local area parks within 1000 m	Improve the quality of existing provision
Principal Parks	Areas of unrestricted public access of over 8 ha within 2 km of all settlements of over 5000 people. These parks have a wide range of facilities for everyone.	This standard is met	Improve the quality of existing provision, including Green Flag status
Other Major Parks	Areas of unrestricted public access of over 8 ha. These large parks may contain similar features to the Principal Parks, but tend to have a less formal character, and often more nature conservation interest.	There are no other large areas of accessible green space in this Zone	Not applicable
Strategic routes	These include the canals and their towpaths, and the most important cycling and walking routes.	There are limited cycle routes in the area, and these do not connect the Town Centre well with the surrounding areas. Some strategic routes have been identified.	Strengthen the cycle network to link the Town Centre to other areas, through the green spaces where possible.

Accessible Natural Green Space	<p>Accessible natural area greater than 0.09 ha within 300 m of home for all settlements having a population greater than 300.</p> <p>1 accessible 10 ha or greater site of natural green space within 2 km catchment of home for all settlements having a population of greater than 5000.</p>	<p>Only part of the Zone has access to the smaller areas of natural green space within 300 m of home.</p> <p>Everyone has access to a larger area of natural green space.</p>	<p>In areas of deficiency in the smaller spaces, change the management of small parts of parks and other green spaces to favour nature conservation, according with the principles of the Biodiversity Action Plans.</p>
Wildlife corridors	<p>These link areas of similar types of natural habitat, and link the designated wildlife sites with the wider areas.</p>	<p>Parts of the Zone have good wildlife sites and corridors, particularly Brueton Park, but other areas to the west and north of the zone are less well linked.</p>	<p>Support management of the river and railway embankment as wildlife corridors. Seek opportunities to make new linked habitats through adoption of Biodiversity Action Plans at the site level e.g. on school and allotment sites.</p>
Local Nature Reserves	<p>A minimum of 1 hectare of Local Nature Reserve per 1000 people (authority wide)</p>	<p>Current provision for the zone is 1.18ha/1000, provided by the Brueton LNR. Provision in this zone therefore exceeds the minimum sought.</p>	<p>Manage and improve the existing LNR</p>

ZONE 3 - SHIRLEY EAST, SHIRLEY WEST, SHIRLEY SOUTH

GREEN SPACE	LOCAL STANDARD (for Zone, unless otherwise stated)	CURRENT PROVISION	COMPARISON WITH STANDARD	PRIORITIES FOR ACTION
Children's Playgrounds	Local Equipped Area for Play within 400 m of all houses in settlements more than 500 population. Minimum of 1 LEAP/ 4300 in urban areas	2 LEAPs	The existing playground provision does not sufficiently provide for the population. This Zone and Zone 4 the worst provided of all areas. There are gaps in the geographical spread of provision, and many people have no playgrounds within 400 m.	Provide additional sites: 5 LEAPs, and 2 NEAPs Ensure all sites provide good play value, including for children with disabilities.
	Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play within 1000 m of all houses in settlements of more than 1000 population. Minimum of 1 NEAP/ 8600 in urban areas.	2 NEAPs	Overall there are too few sites to provide for the number of children in the area.	
Provision For Teenagers And Young People	Skate and other youth provision: one site	1 site	The current provision meets the standard.	Consider development of other new MUGA site(s) as part of the MUGA strategy.
	Additional provision of Multi-Use Games areas to be considered	1 site proposed		
Allotments	0.3 ha/1000	0.08 ha/1000	The Zone falls short of the standard. There are currently three allotment sites, all at 100% occupancy.	Develop new allotment provision. A total of around 8 ha is needed to meet the standard.
Grass Playing Fields	1.64 ha/1000	1.15 ha/1000	Sufficient space for football and rugby, but insufficient space for cricket.	Develop new cricket opportunities, ideally located at school sites.

GREEN SPACE	LOCAL STANDARD (for Zone, unless otherwise stated)	CURRENT PROVISION	PRIORITIES FOR ACTION
Neighbourhood Green Space	Areas of unrestricted public access between 0.2 and 1.5 ha, with at least 0.2 ha of space within 400 m of homes in all settlements with more than 300 people.	Everyone has access to an area of at least 0.2 ha of green space within 400 m, with the exception of the western side of Shirley South.	A small area of green space should be developed in Shirley South, which will complete the coverage.
Local Area Parks/Local Area Green Spaces	Areas of unrestricted public access between 1.5 and 8 ha within 1000 m of all settlements with more than 300 people.	Everyone has access to local area parks	Improve the quality of existing provision
Principal Parks	Areas of unrestricted public access of over 8 ha within 2 km of all settlements of over 5000 people. These parks have a wide range of facilities for everyone.	Everyone has access to a Principal Park.	Improve the quality of existing provision, retaining/achieving Green Flag status for all Principle Parks
Other Major Parks	Areas of unrestricted public access of over 8 ha. These large parks may contain similar features to the Principal Parks, but tend to have a less formal character, and often more nature conservation interest.	There are no other large areas of accessible green space in this Zone	Not applicable

Strategic routes	These include the canals and their towpaths, and the most important cycling and walking routes.	There are limited cycle routes in the area, and these do not connect the local centre or Solihull Town Centre well with the surrounding areas. A short section of canal passes through the Zone	Strengthen the cycle network to link the developing local centre and Solihull Town Centre to other areas, through the green spaces where possible. Improve the canal towpath and its access points, to make it fully accessible for walkers and cyclists, and for disabled users.
Accessible Natural Green Space	Accessible natural area greater than 0.09 ha within 300 m of home for all settlements having a population greater than 300. 1 accessible 10 ha or greater site of natural green space within 2 km catchment of home for all settlements having a population of greater than 5000.	Only part of the Zone has access to the smaller areas of natural green space within 300 m of home. Much of Shirley West and the west side of Shirley East do not meet this standard.	In areas of deficiency in the smaller spaces, change the management of small parts of parks and other green spaces to favour nature conservation, according with the principles of the Biodiversity Action Plans. If opportunities arise, develop a 10 ha natural green space.
Wildlife corridors	These link areas of similar types of natural habitat, and link the designated wildlife sites with the wider areas.	The western parts of the Zone have good wildlife sites and corridors, but much of the rest of the Zone is less well linked.	Support management of the river and railway embankment as wildlife corridors. Seek opportunities to make new linked habitats through adoption of Biodiversity Action Plans at the site level e.g. on school and allotment sites.
Local Nature Reserves	A minimum of 1 hectare of Local Nature Reserve per 1000 people (authority wide)	Current provision for the zone is 0.42 ha/1000, provided by two sites in north of the Zone.	Develop new LNRs where opportunities arise.

ZONE 4 - BICKENHILL AND MERIDEN

GREEN SPACE	LOCAL STANDARD (for Zone, unless otherwise stated)	CURRENT PROVISION	COMPARISON WITH STANDARD	PRIORITIES FOR ACTION
Children's Playgrounds	Local Equipped Area for Play within 400 m of all houses in settlements more than 500 population. Minimum of 1 LEAP/ 4300 in urban areas	1 LEAPs	The existing playground provision does not sufficiently provide for the population. This Zone and Zone 3 are the worst provided of all areas.	Provide additional sites: 4 LEAPs, and 1 NEAPs The priorities for provision are Balsall Common and Hampton-in-Arden Ensure all sites provide good play value, including for children with disabilities.
	Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play within 1000 m of all houses in settlements of more than 1000 population. Minimum of 1 NEAP/ 8600 in urban areas.	2 NEAPs	There are gaps in the geographical spread of provision, and many people have no playgrounds within 400 m. Overall there are too few sites to provide for the number of children in the area.	
Provision For Teenagers And Young People	Skate and other youth provision: one site Additional provision of Multi-Use Games areas to be considered	1 sites	The current provision at Lavender Hall meets the standard for skate parks. There is no provision of MUGAs in the area	Consider development of new MUGA site(s) as part of the MUGA strategy.
Allotments	0.3 ha/1000	0.04 ha/1000	The Zone falls short of the standard. There are currently three allotment sites, two of which are in Meriden village.	Develop new allotment provision, with the priority as Balsall Common. A total of around 6 ha are needed to meet the standard.
Grass Playing Fields	1.64 ha/1000	3.91 ha/1000	This area hosts a number of sports clubs that draw their membership from outside the Zone. The total amount of pitch space, although above the overall standard for Solihull is not therefore a 'surplus'.	Develop formal relationships between SMBC and the clubs to deliver sports development opportunities and to improve the quality of the existing sports sites, particularly the changing provision.

GREEN SPACE	LOCAL STANDARD (for Zone, unless otherwise stated)	CURRENT PROVISION	PRIORITIES FOR ACTION
Neighbourhood Green Space	Areas of unrestricted public access between 0.2 and 1.5 ha, with at least 0.2 ha of space within 400 m of homes in all settlements with more than 300 people.	All of the towns and villages with over 300 people meet this standard.	Improve the quality of the existing provision
Local Area Parks/Local Area Green Spaces	Areas of unrestricted public access between 1.5 and 8 ha within 1000 m of all settlements with more than 300 people.	Everyone has access to local area parks to this standard, except for Berkswell	Develop a local area park/local area green space for Berkswell.
Principal Parks	Areas of unrestricted public access of over 8 ha within 2 km of all settlements of over 5000 people. These parks have a wide range of facilities for everyone.	This standard is met.	Improve the quality of existing provision, achieving Green Flag status for Lavender Hall Park.
Other Major Parks	Areas of unrestricted public access of over 8 ha. These large parks may contain similar features to the Principal Parks, but tend to have a less formal character, and often more nature conservation interest.	There are no other large areas of accessible green space in this Zone	Not applicable

Strategic routes	These include the canals and their towpaths, and the most important cycling and walking routes.	The cycle and walking routes, and other public rights of way are limited and poorly connected. The National Cycle Network route 53 is not yet completed, and there is uncertainty over the future of the Greenway running from Balsall Common towards Kenilworth.	Complete Route 53 of the National Cycle Network, and develop the Greenway to enable unrestricted access for walking, cycling and possibly horse riding. Consider how the rights of way network can be made more valuable and attractive, including making links in the bridleway network.
Accessible Natural Green Space	Accessible natural area greater than 0.09 ha within 300 m of home for all settlements having a population greater than 300. 1 accessible 10 ha or greater site of natural green space within 2 km catchment of home for all settlements having a population of greater than 5000.	This standard is met for most of the Zone, with the exception of parts of Balsall Common and Berkswell. Millison's Wood is the only site that falls into this category. There is a lack of provision for Balsall Common.	In areas of deficiency in the smaller spaces, change the management of small parts of parks and other green spaces to favour nature conservation, according with the principles of the Biodiversity Action Plans. If opportunities arise, develop a 10 ha natural green space close to Balsall Common.
Wildlife corridors	These link areas of similar types of natural habitat, and link the designated wildlife sites with the wider areas.	There are a number of important wildlife sites in the Zone, and the River Blythe is a major wildlife corridor, together with the railway line. There is a continuing need to retain the existing habitats and to support nature conservation within the area.	Support management of the river and railway embankment as wildlife corridors. Seek opportunities to make new linked habitats through adoption of Biodiversity Action Plans at the site level, and through agri-environment schemes, including new woodland planting.
Local Nature Reserves	A minimum of 1 hectare of Local Nature Reserve per 1000 people (authority wide)	Current provision for the zone is 0.69 ha/1000, provided on one site, Millison's Wood.	Develop new LNRs where opportunities arise.

ZONE 5 - BLYTHE, DORRIDGE AND HOCKLEY HEATH, AND KNOWLE

GREEN SPACE	LOCAL STANDARD (for Zone, unless otherwise stated)	CURRENT PROVISION	COMPARISON WITH STANDARD	PRIORITIES FOR ACTION
Children's Playgrounds	Local Equipped Area for Play within 400 m of all houses in settlements more than 500 population. Minimum of 1 LEAP/ 4300 in urban areas	5 LEAPs	The existing playground provision does not sufficiently provide for the population, either in number or in scope of facility as there are no NEAPs.	Provide additional sites: 2 LEAPs, and 4 NEAPs The priorities for provision are Hockley Heath, Cheswick Green, Meriden, Dickens Heath, and Dorridge.
	Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play within 1000 m of all houses in settlements of more than 1000 population. Minimum of 1 NEAP/ 8600 in urban areas.	0 NEAPs	There are gaps in the geographical spread of provision, and many people have no playgrounds within 400 m. Overall there are too few sites to provide for the number of children in the area.	Ensure all sites provide good play value, including for children with disabilities.
Provision For Teenagers And Young People	Skate and other youth provision: one site Additional provision of Multi-Use Games areas to be considered	1 site	The current provision at Bentley Heath meets this standard.	Consider the development of additional MUGA site(s) as part of the MUGA strategy.
Allotments	0.3 ha/1000	0.13 ha/1000	The Zone falls short of the standard. There are currently three allotment sites in the Zone.	Develop new allotment provision, with the priority as Dorridge, Hockley Heath and Cheswick Green. A total of around 5 ha are required.
Grass Playing Fields	1.64 ha/1000	2.81 ha/1000	This area hosts a number of sports clubs that draw their membership from outside the Zone. The total amount of pitch space, although above the overall standard for Solihull is not therefore a 'surplus'.	Develop formal relationships between SMBC and the clubs to deliver sports development opportunities and to improve the quality of the existing sports sites, particularly the changing provision.

GREEN SPACE	LOCAL STANDARD (for Zone, unless otherwise stated)	CURRENT PROVISION	PRIORITIES FOR ACTION
Neighbourhood Green Space	Areas of unrestricted public access between 0.2 and 1.5 ha, with at least 0.2 ha of space within 400 m of homes in all settlements with more than 300 people.	The Zone meets this standard.	Improve the quality of the existing provision
Local Area Parks/Local Area Green Spaces	Areas of unrestricted public access between 1.5 and 8 ha within 1000 m of all settlements with more than 300 people.	Most of the Zone meets this standard, except for part of Cheswick Green.	Develop a local area park/local area green space for Cheswick Green.
Principal Parks	Areas of unrestricted public access of over 8 ha within 2 km of all settlements of over 5000 people. These parks have a wide range of facilities for everyone.	The Zone meets this standard	Improve the quality of existing provision, achieving Green Flag status for Jobs Close and Dorridge Parks.
Other Major Parks	Areas of unrestricted public access of over 8 ha. These large parks may contain similar features to the Principal Parks, but tend to have a less formal character, and often more nature conservation interest.	Blythe Valley Country Park provides additional opportunities. Earlwood Lakes is a major recreation resource for southern Solihull, and it lies on the southern boundary of the Borough. SMBC is one of the partners involved in managing this British Waterways site.	Complete the development of BVCP. Support the improvement of public access and visitor management at Earlwood Lakes (with the partnership)

Strategic routes	These include the canals and their towpaths, and the most important cycling and walking routes.	The two canals are the main strategic routes through the Zone, although there are a small number of other 'strategic' cycle and walking routes. The rights of way network is generally limited and poorly connected.	Improve the canal towpath and its access points, to make it fully accessible for walkers and cyclists, and for disabled users. Consider how the rights of way network can be made more valuable and attractive, including making links in the bridleway network.
Accessible Natural Green Space	Accessible natural area greater than 0.09 ha within 300 m of home for all settlements having a population greater than 300. 1 accessible 10 ha or greater site of natural green space within 2 km catchment of home for all settlements having a population of greater than 5000.	This standard is met for part of the Zone, with notable gaps in Dorridge, Knowle, Hockley Heath and Cheswick Green. The Zone meets this standard.	In areas of deficiency in the smaller spaces, change the management of small parts of parks and other green spaces to favour nature conservation, according with the principles of the Biodiversity Action Plans.
Wildlife corridors	These link areas of similar types of natural habitat, and link the designated wildlife sites with the wider areas.	There are a number of important wildlife sites in the Zone, and the River Blythe, the canals and railway are major wildlife corridors. There is a continuing need to retain the existing habitats and to support nature conservation within the area.	Support management of the river, canal, and railway embankment as wildlife corridors. Seek opportunities to make new linked habitats through adoption of Biodiversity Action Plans at the site level, and through agri-environment schemes, including new woodland planting.
Local Nature Reserves	A minimum of 1 hectare of Local Nature Reserve per 1000 people (authority wide)	Current provision for the zone is 1.21 ha /1000 provided in two sites in Dorridge and Knowle.	Manage and improve the existing LNRs.

ZONE 6 - CASTLE BROMWICH, CHELMSLEY WOOD, KINGSHURST AND FORDBRIDGE, SMITHS WOOD

GREEN SPACE	LOCAL STANDARD (for Zone, unless otherwise stated)	CURRENT PROVISION	COMPARISON WITH STANDARD	PRIORITIES FOR ACTION
Children's Playgrounds	Local Equipped Area for Play within 400 m of all houses in settlements more than 500 population. Minimum of 1 LEAP/ 4300 in urban areas	3 LEAPs	The existing playground provision does not sufficiently provide for the population. There are gaps in the geographical spread of provision, and many people have no playgrounds within 400 m.	Provide additional sites: 11 LEAPs, sited to fill existing geographical gaps in provision. Ensure all sites provide good play value, including for children with disabilities.
	Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play within 1000 m of all houses in settlements of more than 1000 population. Minimum of 1 NEAP/ 8600 in urban areas.	8 NEAPs	There are a sufficient number of NEAPs, but their catchments overlap. Overall there are too few sites to provide for the number of children in the area, although it is the best provided Zone within Solihull.	
Provision For Teenagers And Young People	Skate and other youth provision: one site Additional provision of Multi-Use Games areas to be considered	5 sites	The current provision meets this standard.	Consider how more sports development and youth development opportunities can be linked to the existing sites, and how they can be better managed to reduce anti-social behaviour.
Allotments	0.3 ha/1000	0.03 ha/1000	The Zone falls short of the standard. There are no allotment sites in Castle Bromwich or Smiths Wood. The three sites in the Zone are managed by the relevant Parish/Town Councils.	Develop new allotment provision, with the priority areas being Castle Bromwich and Kingshurst and Fordbridge. A total area of 14 ha is required to meet this standard.
Grass Playing Fields	1.64 ha/1000	0.83 ha/1000	There is insufficient playing field space for football (particularly for juniors), cricket and rugby, and the sites are relatively poor quality.	Secure the informal use of school sites, particularly for mini and junior football, and remark some senior pitches for juniors. Improve the quality of Solihull MBC sites. Develop new cricket and rugby opportunities, ideally linked to schools. Develop new pitch sites as opportunities arise.

<u>GREEN SPACE</u>	LOCAL STANDARD (for Zone, unless otherwise stated)	CURRENT PROVISION	PRIORITIES FOR ACTION
Neighbourhood Green Space	Areas of unrestricted public access between 0.2 and 1.5 ha, with at least 0.2 ha of space within 400 m of homes in all settlements with more than 300 people.	The Zone meets this standard.	Improve the quality of the existing provision, as many of the current spaces are poorly designed and have a high level of problems with anti-social behaviour.
Local Area Parks/Local Area Green Spaces	Areas of unrestricted public access between 1.5 and 8 ha within 1000 m of all settlements with more than 300 people.	The Zone meets this standard.	Improve the quality of the existing provision. Use the Regeneration opportunities to make more larger park areas, better linked to the surrounding housing.
Principal Parks	Areas of unrestricted public access of over 8 ha within 2 km of all settlements of over 5000 people. These parks have a wide range of facilities for everyone.	The Zone meets this standard except for the north of Castle Bromwich	Improve the quality of existing provision, achieving Green Flag status for Babbs Mill and Meriden Parks. If an opportunity arises, develop a new Principal Park in the north of Castle Bromwich or support Birmingham CC to develop a similar facility.
Other Major Parks	Areas of unrestricted public access of over 8 ha. These large parks may contain similar features to the Principal Parks, but tend to have a less formal character, and often more nature conservation interest.	The River Cole Project Kingfisher green space is a major asset for the area as are Marston Green and Bluebell, which form part of the boundary of the Regeneration Zone.	Support the continuation of Project Kingfisher and seek improvements to the quality of the other parks.

Strategic routes	These include the canals and their towpaths, and the most important cycling and walking routes.	This area is heavily constrained by the motorway and major road networks, the airport and NEC, and main railway lines. It does have some strategic cycle and walking routes, a number of which have been identified in the North Solihull Regeneration Zone Strategy. More are needed to link the Zone to the south of the Borough, to Birmingham's green spaces, and to North Warwickshire. Many of the 'local' routes are or appear to be unsafe, and therefore receive limited use.	Develop safer and better links between green spaces, residential and other areas of the Zone. Support and develop Project Kingfisher. If possible, improve the links into North Warwickshire across the motorways.
Accessible Natural Green Space	Accessible natural area greater than 0.09 ha within 300 m of home for all settlements having a population greater than 300. 1 accessible 10 ha or greater site of natural green space within 2 km catchment of home for all settlements having a population of greater than 5000.	This standard is met for part of the Zone, with notable gaps in areas away from the larger green spaces. The Zone meets this standard except for a small area in the north of Castle Bromwich.	In areas of deficiency in the smaller spaces, change the management of small parts of parks and other green spaces to favour nature conservation, according with the principles of the Biodiversity Action Plans. Use Regeneration Zone opportunities to design in these spaces.
Wildlife corridors	These link areas of similar types of natural habitat, and link the designated wildlife sites with the wider areas.	There are some important wildlife sites in the Zone, particularly along the River Cole. There is a continuing need to retain the existing habitats and to support nature conservation within the area.	Seek opportunities to make new linked habitats through adoption of Biodiversity Action Plans at the site level, new woodland planting. These corridors should be incorporated into the Regeneration local area designs.
Local Nature Reserves	A minimum of 1 hectare of Local Nature Reserve per 1000 people (authority wide)	Current provision for the zone is 1.84 ha/1000 provided in three sites. A further two sites are proposed to be designated.	Manage and improve the existing LNRs, and establish the proposed LNRs.

GLOSSARY

TYPES OF GREEN SPACE

Different types of green space are defined in PPG17 Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation. These are:

Green Space Type	Primary purpose of the space	Examples from Solihull
Parks and gardens	Accessible, high quality opportunities for informal recreation and community events.	Meriden Park, Elmdon Park, Malvern Park
Natural and semi-natural green spaces including urban woodland	Wildlife conservation, biodiversity and environmental education and awareness.	Smiths Wood, Millison's Wood
Green corridors	Walking, cycling or horse riding, whether for leisure purposes or travel, and opportunities for wildlife migration.	Canals, footpaths
Outdoor sports facilities	Participation in outdoor sports, such as pitch sports, tennis, bowls, athletics or countryside and water sports.	Solihull MBC and private club football pitches, rugby clubs, cricket clubs, tennis
Amenity green space	Opportunities for informal activities close to home or work or enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas.	Beechcroft Openspace, Streetsbrook Openspace
Provision for children and young people	Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children and young people, such as equipped play areas, ball courts, skateboards areas, and teenage shelters.	Tudor Grange, Lavender Hall, Babbs Mill
Allotments, community gardens and urban farms	Opportunities for those people who wish to do so to grow their own produce as part of the long term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion.	Jobs Close, Bentley Heath, Kingshurst
Cemeteries, disused churchyards and other burial grounds	Quiet contemplation and burial of the dead, often linked to the promotion of wildlife conservation and biodiversity.	Robin Hood, Widney Manor

DEFINITIONS

Accessible Play Space

A play space in which physical and environmental barriers which could exclude children with impairments - such as uneven surfaces, narrow gates and steps - are removed by good environmental planning and design.

Inclusive Play Space

An accessible play space in which disabled children and their non-disabled peers feel comfortable being together in the ways they choose. Making play spaces inclusive refers to actively circumventing social barriers such as fear, embarrassment or discriminatory attitudes which could exclude children with impairments from otherwise accessible places to play. It is important to note that the term 'inclusive' is also sometimes broadened to refer to other factors such as ethnicity, for example when social inclusion is being referred to.

Section 106 Agreements

Types of Planning Obligation authorised by **Section 106** of the **Town and Country Planning Act 1990** as amended by the **Planning and Compensation Act 1991**. When a developer seeks planning permission a Section 106 agreement is negotiated between the developers and the planning authority. These agreements are the main instrument for placing obligations on developers, often to require them to spend money on providing community benefits. Section 106 agreements are usually in force for 15-20 years but can be appealed after 5 years.

Green Flag

National standard for parks and green spaces across England and Wales promoted by CABE Space.

ABBREVIATIONS

CABE	Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment
CIPFA	Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
GIS	Geographical Information System
Ha	Hectare
LAPS	Local Areas For Play
LBAPs	Local Biodiversity Action Plans
LEAPS	Local Equipped Areas For Play
LNR	Local Nature Reserves
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
MUGA	Multi-use Games Area
NEAPS	Neighbourhood Equipped Areas For Play
NPFA	National Playing Fields Association
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
ONS	Office of National Statistics
PCT	Primary Care Trust
POS	Public Open Space
PPG	Planning Policy Guidance

RIGS	Regionally Important Geological Sites
RPG	Regional Planning Guidance
RSS	Regional Spatial Strategy
SINCS	Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document
SSSI	Sites of Special Scientific Interest
TGR	Team Generation Rate
UDP	Unitary Development Plan
WCC	Warwickshire County Council

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CONSULTEES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DRAFT STRATEGY

Age Safe
Balsall Parish Council
Barston Parish Council
Berkswell Parish Council
Bickenhill Parish Council
Birmingham and Solihull Midweek Conservation Volunteers
Birmingham International Airport*
British Waterways
CABE Space
Castle Bromwich Parish Council
Chelmsley Wood Town Council
Colebridge Trust
Disabled People's Network
Environment Agency*
Fordbridge Pathfinder Manager
Fordbridge Town Council
Groundwork Birmingham and Solihull
Hampton-in-Arden Parish Council
Hockley Heath Parish Council
Kingshurst Parish Council
Knowle Society*
Local Agenda 21*
Meriden Parish Council
North Solihull Regeneration
Primary Care Trust
Project Kingfisher
Schools Sports Coordinator
SMBC Bereavement Services, Manager and Registrar
SMBC Black and Ethnic Minorities Officer
SMBC Communications Manager
SMBC Community Housing, Estates Services Manager
SMBC Community Liaison Manager
SMBC Community Services (Sport and Recreation)
SMBC Cycling officer
SMBC Early years
SMBC Ecologist
SMBC Economic Development Business Liaison Officer
SMBC Education Facilities Officer
SMBC Estates
SMBC GP referral exercise manager
SMBC Green Scheme Officer
SMBC Housing
SMBC IT Officer

SMBC Principal Landscape Architect
SMBC Local Nature Reserves Officer
SMBC Local Strategic Partnership Project Manager
SMBC North Solihull Regeneration Project
SMBC Park Rangers
SMBC Neighbourhood Managers
SMBC Planning
SMBC Play and Allotments Officer
SMBC Regeneration Officer
SMBC Rights of Way
SMBC Social Services
SMBC Town Centre Manager
SMBC Youth Service
SMBC Zone Co-ordinator (Horticulture)
SMBC Zone Co-ordinator (Trees and Projects)
Smiths Wood Parish Council
SNAP
Solihull Conservation Volunteers
Solihull Residents' Association*
SOLO
Sport England
Tree Warden Group
Walking for Health Group
Warwickshire County Council
Warwickshire Rural Community Council*
Warwickshire Wildlife Trust
Youth Council

Note:

* denotes consultation via Local Strategic Partnership