

## COUNCIL – 25TH FEBRUARY 2013

### Report of the Cabinet

#### ITEM 7.1 CHARNWOOD OPEN SPACES STRATEGY

##### Purpose of Report

To set out, following a period of public consultation, Charnwood's Open Spaces Strategy for 2013-2028, for consideration and approval.

##### Recommendations

1. That the Charnwood Open Spaces Strategy for 2013-2028, as set out in Appendix A of the report of Cabinet (attached as an Annex), be approved; and
2. that delegated authority be given to the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces, in consultation with the Lead Member for Waste Operations and Open Spaces, to make minor amendments to the Strategy prior to publication, taking into account the recommendations of the Overview Scrutiny Group on 11th February 2013 and the comments of Cabinet members.

##### Reasons

1. To enable the Strategy, which forms part of the Council's Policy Framework, to be adopted in order to protect and improve open spaces in Charnwood.
2. To ensure that the issues raised by Overview Scrutiny Group, reflected in the second recommendation of the Group to Cabinet, along with additional modifications identified by Cabinet Members to be incorporated as appropriate into the Strategy.

##### Policy Justification and Previous Decisions

The Council's Corporate Plan contains a framework for the delivery of services that relate back to the Cabinet's overarching vision for the Borough to 2031. In particular, the Corporate Plan states that – "We will protect and enhance the green and open space in the Borough."

The Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) for Charnwood promotes community involvement, greater use of public open space and more effective cross-departmental and partnership working.

The National Planning Policy Framework explains the contribution that the planning system can make to deliver social, recreational and cultural facilities and services that the community needs. Paragraph 73 says that planning policies should be based on robust and up to date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to

determine what open space, sports and recreational provision is required to meet the Council's objectives and priorities.

Charnwood Borough Council published an Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study in 2010. This study meets the requirement of Paragraph 73 of the National Planning Policy Framework and provides the evidence baseline from which an Open Spaces Strategy can be prepared.

The Borough Council is currently preparing its Local Plan Core Strategy. When this is adopted late in 2013 it will take forward the land use implications of the Council's Open Spaces Strategy.

At its meeting on 14th February 2013, Cabinet considered a report of the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces setting out, following a period of public consultation, Charnwood's Open Spaces Strategy for 2013-2028, for consideration and recommendation to Council, which is attached at Annex 1.

Cabinet also considered the comments and recommendations of the Overview Scrutiny Group on 11th February 2013, which is attached at Annex 2.

The Cabinet resolved to recommend to Council

1. that the Charnwood Open Spaces Strategy for 2013-2028, as set out in Appendix A of the report of the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces, be approved; and
2. that delegated authority be given to the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces, in consultation with the Lead Member for Waste Operations and Open Spaces, to make minor amendments to the Strategy prior to publication, taking into account the recommendations of the Overview Scrutiny Group on 11th February 2013 and the comments of Cabinet members.

Cabinet's reasons for the recommendations is set out in the Reasons section above.

#### Implementation Timetable including Future Decisions and Scrutiny

Once approved by Council, the Strategy is adopted and this point it will be implemented and available to the public and stakeholders as part of the Council's policy framework.

#### Report Implications

##### *Financial Implications*

There are no financial implications associated with the recommendations of the Cabinet further to those detailed in the report of the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces, attached as Annex 1.

##### *Risk Management*

There are no risks associated with the recommendations of the Cabinet further to those detailed in the report of the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces, attached as Annex 1.

Key Decision: Yes

Background Papers: No additional background papers.

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**Draft Report of the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces  
Lead Member: Councillor Hilary Fryer**

ITEM 7      CHARNWOOD OPEN SPACES STRATEGY

Purpose of the Report

To set out, following a period of public consultation, Charnwood's Open Spaces Strategy for 2013-2028, for consideration and approval.

Recommendation

That it be recommended to Council that the Charnwood Open Spaces Strategy for 2013-2028, as set out in Appendix A be approved.

Reasons

To enable the Strategy, which forms part of Council's Policy Framework, to be adopted in order to protect and improve open spaces in Charnwood.

Policy Context

The Council's Corporate Plan contains a framework for the delivery of services that relate back to the Cabinet's overarching vision for the Borough to 2031. In particular, the Corporate Plan states that – *"We will protect and enhance the green and open space in the Borough."*

The Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) for Charnwood promotes community involvement, greater use of public open space and more effective cross-departmental and partnership working.

The National Planning Policy Framework explains the contribution that the planning system can make to deliver social, recreational and cultural facilities and services that the community needs. Paragraph 73 says that planning policies should be based on robust and up to date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sports and recreational provision is required to meet the Council's objectives and priorities.

Charnwood Borough Council published an Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study in 2010. This study meets the requirement of Paragraph 73 of the National Planning Policy Framework and provides the evidence baseline from which an Open Spaces Strategy can be prepared.

The Borough Council is currently preparing its Local Plan Core Strategy. When this is adopted late in 2013 it will take forward the land use implications of the Council's Open Spaces Strategy.

## Implementation Timetable including Scrutiny and Future Decisions

Policy Scrutiny Group have considered the process for the creation of this updated strategy at its meeting 9th October 2012. Cabinet then approved the draft Open Spaces Strategy in October 2012 for public consultation.

The Consultation ran during November and December and was available to the public on the Council's website as well as being circulated to a range of stakeholder organisations.

As it forms part of the Council's policy framework, it is being submitted to Cabinet to recommend to Council for final approval in February 2013.

## Financial Implications

Any financial implications arising from the existing Strategy (2004) have been identified in this year's budget and in the Medium Term Financial Strategy. Financial implications of the revised Strategy (2013) include the need to secure maintenance funding for any new responsibilities for open space management that is given to the Authority through new developments in the future. This additional funding is largely expected to come through the planning system e.g. Section 106 funding or CIL funding.

## Risk Management

The risks associated with the decision Cabinet is asked to make and proposed actions to mitigate those risks are set out in the table below.

Risk Identified	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Management Actions Planned
Failure to deliver activities within the Strategy	Possible	Major	The strategy will be the subject of ongoing monitoring through the development of an annual delivery plan that identifies the ways in which prioritised projects will be delivered. This will include monitoring of financial support for the delivery of new open space and improvements to existing open space by the service. The strategy will also be reviewed within five years to ensure the direction and pace of travel meets expectations within the economic constraints the Council is working.
Failure to support the Council's Planning Core	Possible	Major	The Council's Officers responsible for the two Strategies have worked closely

Strategy			on the development process to ensure they support each other's aim's, objectives and priorities.
Failure to identify resources to deliver the Strategy, or sufficient income being derived from the Strategy objectives	Possible	Major	The delivery of the Strategy requires funding sources to be identified to support the Council's own revenue and capital programme. In addition, the delivery will rely on funding through the planning development system such as section 106 and the future Community Infrastructure Levy.  Future projections take account of prudent forecasting as a result of a down turn in the economy

### Equality and Diversity

The Strategy is intended to support the needs of those most disadvantaged in the community by the supporting the provision of open space, and in particular outdoor play and sports facilities, that meet the needs of all sectors of the community including the disabled. In addition, accessing nature is a key project that is supported by this Open Spaces Strategy, providing support for under-represented groups in Charnwood to enjoy the benefits that open space can offer.

### Crime and Disorder

The Strategy includes an overarching Policy Statement on the positive impact open spaces management has on community cohesion and the Council will work with our partners to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour.

### Sustainability

Open spaces management is clearly an area that can have a positive impact on sustainability, be it through sustainable land management practices, to the use of resources and procurement. The Policy Statements on Protection of Open Spaces, Management and Maintenance, as well as Biodiversity will ensure the Council acts responsibly in the sustainable management of open space in the Borough.

Key Decision: Yes

Background Papers: Draft Open Spaces Strategy  
Appendices to the Open Spaces Strategy – February 2013

Report to Policy Scrutiny Group, 9th October 2012  
Report to Policy Scrutiny Group, 14th August 2012  
Report to Policy Scrutiny Group, 3rd January 2012  
Report to Policy Scrutiny Group, 18th October  
2011  
Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study, on  
30th November 2010 and 27th July 2011

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## Part B

### Background

1. There is considerable national demand for better quality parks and public open spaces. Surveys repeatedly show how much the public values them, while research reveals how closely the quality of public open spaces links to levels of health, crime and the quality of life in every neighbourhood. Beneficial outcomes provided by open space broadly include:-

<b>Table 1 – Benefits of Open Space</b>	
Health and Wellbeing	Wellbeing is a positive state of both mental and physical health and can be effective in a participatory or passive capacity.
Biodiversity	Biodiversity is fundamental to the sustainability of our ecosystem including habitat management, nature conservation and protecting species.
Climate Mitigation	Sustainable Urban Drainage mitigate against flash floods, filtrate polluted surface water and reduce demands on existing systems. Plants also significantly cool and shade, and absorb CO2 and other pollutants.
Social Cohesion	Open spaces encourage inter-generational engagement to fostering a sense of community ownership. Open spaces transcend culture and allow communities to meet in a neutral space.
Heritage	Open spaces can be places where heritage features are found, natural and man-made, and places where memories are formed.
Economy	High quality open spaces have a positive impact on the local economy by attracting and maintaining the local work force.
Learning	Open spaces play a significant role in allowing children and young people to play, which is an integral part of their development. Open spaces also provide other opportunities to learn, from volunteering opportunities to skill-building apprenticeships.

2. The Council manages a large portfolio of freely available open spaces however, whilst being a significant provider, we are by no means the sole provider with many partners such as the County Council, Parish Councils, Trusts and private organisations having large portfolios in the Borough.
3. The Council's current Green Spaces Strategy, produced in 2004, was designed to bring together a strategic framework for the management and development of better quality green spaces that are at a level that meets local needs and accessibility criteria. It identified the types and condition of Green Space in the Borough and set targets for improvements.
4. The Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study, produced in 2010 for Charnwood Borough Council was commissioned by as part of the planning process for the Local Development Framework and will provide guidance for the future delivery of facilities for leisure and recreation across the

Borough. The revised Open Spaces Strategy developed and presented to Cabinet in this report uses this Study as the main evidence base for identifying shortfalls, standards and priorities.

### Open Spaces Strategy Documents

5. The Open Spaces Strategy outlines the following:-

- The reason for producing the Strategy and the policy context
- Scope and Purpose of the Strategy
- Vision, Aims and Objectives
- The recommendations and actions completed from the previous Green Spaces Strategy
- The background evidence base that is used in the Open Spaces Strategy i.e. the Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study in 2010
- The use and acceptance of typologies of open space and standards that are used to measure the level of provision and hence shortfalls across the Borough
- The inclusion of appropriate stakeholders in the development of priorities for delivering the shortfalls e.g. Reference Panels and Focus Groups
- Priorities and mechanisms for delivering the Strategy in relation to the Borough as a whole and individual settlements
- The proposal for a delivery plan for the Strategy in relation to funding opportunities and delivery partners
- A set of policy statements to help guide future delivery together with a supplementary open spaces document that identifies a list of key spatial priorities to be delivered over the next 3-5 years and the context for delivering these priorities.

6. The Open Spaces Strategy explains how open spaces will be provided and managed in to the future and sets out the Council's expectations for quality and accessibility. This strategic framework will be reflected in the Local Plan Core Strategy to ensure that open spaces are protected and new open spaces are secured as part of new developments. Where there are deficiencies in the quality of existing open spaces, this Strategy will guide how those deficiencies will be addressed.

7. The Open Spaces Strategy covers the period to 2028. Whilst this represents a significant period of time it matches that of the Local Plan Core Strategy and provides a reasonable timeframe for investment decisions and programmes to be delivered. It is recognised that a number of influencing factors can change during such a length of time, and so there will be regular formal reviews of the Strategy. In this way, the Strategy can remain a fluid, up-to-date and relevant document that reflects the needs and aspirations of the communities we serve.

### Development and Consultation Process

8. The Strategy development process has included a number of stages including:

- Proposing a method of consultation on the Draft Strategy

- Consulting upon this Draft Strategy with a wide range of stakeholder groups and the general public through a comprehensive set of proposals e.g. roadshows, internet, twitter, door-to-door visits etc.
9. Over 100 comments have been received as part of the consultation process. These comments are summarised in a Consultation Report attached as Appendix B. This Consultation Report includes details of the responses received and a summary of the key themes and proposed changes to the Open Spaces Strategy as a result.

### Consultation Outcomes

10. It is felt that the draft Open Spaces Strategy consultation process shows broad support for the Strategy and associated Policies, and based on the findings of the survey together with other additional comments identified above, it is proposed to make a number of recommendations to alter the Draft Open Spaces Strategy and Policy Statements, including:-

- Consider strengthening the protection of Open Spaces and perhaps identify specific sites that may be under threat (policy statement 1)
- The Open Spaces Strategy should focus upon Parks and Gardens; Facilities for Children and Young People; and Natural Open Space but also address Allotment and Burial space shortages (policy statements 6 and 7)
- The Open Spaces Strategy should focus on improving maintenance including sports pitch maintenance, shrub pruning, removal of dog fouling and litter (policy statement 1)
- The Open Spaces Strategy should focus on listening to local views Community Expectations, Consultation and Partnership Working (policy statement 1)
- The standards adopted as part of the Open Spaces Strategy should reflect those required for provision as well as maintenance
- Greater emphasis should be placed upon the need for recognising the benefits of open spaces in biodiversity and wildlife habitats (all policy statements)
- Improving marketing of open space and exploit educational value of open space across the Borough including accessibility via public transport, cycling or walking
- Ensuring the Strategy allows for upgrading existing open space to make better use of or provide alternative uses for the open space e.g. change in typology
- Improve management practices to allow for more effective or efficient use of open space e.g. splitting allotments or playing

pitches

- Identify linking opportunities of open space, particularly throughout the Soar Valley and Charnwood Forrest
- Act as critical friend to key partners and provide advice and support where possible
- Use best practice and make best use of other stakeholders e.g. access to educational establishments playing facilities and utilising children and young people in the design of facilities
- Ensuring new developments actively contribute towards the standards of open space, in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility

11. The Strategy highlights areas within the Borough that are considered lacking in certain types of open space, together with priorities for future development opportunities. These issues are considered in a location specific context (i.e. Parish or Ward basis), as well as in certain circumstances a broader strategic context (e.g. skate parks for youth).

12. The revised Strategy provides a strategic framework for managing existing Open Spaces and the development of new open spaces to ensure that the Council acts in a co-ordinated way with all stakeholders to make best use of open spaces by as much of the community as possible. The Action Plan will be informed by the Strategy and will help identify a prioritised list of sites that need to be developed or improved to improve service provision, shortfalls and/or accessibility within the limited resources that are potentially available during the Strategy period up to 2028.

13. Of particular importance is the relationship between the Open Spaces Strategy and the Local Plan Core Strategy. It is highlighted in the Open Spaces Strategy that the method for delivering the Strategy, particularly when considering shortfalls identified in quantity or accessibility, will in a number of cases require a co-ordinated approach with the Planning & Regeneration Service. This relates to the need for some sites to secure planning permission before they can be implemented and also because of the potential opportunities to secure funding through the Community Infrastructure Levy or via Section 106 Agreements.

### Delivery of the Strategy

14. The Open Spaces Strategy is owned by the Borough Council with the service responsible for Open Space management taking responsibility for its delivery. The Lead Member for this Service will have a key leadership role to play in ensuring the Strategy is taken to the heart of the communities in Charnwood and that the Council play an active role in promoting its successful implementation.

15. However, the delivery of the Open Spaces Strategy relies upon Officers taking the lead in identifying appropriate delivery partners (e.g. Parish Councils, Sports Groups etc) to help identify sites for developing new

facilities. In addition, a matrix of funding opportunities will be sourced for new facilities and improvements to existing facilities to help tackle the quality deficiencies identified. This will include Heritage Lottery Funding, Sport England etc, as well as bidding groups other than the Council. Funding through the planning system will form part of this matrix.

16. The Council will help identify a range of suitable delivery vehicles and partner agents e.g. community groups, Parish or Town Councils etc, for the Strategy. This will include actively promoting the identification of key funding sources e.g. Heritage Lottery Grants, Sport England Grants etc, and co-ordinating these using the Open Spaces Strategy as the guiding principle. Additional key funding sources include planning development through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) or Section 106 funding and relatively small amounts of revenue or capital funds through the Council's budget.
17. The co-ordination of these different funding streams and delivery agents is a key role for the Council, particularly in the current economic climate. With a strong housing growth agenda being proposed for Charnwood it is vital that the Council balances the identified community needs for appropriate, quality open space against the financial burden of both the development and management of this open space during the life of this Open Spaces Strategy.
18. Members are advised that in addition to the detailed Strategy document presented to Cabinet for approval, a 'summary' of the Open Spaces Strategy will be produced that summarises the key points of the Strategy, making the document more user friendly for the public and stakeholders. In this way it is envisaged there will be greater community engagement and buy in to the concepts, policies and initiatives that will be provided by the adoption of the Strategy.

### Community Engagement

19. It is recognised that new developments are key to the delivery of additional public open space. In addition, the Open Spaces Strategy identifies deficiencies to be addressed that have been developed using key stakeholder and community input. Consultation and community engagement is therefore pivotal in successfully delivering additional open space and improvements to open space in Charnwood.
20. Community engagement will range from specific sectors of the community being directly engaged in the design of open space e.g. children's and young people's play, through to engagement of sports or special interest groups in the identification and support for appropriate funding of open space, and direct consultation with whole communities on specific projects in settlements e.g. Parish or Town Councils.

### Partnership Working

21. The consultations and research undertaken as part of the Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study 2010 highlight the following opportunities relating to the provision, management and maintenance of open spaces:

- Loughborough University is seen as a key driver of the character of the town. There are significant opportunities to capitalise further on the resources that the university has, as well as maximising the input that the University and its students can have in day to day community life. For example, students with expertise in sports may wish to provide volunteering at local sports clubs.
- There are many examples of effective partnership working across the Borough, including the Charnwood Forest Partnership and the Charnwood Sport and Recreation Alliance (CSARA). Such partnerships are key to helping deliver the Open Spaces Strategy.
- There are opportunities to increase the role that schools play in community life and to maximise use of the facilities that these sites have to offer outside of curricular hours.

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## FOREWORD

There is considerable national demand for better quality parks and public spaces. Following the London Olympics of 2012, there is even more emphasis put on access to parks and public spaces. Surveys repeatedly show how much the public values them, while research reveals how closely the quality of public spaces links to levels of health, crime and the quality of life in every neighbourhood. Charnwood Borough Council manages a large variety of freely available open spaces, from formal parks, play and recreation areas, to woodlands and allotments, however whilst being a significant provider of open spaces, the Borough Council is by no means the sole provider, with many partners such as the County Council, Parish Councils, Trusts and private organisations. We are very blessed in the Borough of Charnwood to have such a variety of open spaces, from formal parks, play and recreation areas, to woodlands and allotments.

This Open Spaces Strategy is designed to bring together a strategic framework for the management and development of better quality open spaces that are at a level which meets local needs and accessibility criteria. It will help to ensure that the Council acts in a co-ordinated way with all the stakeholders to make best use of open spaces by as much of the community as possible, across the whole Borough. It will support the Planning Core Strategy to deliver the increased demand for the various types of open spaces through the anticipated sustained growth over the next fifteen years.

The Action Plans which are informed by the Strategy help to identify a prioritised list of sites that need to be developed or enhanced to improve service provision, provide for shortfalls and / or make open spaces more accessible. The Strategy has been considered by consultation with our partners and stakeholders, including Councillors, community representatives, Parish and Town Councils. The Borough's Policy Scrutiny Group has also scrutinised the development process of the Strategy to ensure the resultant strategy represents a robust framework for delivering open space for the foreseeable future.

Councillor Hilary Fryer  
Lead Member for Cleansing and Open Spaces  
February 2013

## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Introduction**

This is a strategy for the management of open spaces in the Borough of Charnwood. It aims to provide a clear framework for practical action to protect and improve open spaces. It will guide the prioritisation and resource allocation for the management and improvement of open spaces, and will deliver good practice in the management of new and existing open space. It will also exploit opportunities to increase the provision of open space, and support and enable bids for funding to improve the network of open spaces.

The strategy will also ensure the Council's commitment to high quality open spaces is fully integrated into its strategies, plans and programmes, by influencing and informing policy development and implementation across the Council's activities.

### **Purpose**

The Open Spaces Strategy will provide:-

- A framework for the management, development and maintenance of open space owned by Charnwood Borough Council
- An action plan for the future delivery of open space to meet identified deficiencies
- Guidance and support for the delivery of open space through the Local Development Framework
- Leadership advice and support for alternative open space delivery partners
- Information to the communities of Charnwood on the provision of open space.

### **Background**

The Council's existing Green Space Strategy was adopted in 2004. Since then, there have been a number of changes influencing service delivery, including a structural review, a new evidence base and recommendations from the Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study 2010, achievement of objectives, the introduction of the Localism Act, and a new Corporate Plan. The Council is also planning new communities to address our need for new jobs and a substantial number of new homes up to 2028.

### **Achievements to date**

Since the adoption of the Green Space Strategy in 2004, there have been a number of key achievements, including the production of the Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study 2010, the provision of new facilities, the improvement of existing facilities and the appointment of an Access to Nature Officer.

The Council has successfully achieved two Green Flag awards, and gold awards in the regional and national Britain in Bloom competition.

While the Council is performing well it is clear that more needs to be done to ensure that the deficiencies in quantity, quality and accessibility, which were identified in the Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study 2010, are addressed.

### **Scope of the Open Spaces Strategy**

The Open Spaces Strategy recognises all available open space in Charnwood, categorising it into a range of land types. These 'typologies' are used to measure standards and identify deficiencies in provision across the Borough.

The Council's vision and objectives are set out for open space including a range of policies that will help guide future provision and management of open space up to 2028, remedying some of the identified deficiencies. The strategy will also inform the Local Plan and will be used to guide future decision making by the council. Successful delivery will require the engagement of key stakeholders including the support of a wide range of Council services, as well as other landowners, such as Leicestershire County Council, Town and Parish Councils, the community sector, businesses, developers and schools.

### **Key Drivers**

There are a number of key drivers for the new strategy, including the preparation of a new Local Plan and the Council's ambitious housing growth agenda, and the issues arising from the Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study 2010. In addition, a range of local, regional and national strategies, frameworks and plans contribute to the need for an effective Open Spaces Strategy.

It is recognised that the next steps required will be very challenging. Budget constraints, increasing costs, and ensuring the needs of residents are identified and met will all present significant challenges.

### **Main issues to be addressed by the Open Spaces Strategy**

This Open Spaces Strategy aims to provide a framework for delivering the necessary additional open space needed as part of the Council's ambitious growth agenda identified in the emerging Planning Core Strategy.

This framework will include a set of Policy Statements that will guide the Council in its decision making process and allow for deficiencies in open space identified in the Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study 2010 to be addressed in a prioritised manner.

In adopting an Open Spaces Strategy, Charnwood Borough Council has shown it has aspirations to make significant improvements in the provision of open space in Charnwood. A key part of achieving success with the strategy will be working with a variety of partners and stakeholders. In this way we can ensure that all residents of the Borough can have suitable access to the right types of high quality open space.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

### 2.1. The definition of open space

Government guidance defines open space as:

*“all open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can also act as a visual amenity”.*

Parks, natural spaces and other types of open space do not exist in isolation but make up the green infrastructure of the Borough. Green infrastructure is the physical environment within and between urban areas. It is a network of multi-functional open spaces, including formal parks, gardens, woodlands, green corridors, waterways, street trees and open countryside.

### 2.2. The vision for open spaces in Charnwood

The Council will lead our partners in improving the quantity, quality and accessibility of outdoor sport and recreational opportunities by providing sustainable open spaces. It will protect and enhance biodiversity and heritage, whilst meeting the community's needs, maximising the use of facilities, and engendering pride in the local community.

### 2.3. The aims and objectives of the Strategy

The aim of this Strategy is to provide a clear framework for practical action to protect and improve open spaces in Charnwood.

The objectives of this Strategy are to:

- Develop a strategic framework, including an Open Spaces Policy, to guide key prioritisation and resource allocation for the management and improvement of open spaces;
- Understand and fulfil community expectations in providing open spaces in Charnwood;
- Provide standards of public open space which are adopted within the Local Plan;
- Deliver good practice in the management of new and existing open space;
- Exploit opportunities to increase the provision of open space;
- Support and enable bids for funding to improve the network of open spaces.

### 2.4. The importance of open space

The foreword to the recently produced guide to the production of open space strategies (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment [CABE] Space 2009) states that: *Open space has never been more important than it is today. In the face of new environmental, social and economic challenges, it is essential to our quality of life, our health and well-being and to ensuring a more sustainable future for all. Creation, protection and improvement of a high quality open space network should be at the heart of every authority's vision for an area.*

There are also a number of wider benefits of open space, as detailed in table 1 below:

**Table 1: Beneficial Outcomes of Open Spaces**

<b>Beneficial Outcome</b>	<b>Description</b>
Health and Wellbeing	Wellbeing is a positive state of both mental and physical health. How interaction with open spaces is beneficial is well documented. It can be effective in a participatory or passive capacity, positively affect depression, and lower blood pressure and cholesterol, among many other positive interventions and preventions.
Biodiversity	Biodiversity is fundamental to the sustainability of our ecosystem. With the ever increasing pressures on agricultural practice and loss of habitat-rich gardens, public open space has increased its strategic importance. The benefits to biodiversity can be in habitat management, nature conservation, maintaining green corridors and targeting work towards protected species.
Climate Mitigation	The beneficial outcome of open spaces on climate change and pollution can be effected in a number of provisions. Sustainable Urban Drainage mitigate against flash floods, filtrate polluted surface water and reduce demands on existing systems. Plants also significantly cool and shade, and absorb CO2. Plants also act as filters for harmful airborne particles that can impact on air quality.
Social Cohesion	Open spaces have a number of benefits on social cohesion from encouraging inter-generational engagement to fostering a sense of community ownership. Open spaces transcend culture and allow communities to meet in a neutral space.
Heritage	Open spaces have a number of heritage benefits: places where heritage features are found, natural and man-made, and places where memories are formed.
Economy	High quality open spaces have a positive impact on the local economy by attracting and maintaining the local work force.
Learning	Open spaces play a significant role in allowing children and young people to play, which is an integral part of their development. Open spaces also provide other opportunities to learn, from volunteering opportunities to skill-building apprenticeships.

## **2.5. Issues relating to provision and management of Open Spaces**

In addition to the deficiencies in quality, quantity and accessibility of open spaces (identified in chapters 4 and 5) there are a number of other strategic and local issues that need to be taken into account in developing and delivering the Open Spaces Strategy for Charnwood. These include:-

- The ambitious housing growth agenda that the Council is responding to
- Lack of dedicated governing body within central Government for open spaces e.g. Sports Council, Arts Council etc
- The service is particularly vulnerable to financial pressures given the lack of statutory nature of open spaces
- Community expectations are relatively high and therefore associated costs of service provision are equally relatively high.
- The service requires long term investment and the associated costs for maintenance and replacement of open spaces can be relatively high (both capital and revenue)

- Unless quality standards are maintained at a relatively high standard, open spaces rapidly attract anti-social behaviour and can start a spiral of decline
- Service provision is high profile, customer focused and immediately apparent e.g. children play areas, street scene etc
- There is a matrix of service providers for open space which makes co-ordination difficult and the potential for non-uniformity of standards across the Borough.
- Competing and conflicting needs and aspirations of open spaces from the different sectors of the community

## **2.6. The need for an Open Spaces Strategy**

The Open Spaces Strategy explains how open spaces will be provided and managed in to the future and sets out the Council's expectations for quantity, quality and accessibility. This strategic framework will be reflected in the Local Plan Core Strategy to ensure that open spaces are protected and new open spaces are secured as part of new developments.

Where there are deficiencies in the quality of existing open spaces, this Strategy will guide how those deficiencies will be addressed.

## **2.7. The timescale covered by the Strategy**

The Open Spaces Strategy covers the period to 2028. Whilst this represents a significant period of time it matches that of the Local Plan Core Strategy and provides a reasonable timeframe for investment decisions and programmes to be delivered. It is recognised that a number of influencing factors can change during such a length of time, and so there will be regular formal reviews of the Strategy. In this way, the Strategy can remain a fluid, up-to-date and relevant document that reflects the needs and aspirations of the communities we serve.

## **2.8. The scope of the Strategy**

This Open Spaces Strategy recognises all available open space in Charnwood and categorises each according to land typologies recommended by Government guidance.

The Strategy highlights areas within the Borough that are considered lacking in certain types of open space, together with priorities for future development opportunities. These issues are considered in a location specific context (i.e. Parish or Ward basis), as well as in certain circumstances a broader strategic context (e.g. skate parks for youth).

The strategy recognises that the Borough Council owns and manages a limited amount of open space within Charnwood and that a significant land ownership is placed with the County Council, Parish Councils, private land owners and private trustees.

To ensure the Open Spaces Strategy takes account of all open space facilities available to the communities within Charnwood, all areas are included within the scope of the Strategy. Details of other stakeholders land is included in the Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study (OSSRS), 2010, and is reviewed in chapter 3 of this Strategy.

## **2.9. Previous Strategy recommendations**

The Green Space Strategy, approved by the Borough Council's Cabinet in September 2004, was produced to provide the context and strategic direction relating to the management and improvement of green space provision in the Borough. It recognised the need to have a more thorough and robust information base and that many proposals



will be subject to land availability and funding opportunities over a time period of up to thirty years.

The 2004 Strategy identified weaknesses in the management of green space, including partnership working, community involvement, customer research and the development of an information base. However, since 2004, there have been a number of changes influencing service delivery, including:

- A structural review;
- Evidence base and recommendations from the 2010 Study;
- Achievement of a number of objectives;
- Introduction of the Localism Act;
- A new Corporate Plan.

The key achievements of the 2004 Strategy are shown below. A more detailed list can be found in appendix 1.

- The Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study, 2010
- Achievement of Green Flag awards at Queen's Park and The Outwoods
- Provision of new facilities and improvement to existing facilities, such as play areas
- Appointment of Access to Nature Officer and Rangers
- Gold award in East Midlands in Bloom's 'small city' category (2011)
- Gold award and 'small city' category winner in East Midlands in Bloom (2012)
- Gold award and 'small city' category winner in Britain in Bloom (2012)

The Green Space Strategy 2004 was adopted with the intention of achieving the proposals within 30 years. It is noted, however, that the 2004 Strategy does not set out proposals for specific sites or areas, although this was included in the Play Strategy 2006-11, in relation to play provision.

Whilst the Strategy is still current, the decision to review it in 2012 rather than after 30 years has been taken based on the availability of more robust data from the Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study 2010. Also, there have been significant changes to the way open space is funded including changes in the developers financial contributions occasioned by the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations 2010.

Achievement against objectives put forward in 2004 have been reviewed and where necessary carried forward into the Open Spaces Strategy 2012, alongside revised targets based on changes since 2004.

## **2.10. Availability of Funding**

Green spaces managed by Charnwood Borough Council are funded from a variety of sources, including a revenue budget of approximately £1.7m per annum, significant planning obligations secured by section 106 agreements, and grants from external funding bodies, such as the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Since 2010, fiscal measures have been introduced to minimise pressure on the public purse, resulting in the need to seek alternative sources of funding for non-essential services. Whilst not detracting from the importance of green space on issues such as

the health and well-being agenda, social cohesion and biodiversity, there is a need to source sustainable long-term funding opportunities.

The Council recognises that with a growing population, there is increased pressure to develop land currently designated as open space. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) has been introduced by the government as an additional means to secure community benefits from new developments and support the established mechanism of agreements under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act. Charnwood Borough Council has resolved to prepare a Community Infrastructure Levy and along with Section 106 Agreements, this will help fund the provision, preservation and maintenance of new open space into the future as part of a package of funding opportunities

The Council will continue to seek alternative funding mechanisms to minimise the long-term impact on the Council Tax payer. With the exception of traditional models (i.e. revenue and grants), the Council will consider alternative models of securing funding e.g. the use of business rental income provided by new developments to support the community.

Since the Green Spaces Strategy of 2004, the service has benefited from an increase in revenue funding of approximately £670,000 representing a 63% increase. This should be considered in relation to a significant increase in the land managed.

During the course of public consultation on the Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study 2010, the following issues were highlighted:

- Parish Councils indicate that current funding (capital and revenue) is insufficient to continue to maintain Parish Open Space at the current level. The long-term sustainability of existing and new open spaces was questioned
- While external funding is available to Parish Councils (and to Sports Clubs), there is a lack of knowledge sharing. It was also suggested that additional guidance on funding applications and sources of funding would be of benefit.

### **2.11. Community engagement in developing the Strategy**

The Open Spaces Strategy has been developed using the Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study of 2010, which was prepared by independent consultants. It forms the evidence base upon which the development of this Open Spaces Strategy is built. It audited existing open space within Charnwood and incorporated extensive consultation to determine local standards on the quality, quantity and accessibility of open space.

The Open Spaces, Sports and Recreation Study 2010 used nine typologies (e.g. parks and gardens, allotments etc) to identify deficiencies in open space provision across the Borough. The study proposed standards for each typology, and those areas falling short of the standards were identified and prioritised through a series of workshops with key stakeholder groups (e.g. community focus group and member reference group) considering the beneficial outcomes of the different typologies.

These community priorities have been used to inform the Council's priority for rectifying shortfalls in open space provision and in the development of Open Spaces policies.

Having completed workshops through community engagement a draft Strategy was produced in late 2012 and subsequently subject to public consultation in November and

December 2012. The method used included electronic web-based surveys together with more traditional leaflets and letters of invitation to comment on the Draft Strategy. A formal Consultation Report was produced summarising the key findings and proposed changes to the Strategy.

The Open Spaces Strategy and on-going Action Plans will therefore represent a robust framework for developing and managing open space in the future.

### **3. CONTEX T**

#### **3.1. The Borough of Charnwood**

The Borough of Charnwood lies at the heart of the East Midlands, with the major cities of Nottingham and Derby to the north, and Leicester to the south. Loughborough is the main town, and has become a major centre for advanced technology, which is underpinned by one of the country's leading universities. One third of the population lives in the thriving university town of Loughborough. The remaining two thirds live in the villages and small towns of the Soar and Wreake valleys and on the edge of Leicester.

#### **3.2. Overview**

This section reviews the legislative and strategic context and provides the national, regional and local perspectives which are relevant to public open space provision. Whilst this review is not exhaustive it provides outline background information on the context in which the Strategy sits, and which influences current provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities in the Borough.

The Open Spaces Strategy is shaped and influenced by a number of inter-related strategies, policy documents and plans from national policy through to regional and local frameworks. Diagram 1 below helps to provide an illustrative context on the links with other strategies, whilst the following text provides some further information.

#### **3.3. National**

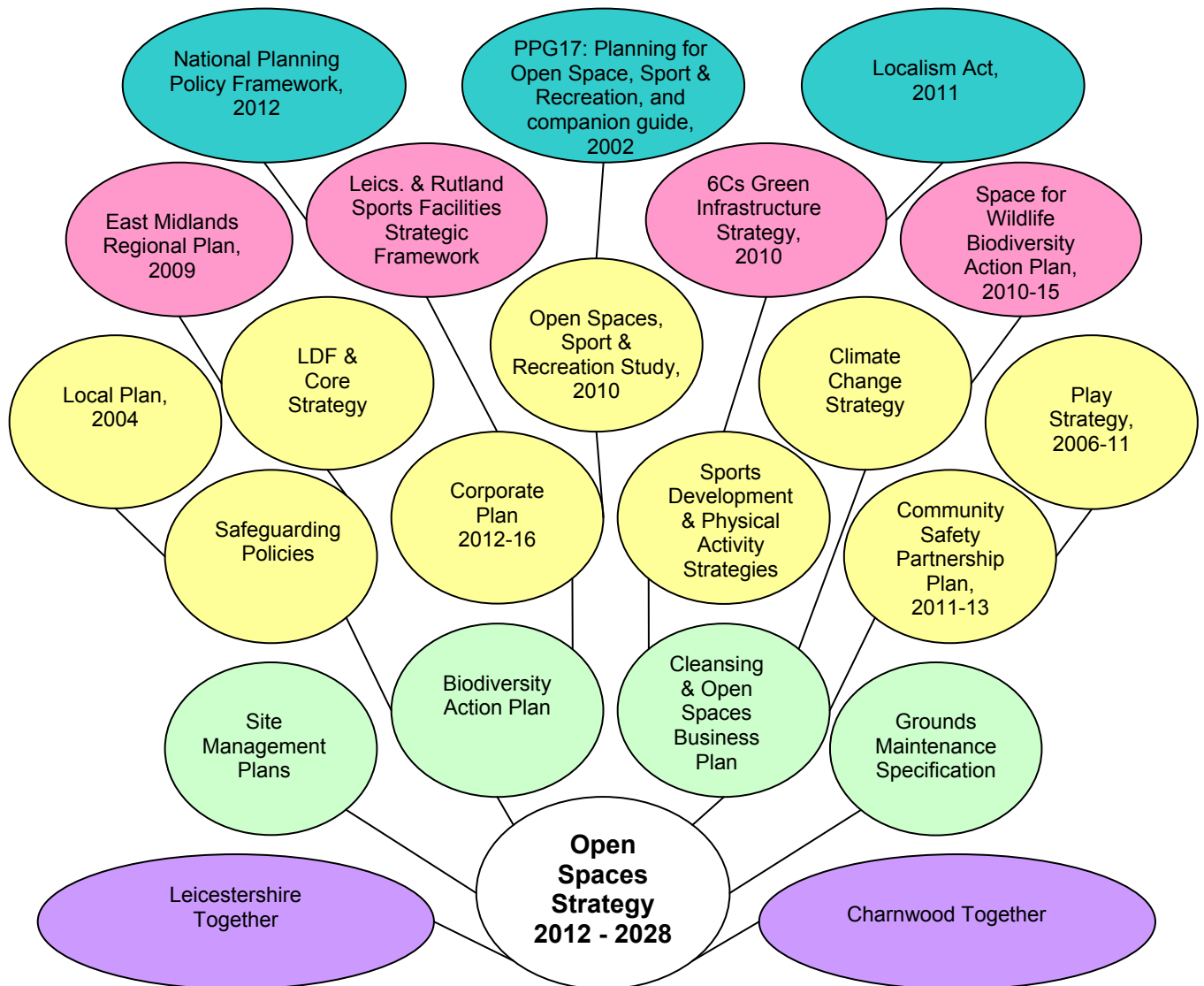
At a national level, successive governments have encouraged improvements to parks and green spaces, culminating in the creation of CABI Space in 2003. CABI Space aimed to promote the best in public space design, and to take a lead in these improvements. This group set up guidelines on the production of Open Spaces Strategies, which this strategy follows. Whilst CABI Space was disbanded in 2011, this framework is still relevant today.

There are many Regulations and Acts that specifically refer to the benefits that can be offered by public open space, such as the Public Health Acts and the Crime & Disorder Act. However, two have specifically focused on the need for a strategic approach to be taken.

##### **3.3.1. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2012**

This framework sets out the Government's planning policies and how these are expected to be applied. Its provisions must be taken into account in the preparation of local plans and as a material consideration in planning decisions. It replaces previous guidance in Planning Policy Statements and Planning Policy Guidance Notes. At its heart is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which promotes development that improves economic, social and environmental outcomes.

**Diagram 1: The Strategic Context of the Open Spaces Strategy**



The National Planning Policy Framework states that access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and wellbeing of communities. Planning policies need to be based on robust and up to date assessments of the needs for open spaces, sports and recreation facilities, and opportunities for new provision. The assessments should identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreation facilities in the local area.

**3.3.2. Localism Act, 2011**

In relation to public open space provision, the Localism Act:

- Makes provision for the abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies, and will make changes to the processes for, publishing, examining and adopting development plan documents;
- Provides for neighbourhood plans, which would be adopted by the council as part of the development plan if they receive 50% of the votes cast in a referendum;

- Provides for Neighbourhood Development Orders (NDOs), which allow communities to approve development without requiring normal planning consent;
- Amends the Community Infrastructure Levy, which allows councils to charge developers to pay for infrastructure on a tariff basis. Some of the revenue will be available for the local community;
- Makes pre-application consultation compulsory for developments above certain thresholds.

### **3.4. Regional**

Charnwood Borough Council has signed up to a number of regional strategies to enable a coordinated approach to the management of public open space. These include, but are not limited to:

#### **3.4.1. 6Cs Green Infrastructure Strategy (2010)**

This draft strategy set out a strategic green infrastructure (GI) network for the three counties of Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire, and for the three cities of Nottingham, Derby and Leicester (The 6Cs). The strategy also sets out vision for GI in the area, a set of strategic objectives and provides recommendations for the content of GI policies within Local Development Frameworks.

Charnwood Borough Council's Cabinet endorsed a response to the Draft 6Cs Green Infrastructure Strategy in November 2009, and in so doing supported the proposed strategic Green Infrastructure Network that was set out in the consultation document.

#### **3.4.2. Space for Wildlife – the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Biodiversity Action Plan (2010 – 2015)**

The Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LLRBAP) was modeled on the national UK Action Plan but concentrated on habitats and species of local conservation concern. There were 17 Habitat Action Plans and 14 Species Action Plans. When the plan was revised in 2005 an urban habitat plan and additional species plans were added. In addition, the numerous targets and actions detailed in the original plan were considerably reduced in number and simplified.

Space for Wildlife has three main components:

1. To promote the restoration, management and creation of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority habitats
2. To promote the creation of new wildlife habitats in the wider countryside
3. To survey, monitor and promote favourable management of existing good sites through the Local Wildlife Sites system.

#### **3.4.3. Corporate Plan 2012 - 2016**

The Borough Council's Corporate Plan sets out the Council's priorities and objectives for the next four years, which make clear reference to the need for quality open spaces, whilst recognising the need to lead and work with partners.

Particularly relevant to the Open Spaces Strategy is the ambition of protecting our natural resources to provide a Borough which is clean and tidy and has a variety of green, open spaces for the benefit of all our residents.

It outlines how we intend to protect and enhance the green and open spaces of the Borough, by:

- Continuing to support Loughborough in Bloom;
- Working with partners to create Charnwood Forest Regional Park to conserve and enhance the Borough's landscape and townscape;
- Continuing to work with partners to support the Watermead Park area;
- Supporting the creation of open spaces including parks, play areas and allotments within new developments.

#### **3.4.4. The Planning Policy Framework**

Planning decisions are made in light of the policies in the development plan and having regard to other material considerations. The development plan for Charnwood includes the Regional Plan (2009) and the Borough of Charnwood Local Plan (2004). A new local plan is being prepared which will eventually replace the policies in the Borough of Charnwood local plan and the government is committed to revoking the Regional Plan.

The development of new green spaces, and the maintenance of existing sites, is heavily influenced by the planning of new developments. A number of strategic documents influence this provision, and are outlined below.

#### **3.4.5. East Midlands Regional Plan (2009)**

Policy 41 of the Regional Plan (see appendix 2), entitled 'Regional Priorities for Culture, Sport and Recreation', states that local authorities should work with local communities to develop 'cultural infrastructure plans' to inform Local Development Frameworks. These plans should specify:

- Key elements of cultural provision, including assets needing refurbishment, relocation of facilities and new provision;
- Standards and costs for provision, including quality standards; and
- The potential sources of funding, including from the planning system.

Policy 28, entitled 'Regional Priorities for Environmental and Green Infrastructure' calls on local authorities to ensure the delivery, protection and enhancement of environmental infrastructure. It includes assessing the capacity of existing environmental infrastructure to accommodate change, in order to inform decisions on the scale, location and phasing of new development and developing green infrastructure plans.

The East Midlands Regional Plan proposed the Charnwood Forest Regional Park, which is currently being developed by Charnwood Borough Council, North-West Leicestershire District Council, and Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council. Funding is being sought from the Heritage Lottery Fund's Landscape Partnership to fulfil the following vision:

*To manage and promote the unique natural and cultural heritage features of Charnwood Forest, and for the Park to be recognised as an essential part of the growing communities in the Derby, Leicester and Nottingham area, now and in the future.*

#### **3.4.5.1. Local Plan (2004)**

Along with the Regional Plan, the Borough of Charnwood's Local Plan is the main basis to make decisions on planning applications. It includes policies which require developers to make provision for children's and adult play, landscaping and amenity green space as part of new developments. It will eventually be replaced by the Charnwood Local Development Framework.

#### **3.4.5.2. Local Plan Core Strategy**

The Council is working on a new local plan which will contain new policies to guide future development up to 2028. The most important document within the local plan is the Core Strategy, which is expected to be adopted towards the end of 2013. The Core Strategy sets out a long term vision for the future of the Borough, along with a list of policies and infrastructure projects to achieve this vision.

The Core Strategy will see major areas of new development accompanied by significant areas of open space. This will have a major impact on open space provision in the Borough, and this Open Spaces Strategy will address the management implications of these developments.

#### **3.4.6. Charnwood Biodiversity Action Plan**

This includes plans for many of the habitats and species in the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Biodiversity Action Plan, plus a few of special concern in Charnwood, such as the song thrush and post-industrial land.

#### **3.4.7. Climate Local Commitment**

Climate Local is a Local Government Association (LGA) initiative to support council action on a change climate. It will replace the Nottingham Declaration, to which all local authorities in Leicestershire had signed up. The LGA intends that the initiative will support councils' efforts both to reduce carbon emissions and to improve their resilience to the effects of our changing climate and extreme weather. The main way the Climate Local Commitment will be met is through renewing the Council's Climate Change Strategy, which is due to expire in 2013.

The impacts of a changing climate mean that Charnwood will experience warmer and wetter winters, hotter and drier summers and more extreme weather events like flooding and heat waves. The greenhouse gas emissions caused by the past hundred years of industrialisation have meant that there is no way to avoid these impacts – we can only adapt.

The council's Climate Change Strategy seeks to not only reduce the carbon emissions arising from everyday life in Charnwood, but also adapt services, public estates and development.

Well thought out and carefully planned open spaces are fundamental to the long term success of the Climate Change Strategy. They can help to alleviate flooding, reduce overheating in urban areas, provide habitats for migrating species, and absorb man-made carbon, reducing the likelihood of future impacts.

This Open Spaces Strategy presents opportunities to support local wildlife to be more resilient to the effects of climate change. The provision of open spaces in built-up areas can provide urban cooling and access to shady outdoor space, contributing to



healthier living environments in more extreme weather. Open spaces can support local flood risk management and can absorb carbon from the atmosphere.

### **3.4.8. Links with Sport, Active Recreation and Neighbourhood Services**

- **Charnwood Play Strategy 2006-11**

The Charnwood Play Strategy provided a framework for the provision of play spaces and activities throughout the Borough for the period 2006-11, and Charnwood Borough Council's relationship with others through:

- Measuring the quality of children's play;
- Grant aid;
- Capitalising on funding opportunities;
- Social and economic development;
- Planning strategies and controls identified in the Core Strategy;
- Supporting children's rights and entitlements to play.

This Open Spaces Strategy will provide this framework during the period of the Strategy.

- **Sports Development and Physical Activity Strategies**

Charnwood Borough Council is committed to the Leicestershire and Rutland Strategy for Physical Activity 2009-13, and the Leicestershire and Rutland Sports Strategy 2009-13. The Strategies provide a common framework across Leicestershire and Rutland to successfully increase participation levels and reduce health inequalities.

The Physical Activity Strategy's focus is on encouraging people to get physically active on a recreational level, while the Sports Strategy focuses on developing participants into more structured sport. The development of green spaces and the wider countryside are an integral part of the Strategies to ensure that they are promoted and developed to encourage more people to be more active.

- **Leicestershire and Rutland Sport Facilities Strategic Framework**

A county-wide sports facilities strategic framework has been developed by Leicestershire and Rutland Sport. The study involved extensive research and consultation to assess existing provision in terms of quality, quantity and accessibility. Key information relating to Charnwood was included within the Outdoor Sports Facilities section of the Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study 2010.

- **Charnwood Community Safety Partnership Plan 2011-13 Refresh**

The Charnwood Community Safety Partnership brings together a variety of statutory, non-statutory and voluntary organisations with a shared commitment to improving public confidence by reducing crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour for our communities. The Partnership is one of the delivery groups of Charnwood Together.

The priorities for Charnwood have been established using the Charnwood Strategic Assessment 2011, in support of the Partnership overarching aim to improve community confidence. These priorities have been identified as:

- Reduce acquisitive and violent crime

- Reduce anti-social behaviour
- Reduce re-offending.

In addition, under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act, the Council has a statutory duty to take account of the community safety dimension in all of its work. In recognition of this duty, the design of open spaces and facilities will consider how best this can be taken into account and play an integral part in the community safety agenda.

- **Safeguarding Policies**

Statutory agencies, including Charnwood Borough Council, have a corporate responsibility to safeguard children and young people - that is to protect them from harm and to promote their welfare.

Excellent design of open spaces and thoughtful selection and placement of equipment for these areas enhances our contribution to children's development and opportunities for them to use their creativity and sense of adventure.

Charnwood Borough Council's Children and Young People's Safeguarding Policy, and the Adults in Need of Safeguarding Policy, are important guides for open spaces staff, and for those who deliver activities within them, in order to ensure that concerns and incidents are reported effectively.

### **3.5. Partnership Working**

#### **3.5.1. Leicestershire Together**

Leicestershire Together is a partnership made up of the county's major public service budget holders, such as local councils, the police and the health service. Through collaborative working within the partnership, improvements are made to schools, colleges, businesses, shops, hospitals, roads, parks, homes, villages and towns.

The Environment Board, with its remit including green space management, sits within Leicestershire Together and apart from the eight local authorities, representatives include the voluntary sector, the Environment Agency, Natural England and English Heritage. This Board is a strategic delivery agent that may be influential in identifying sources of funding to support the delivery of new and improved open space within Charnwood.

#### **3.5.2. Charnwood Together**

Charnwood Together is the Local Strategic Partnership for Charnwood. It has a Board membership that includes all key partners from organisations and agencies working in the Borough. The Board has five key delivery partnerships which focus on the delivery of strategic objectives. Much of the focus is to improve the wellbeing of the residents and workforce of Charnwood, and the Open Spaces Strategy has significant relevance to the success of these objectives (see appendix 3).

The five delivery groups are listed below, with identified priorities or actions that are relevant to the Open Spaces Strategy, and demonstrate the linkage and the integral part open spaces play in the community:

- **Health and Wellbeing Partnership**
  - Reducing the prevalence of obesity in children and adults
  - Improving physical activity in children and adults
  - Reducing the prevalence of smoking
  - Reducing the prevalence of alcohol misuse.
- **Partnership for Children and Young People**
  - To provide a targeted physical activity and play programme for early years children and their families
  - Children and families are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and have healthy lifestyles
  - Provide a varied offer of activities to 10-19 year olds, through Positive Activities for Young People, across Charnwood, targeted at disengaged young people.
- **People, Places and Environment**
  - To co-ordinate partner activity to deliver tangible improvements to residents' quality of life, environment and wellbeing (with significant focus on priority neighbourhoods)
  - To provide opportunities to enable residents to engage effectively in the creation of Neighbourhood Action Plans for their area and their delivery
  - To promote community cohesion by working together to develop small-scale programmes that help to break down barriers and build relations between different communities, for example by encouraging festivals, events and service programmes
  - Working with partners to support initiatives that build resilience in local communities to the adverse environmental impacts of climate change
  - Working with partners that support local initiatives that engage residents, businesses, schools and community groups in practical approaches to enhance the natural environment and adopt sustainable lifestyles.
- **Economy and Skills Partnership**
  - Ensuring that the towns and villages offer a vibrant place to live and work, with attractive facilities including parks and leisure.
- **Community Safety Partnership**
  - To reduce acquisitive and violent crime
  - To reduce anti-social behaviour
  - To reduce reoffending.

### **3.5.3. Land ownership**

In addition to the Borough Council, there are a variety of other organisations managing and maintaining open spaces in Charnwood. Table 2 gives an indicative breakdown of the ownership between each of these groups, and demonstrates the need for partnership working, and knowledge and information sharing. The varying responsibility in terms of ownership and management means that addressing gaps in the provision of open space will not be the responsibility of one agency, but will require commitment from a variety of groups.

The Borough Council has a key role to play through the adoption of this Open Spaces Strategy to provide leadership and guidance to other partners in how open space provision can meet community expectations and need. The Council will work with others to help guide and advise partners in an attempt to fulfil shortfalls in certain typologies.

### 3.6. The Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study (2010)

In 2009 an open space, sport and recreation study was commissioned in accordance with the requirements of Planning Policy Guidance 17 (PPG17). The study, completed in 2010 underpins the evidence base for the Charnwood Local Development Framework, will provide guidance on the future delivery of facilities across the Borough, and evidence for informed decision making.

The key aims and objectives of the study were to:

- provide local standards for open space, sport and recreation
- identify surpluses and deficiencies in open space, sport and recreation provision and to consider these against current needs and future growth
- inform future policies and planning obligations
- provide specific recommendations for the type and amount of open space, sport and recreation provision across the Borough and for each area of growth being investigated by the council as possible development sites to include in its new local plan
- form part of and inform a wider Green Infrastructure approach in the Charnwood Core Strategy and other Development Plan Documents.

**Table 2 – Percentage ownership of open space across Charnwood**

Ownership	Charnwood Borough Council	Parish Council	Leicestershire County Council inc. schools	Clubs	Developers	Trust / Committee / Private	Further / other education
Parks	25%	75%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Natural & semi-natural open space	22%	6%	27%	0%	0%	45%	0%
Green corridors	78%	18%	4%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Amenity green space	25%	71%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Children & Young People	35%	63%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Allotments	31%	68%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Village Green / Civic Spaces	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Outdoor Sports	16%	20%	49%	3%	0%	4%	9%

Source: Open Spaces, Sports and Recreation Study 2010

This Study also incorporates a Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) which evaluates the adequacy of pitches for football, rugby, cricket and hockey and emphasised that decisions regarding open spaces should be based on local needs. A five-step process was used to:

1. identify local needs
2. audit local provision
3. set provision standards
4. apply provision standards
5. draft policies from recommendations and strategic priorities.

Steps 1-3 were completed through the Study itself, whilst steps 4 and 5 remained incomplete, and will be addressed through this Strategy.

This Open Spaces Strategy therefore uses the Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study 2010 as the core evidence base for applying standards of provision across a range of typologies in Charnwood, taking account of any changes since the Study was complete, in order to identify shortfalls and surpluses. This also informs Policy formulation through a set of Policy Statements produced as an Addendum of the Open Spaces Strategy.

The Study includes a number of recommendations. These are based on the findings of the evidence base, including consultation and site surveys to assess compliance with the local standards of quantity, quality and accessibility. One of the recommendations is to develop a green spaces strategy for Charnwood, which outlines the key priorities and highlights the actions which will be taken when resources, opportunities and future development allow.

### **3.7. Green Spaces Service**

The Borough Council's Green Spaces Service, in partnership with other groups within the Cleansing and Open Spaces Service, partners and community groups, is responsible for managing and maintaining over 250 hectares of land at over 500 separate sites throughout the Borough, including:

- 137 ha Grass cutting
- 142 Amenity Green Spaces (Housing Sites)
- 150 Garage Sites
- 262 Amenity Green Spaces (Non-Housing)
- 30 Parks (inc pocket parks)
- 114 ha of land designated for its wildlife value
- 53 ha of Woodland
- 35.4 ha of wildflower meadow in Higher Level Stewardship
- 37 wildlife sites, including a SSSI, 3 Local Nature Reserves and a Regionally Important Geological Site
- 5 Sports Grounds including:
  - 3 Bowling Greens
  - 5 Cricket Squares
  - 15 Football pitches
  - 1 Lacrosse pitch
  - 16 Tennis Courts (All-Weather)
  - 6 Changing Rooms
  - 1 Par 3 18-hole Pitch and Putt Golf Course
- 10 Allotment Sites (376 plots)
- A cemetery and 21 closed churchyards
- Pruning and maintaining:
  - 38832 sq. metres of Shrubs and Minor hedges
  - 75503 sq. metres Major hedges/hedgerows
  - Over 250,000 trees
- 29 Playgrounds
- 9 Facilities for Young People including MUGAs, basketball hoops, youth shelters and a skatepark

## **4. THE DEMAND FOR OPEN SPACE IN CHARNWOOD**

This chapter assesses the current provision of open space against the features which local people demand.

### **4.1. Understanding Community Needs**

Community consultation is essential to identify local attitudes to existing provision, and understand local expectations for additional or improved provision. The guidance relies less on the implementation of national standards and places increased emphasis on local needs.

Two significant recent studies have been used to understand community needs:

#### **4.1.1. Green Spaces Consultation, 2011**

Early in 2011, Leicestershire County Council asked the public to say which local green spaces they particularly valued and why. This was in response to Government proposals to create a new designation to protect green areas of particular importance to local communities.

The consultation identified that people see open space as an important part of their local environment, providing a feeling of 'openness and space'. The over-riding concern was to protect green space from potential development, particularly from housing. There was also a call for maintenance, improvement or new provision of a number of types of facilities local to population centres.

This consultation provides valuable data for local communities and councils to decide where new homes and other developments would be best located, and to inform neighbourhood plans.

#### **4.1.2. Local Needs Assessment, Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study 2010**

Statistical and subjective consultations were carried out as part of the Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study 2010, to ensure that a wide variety of opinions were heard in order to identify local needs.

The findings are detailed in appendix 4, and formed a strong evidence base for compiling the quality, quantity and accessibility standards against which shortfalls in provision of open space have been identified.

## **4.2. Open Spaces in Charnwood**

### **4.2.1. Mapping of open spaces**

The Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study, 2010 identified all the publicly accessible open spaces in Charnwood, regardless of ownership, following the principles set out in Planning Policy Guidance note 17 (PPG17). This will ensure that the Strategy takes into account all facilities available to the communities of Charnwood.

The data gathered is considered robust and comprehensive, however some areas have been excluded. For example, those sites below 0.3 hectares, new developments since the data was gathered, or where land owners didn't respond to a request for data.

This data was subsequently recorded digitally as a GIS mapping exercise. The maps have been split into settlements in line with the Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study 2010. These settlements are equivalent to parish boundaries, except in Loughborough which has no parish boundary, and has been split into three; East, North-West and South-West which correspond to the existing Borough Council Area Forums.

The maps are colour-coded to denote the typologies used in the Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study 2010, and have been prepared to show both primary and secondary typologies.

#### **4.2.2. Categories of open space**

The categories or 'typologies' used within this Strategy follow PPG17 guidance at the time of the 2010 Study, and therefore include:

- **Parks and gardens**  
These range from major parks to small memorial gardens – often used for informal recreation and community events. These may include paths, benches, footpaths, tree and shrub planting, formal gardens, close mown grass for ball games / picnics etc, play areas, facilities for young people, and toilets.
- **Natural and semi-natural urban green spaces**  
These include publicly accessible woodlands, urban forestry, scrub, grasslands (e.g. commons, meadows), wetlands and wastelands. Uses include wildlife conservation, biodiversity and environmental education and awareness.
- **Amenity green space**  
Most commonly found in housing areas. Includes informal recreation green spaces. Used for informal activities close to home or work, children's casual play, enhancement of the appearance of residential areas.
- **Provision for children and young people**
  - Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children below age 12, specifically designed as equipped play facilities
  - Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving young people aged 12 and above, specifically designed for use by young people (e.g. youth shelters, skateboard parks etc).
- **Outdoor sports facilities**  
Natural or artificial surfaces either publicly or privately owned, used for formal sport and recreation. Includes school playing fields, outdoor sports pitches, tennis courts, bowling greens, golf courses etc.
- **Allotments, community gardens and urban farms**  
Sites laid out for people to grow their own vegetables, fruit and flowers as part of the long-term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion.
- **Cemeteries, disused churchyards and other burial grounds**  
Including closed churchyards or other burial grounds.

- **Green corridors**  
Linear routes with a primary purpose of providing opportunities for walking, cycling and horse riding, whether for leisure purposes or travel, and include towpaths along canals and riverbanks.
- **Civic spaces**  
Including civic and market squares and other hard surfaced community areas designed for pedestrians. The primary purpose of civic spaces is the provision of a setting for civic buildings and together with village greens also offer space for public demonstrations and community events etc and can often define the character of the local environment.

#### **4.2.3. Audit of existing provision of open spaces**

In the audit of provision through the Open Spaces, Sports and Recreation Study 2010 all existing open spaces and sport and recreation facilities irrespective of ownership were identified, categorised and mapped.

National Standards were used as a benchmark for the quantity, quality and accessibility of open space across the Borough. The following evaluations were carried out:

- **Quantity:** sites were mapped to determine if there was sufficient open space serving the local community based upon national standards per 1,000 population;
- **Quality:** primary and a secondary purpose classifications were allocated to each piece of land, and an assessment was made to determine if it met certain basic standards for its primary classification;
- **Accessibility:** open spaces were evaluated to assess the distance travelled by members of the community against their expectations.

#### **4.3. Defining Community Expectations**

Consultation was carried out as part of the Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study 2010 to gather data as an evidence base for the setting of the local standards outlined above. This was carried out in summer 2009, and involved a wide range of stakeholders, including the general public, children and young people, sports clubs and town and parish councils.

This consultation, together with the audit, best practice from the evaluation of standards set elsewhere in the country, was used to set local standards during a workshop attended by representatives from a range of Council departments. Standards have not been set for Green Corridors or Civic Spaces. In addition, within the quality standard, some elements are essential, whilst others are only desirable. Further details can be found in appendix 5.

#### **4.4. Standards for Open Space in Charnwood**

As a result of this assessment and consultation a set of local standards for providing open space in the Borough have been set. These standards have been used as the basis for recommended Open Space Standards for Charnwood and will be used as the basis for open space provision as part of new developments. Table 3 below summarises these standards for Charnwood. Where no standards have been set, this is in line with guidance.



**Table 3: Open Space Standards for Charnwood**

Typology	Quantity Standard (hectares per 1000 population)	Accessibility Standard	Quality Standard – Key features of a Site
Parks	0.32 Current provision equates to 0.32ha per 1000.	15 minute walk time (720m). 10 minute drivetime in rural settlements where the population falls below the minimum required to need a park	Adoption standard: A regularly mowed smooth surfaced grassland space with tree and shrub planting suitable for a variety of informal outdoor recreation activities. Including features such as gardens, footpaths, play areas, young peoples facilities, seating and litter bins. Prepared in accordance with an agreed plan. Clean and litter free, appropriate planting and well kept grass. It is desirable to include toilets, seating, footpaths, nature features, litter bins and safety features. They should have a clear entrance, boundaries and lighting.
Natural and Semi Natural Open Space	2.0 (to be applied to new provision only). Current provision equates to 5.7ha per 1000.	10 minute walk time (480m)	Adoption standard: An accessible space with wildlife habitats to improve biodiversity. These may be predominantly woodland, water, meadow or a combination. Prepared in accordance with an agreed management plan. Clean and litter free, nature features, safe footpaths and appropriate planting. It is also desirable for sites to include water features, parking, dog walking facilities, seating, information and toilets.
Amenity Green Space	0.46 Current provision equates to 0.45ha per 1000.	10 minute walk time (480m)	Adoption standard: A regularly mowed smooth surfaced grassland space. Including features such as tree and shrub planting and footpaths. Prepared in accordance with an agreed plan. Clean and litter free, regularly maintained and with well kept grass and appropriate planting. Where possible, sites should also contain litter bins, dog bins and seating and be safe and secure.
Provision for Children & Young People	1 facility within 480m of every home	10 minute walk time (480m)	Adoption standard: A LAP, LEAP or NEAP constructed to EN 1176 and EN 1177 standards or a Facility for Young People. The facility to have a compliant RoSPA installation report. Prepared in accordance with an agreed plan. Facilities should be appropriate and designed through consultation with children and young people. They should be clean and litter free, well maintained and should also contain seats, litter bins and be dog free (where appropriate). The site should be

Typology	Quantity Standard (hectares per 1000 population)	Accessibility Standard	Quality Standard – Key features of a Site
			appropriately located and meet minimum LAP/LEAP/NEAP criteria with a defined main entrance with clear boundaries.
Outdoor Sports Facilities	2.60 (of which a minimum of 1.09 should be community use pitches) Current provision equates to 2.58 ha per 1000 of which 0.90 are community use pitches.	10 minute walk time (grass pitches) 10 minute drive time - tennis courts, bowling greens, athletics tracks, golf courses and synthetic turf pitches	Adoption standard: A high quality sports facility that is fit for purpose and prepared to the standards required by the governing body of sport e.g. Football Association, Lawn Tennis Association. Pavilion/changing and parking facilities to meet Sport England standards. Sports fields to be provided to a specification agreed by the Sports Turf Research Institute or equivalent organisation. Facilities should be clean and litter free with well kept grass and safe playing surfaces with the pitch appropriately maintained. It is desirable to provide parking, seating facilities, changing facilities and toilets and be dog free.
Allotments	0.33 Current provision equates to 0.26 ha per 1000.	15 minute walk time (long term – 720m)	Adoption standard: A high quality allotment site that is fit for purpose. Including the following features: Loam to a minimum depth of 400mm with few stones; no shading or root invasion by large trees; 2 metre perimeter palisade fencing and gates; water supply with taps or troughs at appropriate intervals; appropriate concrete vehicle access throughout the site, waste container storage and parking; sheds provided adjacent to each plot; onsite toilet; plots laid out with plot markers with 500mm grass strips between plots. Plots ploughed to an agreed depth. Prepared in accordance with an agreed plan. Allotments should be clean, litter free and secure. It is desirable to provide appropriate parking, toilets, water supply and managed appropriate access routes.
Green Corridors	No standard set	No standard set	Adoption standard: An accessible linear space with wildlife habitats to improve biodiversity. These may be predominantly woodland, water, meadow or a combination. Prepared in accordance with an agreed management plan. Sites should be clean and litter free, with clearly defined footpaths and natural features. It is also desirable for sites to have an effective main entrance, litter and dog bins, appropriate planting, lighting and seating.
Civic Spaces	No standard set	No standard set	Adoption standard: An accessible high

Typology	Quantity Standard (hectares per 1000 population)	Accessibility Standard	Quality Standard – Key features of a Site
			quality public space. Prepared in accordance with an agreed plan. Sites should be clean and litter free with well kept grass and seating. It is also desirable to have parking facilities, appropriately maintained footpaths and planting, litter and dog bins, and should be secure and safe.
Cemeteries, disused churchyards and other burial sites	No standard set	No standard set	Adoption standard for Cemeteries: A high quality site that is fit for purpose. Including the following features: 2 metre perimeter fencing and gates; water supply with taps at appropriate intervals; litter bins at appropriate intervals; appropriate tarmac vehicle access throughout the site road markings and parking bays; street lighting; public toilet; cemetery buildings including office, staff quarters and equipment storage; Cemetery plots laid out with concrete beams and plot markers. Prepared in accordance with an agreed plan. Facilities should be clean and litter free, with well kept grass, appropriate planting and infrastructure, including bins. It is also desirable for sites to contain seating, appropriately maintained and safe footpaths, opportunities for biodiversity and wildlife, and toilets (where appropriate).

Original Source: Open Space, Sports and Recreation Study 2010

## **5. PRIORITISING THE SHORTFALLS**

Having agreed a set of standards from the Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study 2010, shortfalls can be measured with a view that these should form the basis upon which decisions are made on new open space provision and improvements to existing open spaces. Clearly, to meet all standards across the Borough (fulfil every shortfall) would require a significant investment of resources. The availability of these resources is currently uncertain, and therefore this Open Spaces Strategy needs to identify how to prioritise the shortfalls against these standards.

### **5.1. Identifying the shortfalls**

The Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study 2010 identified shortfalls of open spaces for each settlement across the range of typologies, by applying the local standards (identified in chapter 4) against the audit of existing provision. Within each typology, an assessment against each of the three standards is made, as illustrated in table 4 (showing Rothley as an example).

These shortfalls can be seen in summary in table 5, and in detail in appendix 6. The summary table only covers larger settlements and is only indicative of the major shortfalls for those settlements. The quality shortfalls listed do not necessarily apply to all sites within the settlement; for instance a quality shortfall in parks and gardens may apply to just one site rather than all within the settlement.

It is also noted that no quantity or accessibility shortfalls were established for three of the typologies (Green Corridors, Civic Spaces and Cemeteries, Disused Churchyards and Other Burial Sites), as a result of no standards being set in the 2010 Study, in accordance with guidance in PPG17 at that time.

**Table 4: Excerpt from the Assessment of Shortfalls showing Rothley as an example**

Settlement	Parish Pop'n	Parks	Natural and Semi Natural Open Space	Amenity Green Space	Facilities for children	Facilities for Young People	Outdoor Sports Facilities	Allotments	Cemeteries and Churchyards	Overall Summary
Rothley	3,841	<p><b>Quantity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current Provision: 0 ha per 1000</li> <li>• Recommended Standard: 0.32ha per 1000 population</li> <li>• Shortfall: -1.23 ha in total</li> </ul> <p><b>Quality</b> There are no parks.</p> <p><b>Accessibility</b> Residents do not have access to parks within the recommended distance threshold. The distribution of amenity space is however good and residents have access to this type of informal space.</p> <p><b>Impact of forthcoming developments</b> None.</p>	<p><b>Quantity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current Provision: 0 ha per 1000</li> <li>• Recommended Standard: 2ha per 1000 population (to be applied to new development only).</li> </ul> <p><b>Quality</b> No natural and semi natural open space</p> <p><b>Accessibility</b> Most residents are outside the recommended catchment</p> <p><b>Impact of forthcoming developments</b> None</p>	<p><b>Quantity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current Provision: 1.02 ha per 1000</li> <li>• Recommended Standard: 0.46ha per 1000 population</li> <li>• Surplus: 2.13ha in total</li> </ul> <p><b>Quality</b> Quality of sites ranges from average to excellent. Key area for improvement are, planted areas, grassed areas, litter bins and seats.</p> <p><b>Accessibility</b> Most residents within recommended catchment of amenity green space. Spaces particularly valuable in the absence of parks.</p> <p><b>Impact of forthcoming developments</b> New amenity green space to be provided as part of Persimmon Homes development.</p>	<p><b>Quantity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current Provision: 4 facilities for juniors. None for toddlers.</li> <li>• No quantity standard set</li> <li>• Shortfall / Surplus: n/a</li> </ul> <p><b>Quality</b> All sites were rated average – very good. Key areas for improvement include the play value offered at sites, quality of equipment, entrances, seating and litter bins.</p> <p><b>Accessibility</b> Most residents within recommended catchment.</p> <p><b>Impact of forthcoming developments</b> New facility for children to be provided as part of Persimmon Homes development at Hallfields Lane.</p>	<p><b>Quantity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current Provision: 1 facility</li> <li>• No quantity standard set</li> <li>• Shortfall / Surplus: n/a</li> </ul> <p><b>Quality</b> The facility at the rear of Rothley Primary School, the only site in the town is rated very good. The key area for improvement is lighting.</p> <p><b>Accessibility</b> Most residents are within the recommended catchment of a facility.</p> <p><b>Impact of forthcoming developments</b> None</p>	<p><b>Quantity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current Provision: 2.59ha per 1000 population. Facilities provided include tennis, bowls, cricket and football pitches.</li> <li>• Recommended standard: 2.60 ha per 1000 use pitches.</li> <li>• Shortfall: -0.06 in total. Shortfalls of mini soccer (-1.4) and cricket pitches (-2) but no other unmet demand identified</li> </ul> <p><b>Quality</b> Quality of provision rated average to very good. Key areas for improvement are entrance, seating, lighting, changing facilities and parking.</p> <p><b>Accessibility</b> All residents within recommended drivetime of tennis courts, bowling greens and synthetic turf pitches and golf courses as well as playing pitches suitable for comps.</p> <p><b>Impact of forthcoming developments</b> None</p>	<p><b>Quantity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current Provision: 0.65 ha per 1000 population</li> <li>• Recommended standard: 0.33 ha per 1000</li> <li>• Surplus: 1.22 ha in total. Waiting lists at existing sites.</li> </ul> <p><b>Quality</b> Loughborough Road Allotments is rated as average. The key area for improvement is roads and pathways.</p> <p><b>Accessibility</b> Majority of residents within recommended catchment.</p> <p><b>Impact of forthcoming developments</b> None</p>	<p><b>Quantity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current Provision: one cemetery and one churchyard.</li> <li>• No quantity standard recommended.</li> <li>• Shortfall / Surplus: Capacity of existing cemetery sufficient.</li> </ul> <p><b>Quality</b> Both sites are rated average. Litter bins, grass areas and parking are the key areas for improvement.</p> <p><b>Accessibility</b> No accessibility standard set</p>	<p><b>Significant Issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are no parks within Rothley and there is therefore potential to upgrade an amenity green space into a park. The protection of amenity green space is particularly important for the village in the absence of a park. The Persimmon Homes development at Hallfields Lane will provide further amenity green space. Given the absence of natural green space in the village, there is a need to identify ways of providing this type of space and this could potentially be located within any new park.</li> <li>• The Persimmon Homes development at Hallfields Lane will include a new play area.</li> <li>• There are shortfalls in the provision of mini-soccer and cricket pitches.</li> </ul>

Source: Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study (2010)

**Table 5: Summary of the shortfalls in the larger settlements and service centres**

Settlement	Summary of shortfalls		
	Quantity	Accessibility	Quality
Anstey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outdoor sports facilities</li> <li>Natural and semi-natural open space</li> <li>Amenity green space</li> <li>Parks</li> <li>Allotments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilities for young people</li> <li>Allotments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parks</li> <li>Allotments</li> </ul>
Barrow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natural and semi-natural open space</li> <li>Allotments</li> </ul>	Facilities for young people	Facilities for children
Birstall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amenity green space</li> <li>Natural and semi-natural open space</li> <li>Outdoor sports facilities</li> <li>Facilities for children and young people</li> </ul>	Amenity green space	Informal recreation space
Hathern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natural and semi-natural open space</li> <li>Amenity green space</li> </ul>	Natural and semi-natural open space	Amenity green space
Loughborough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parks</li> <li>Provision for young people</li> <li>Cemeteries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natural and semi-natural open space</li> <li>Facilities for children</li> </ul>	Varies across sites
Mountsorrel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilities for children and young people</li> <li>Outdoor sports facilities</li> </ul>	None	None
Queniborough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parks</li> <li>Amenity green space</li> <li>Natural and semi-natural open space</li> <li>Facilities for young people</li> <li>Outdoor sports facilities</li> <li>Allotments</li> </ul>	None	None
Quorn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parks</li> <li>Amenity green space</li> <li>Outdoor sports facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parks</li> <li>Facilities for young people</li> </ul>	Facilities for children
Rearsby	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parks</li> <li>Natural and semi-natural open space</li> </ul>	Facilities for young people	Facilities for young people
Rothley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parks</li> <li>Natural and semi-natural open space</li> <li>Outdoor sports facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parks</li> <li>Natural and semi-natural open space</li> </ul>	None
Shepshed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parks</li> <li>natural and semi-natural open space</li> <li>outdoor sports facilities</li> </ul>	Natural and semi-natural open space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cemeteries</li> <li>Provision for children</li> </ul>
Sileby	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natural and semi-natural open space</li> <li>Outdoor sports facilities</li> <li>Allotments</li> <li>Cemeteries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natural and semi-natural open space</li> <li>Facilities for young people</li> </ul>	Allotments

Settlement	Summary of shortfalls		
	Quantity A	Accessibility	Quality
System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natural and semi-natural open space</li> <li>Outdoor sports facilities</li> <li>Allotments</li> <li>Cemeteries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natural and semi-natural open space</li> <li>Amenity green space</li> <li>Facilities for children and young people</li> <li>Allotments</li> </ul>	Amenity green space
Thurmaston	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parks</li> <li>Facilities for young people</li> <li>Outdoor sports facilities</li> <li>Facilities for children</li> </ul>	Parks affected by major transport routes	Facilities for children

## 5.2. Identifying priorities

A framework has been set to prioritise future investment and inform future requirements for developers in addressing shortfalls and raising sites to the local standards. It is based on prioritisation exercises to determine a hierarchy of typologies assessed using the beneficial outcomes outlined in table 1 (chapter 2). These are:

- Health and Wellbeing
- Biodiversity
- Climate Mitigation
- Social Cohesion
- Heritage
- Economy
- Learning.

In order that the prioritisation process was completely without bias, an independent consultant was utilised to develop a robust mechanism which could be used to prioritise the shortfalls identified in the Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study 2010. The report detailing the process can be found at appendix 7. The mechanism was influenced by panels to establish a framework in which the shortfalls could be assessed and prioritised.

### 5.2.1. The use of panels

Three key groups were identified as the participants of the consultation process: elected members, members of the public, and officers of the council. In order to fully account for differing interactions on the use, management and development of open space, it was integral to the robust testament of the framework that the three key groups were equally influential in setting the priorities.

The public and elected members groups were given a presentation to ensure a broad understanding of the issues. The officers of the council were chosen as having input into the green spaces service through their positions within the Planning, Sport and Active Recreation and Green Spaces departments, so were asked to complete the exercise independently.

### 5.2.2. Process of prioritisation

Participants were required to individually rate each of the typologies by probable significance of impact on each beneficial outcome, using table 6 below. Thus, each outcome would attain a hierarchy of typologies, and equally, across all beneficial outcomes, a hierarchy of typologies would be established, based on the maximum number of benefits each typology has the potential to deliver.

**Table 6: Ranked typology by beneficial outcomes**

		Beneficial Outcomes						
		Health & Wellbeing	Biodiversity	Climate Mitigation	Social Cohesion	Heritage	Economy	Learning
Typologies	Allotments							
	Amenity Green Space							
	Cemeteries, Churchyards & Burial Grounds							
	Civic Spaces							
	Green Corridors							
	Natural and Semi-Natural							
	Outdoor Sports							
	Parks & Gardens							
	Provision for Children & Young People							

The participants were then asked to rank the importance of the outcomes, using table 7, scoring the highest priority '1' through to the lowest priority '7'.

**Table 7: Ranked importance of outcomes**

Outcomes	Health & Wellbeing	
	Social Cohesion	
	Biodiversity	
	Climate Mitigation	
	Heritage	
	Economy	
	Learning	

A scoring matrix was developed (see table 8) to allow the rating established within the Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study 2010 (poor, average, good, very good and excellent) to be applied to each of the typologies, but



required the typologies to be placed in priority order, based on the benefits they generate.

The prioritised list of typologies was then fed into a scoring matrix which can then be applied to each shortfall from the 2010 Study, resulting in each shortfall being allocated a score of priority.

**Table 8: Scoring Matrix**

			Typology 1	Typology 2	Typology 3	Typology 4	Typology 5	Typology 6	Typology 7	Typology 8	Typology 9
			High = 3			Medium = 2			Low = 1		
Quality	Poor	5	15	15	15	10	10	10	5	5	5
	Average	4	12	12	12	8	8	8	4	4	4
	Good	3	9	9	9	6	6	6	3	3	3
	Very Good	2	6	6	6	4	4	4	2	2	2
	Excellent	1	3	3	3	2	2	2	1	1	1

Quantity	Poor	5	15	15	15	10	10	10	5	5	5
	Average	4	12	12	12	8	8	8	4	4	4
	Good	3	9	9	9	6	6	6	3	3	3
	Very Good	2	6	6	6	4	4	4	2	2	2
	Excellent	1	3	3	3	2	2	2	1	1	1

Access	Poor	5	15	15	15	10	10	10	5	5	5
	Average	4	12	12	12	8	8	8	4	4	4
	Good	3	9	9	9	6	6	6	3	3	3
	Very Good	2	6	6	6	4	4	4	2	2	2
	Excellent	1	3	3	3	2	2	2	1	1	1

	High priority		Medium priority		Low priority
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Settlements with a population of less than approximately 1000 have been classified as 'smaller villages'. In these circumstances it may not always be appropriate to apply the same standards of provision, due to the level of investment in relation to the population of that area.

### 5.2.3. Financial Context

The prioritised shortfalls can then be considered in a financial context i.e. the required indicative level of funding. The amount of funding available to the Council for the provision and improvement of open space will vary significantly from levels of investment that have been afforded the Borough in recent years. Recent austerity measures have had a significant impact on service delivery and availability of alternative funding sources.

Whilst it is important to ensure the Open Spaces Strategy does not burden the Council and its tax-payers too heavily for the future, there is a clear need to plan for the future when the financial climate may be very different.

It is therefore vital to work towards identifying alternative sources of funding open space other than the traditional methods of revenue, capital, grants and contributions through development e.g. section 106.

### 5.3. Outcomes

#### 5.3.1. Ranking Typologies

The process of prioritisation using three groups (Members, Community and Professionals), resulted in each typology being ranked. An average ranking was established per group.

#### 5.3.2. Ranking Beneficial Outcomes

The groups were also asked to rank the beneficial outcomes in order of significance. The total ranks for each beneficial outcome were then combined (by group and overall), giving an order of importance. See appendix 8.

#### 5.3.3. Weighting the Ranked Typologies

The average rankings of typologies were then weighted, to take account of the relative importance of the beneficial outcomes, as defined through the process in 5.3.2 above.

Weightings were applied to the outcomes as follows:

- High (x3) – Health & Wellbeing, Social Cohesion
- Medium (x2) – Biodiversity, Learning, Climate Mitigation
- Low (x1) – Economy, Heritage

#### 5.3.4. Prioritised Typologies

This resulted in a ranking for each typology, as demonstrated in table 9 below.

**Table 9: Weighted rankings of typologies**

Typology	Priority	Level
Parks and Gardens	1 <sup>st</sup>	High
Natural and Semi-natural Open Space	2 <sup>nd</sup>	
Provision for Children and Young People	3 <sup>rd</sup>	
Amenity Green Space	4 <sup>th</sup>	Medium
Outdoor Sports	5 <sup>th</sup>	
Green Corridors	6 <sup>th</sup>	
Allotments	7 <sup>th</sup>	Low
Civic Spaces	8 <sup>th</sup>	
Cemeteries, Churchyards and Burial Grounds	9 <sup>th</sup>	

Whilst this ranked typology reflects the views of the three stakeholder groups having completed an analysis of beneficial outcomes, it does not at this stage take into

account other factors such as the level of deficiency in any given area or funding criteria.

### 5.3.5. Prioritising the Shortfalls

The prioritised typologies were then used in the scoring matrix (see table 10 below), which was, in turn, used to prioritise the shortfalls identified in the 2010 Study.

**Table 10: Scoring matrix, including prioritised typologies**

			Parks & Gardens	Natural & Semi-Nat	Children & Young	Amenity Green Space	Outdoor Sports	Green Corridors	Allotments	Civic Spaces	Cems, Churchyards & Burial Grounds
			High = 3			Medium = 2			Low = 1		
Quality	Poor	5	15	15	15	10	10	10	5	5	5
	Average	4	12	12	12	8	8	8	4	4	4
	Good	3	9	9	9	6	6	6	3	3	3
	Very Good	2	6	6	6	4	4	4	2	2	2
	Excellent	1	3	3	3	2	2	2	1	1	1

Quantity	Poor	5	15	15	15	10	10	10	5	5	5
	Average	4	12	12	12	8	8	8	4	4	4
	Good	3	9	9	9	6	6	6	3	3	3
	Very Good	2	6	6	6	4	4	4	2	2	2
	Excellent	1	3	3	3	2	2	2	1	1	1

Access	Poor	5	15	15	15	10	10	10	5	5	5
	Average	4	12	12	12	8	8	8	4	4	4
	Good	3	9	9	9	6	6	6	3	3	3
	Very Good	2	6	6	6	4	4	4	2	2	2
	Excellent	1	3	3	3	2	2	2	1	1	1

	High priority		Medium priority		Low priority
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## **6. FRAMEWORK FOR DELIVERY**

### **6.1. Identifying Deficiencies**

The Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study (OSSRS) 2010 identified standards for open space across quality, quantity and accessibility. This Open Spaces Strategy adopts these standards across the Borough. The OSSRS 2010 also resulted in the identification of a list of shortfalls in the provision of nine different 'typologies' of open space in Charnwood, against these standards (a gap analysis). These deficiencies have been mapped to illustrate the extent to which provision fails to meet the standards identified and adopted in this Strategy across the Borough.

This extensive nature of the list, including shortfalls in quantity, quality and accessibility for Charnwood residents across most settlements, suggests that bridging all the gaps in provision could not be met without substantial and long term investment. This level of investment exceeds that expected to be successfully delivered through the planning system (Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy, CIL) combined with any available revenue or grants/bids.

There is therefore a clear need to prioritise the delivery programme for the Open Spaces Strategy and to consider the themes that can be identified from the recommendations in the OSSRS 2010.

### **6.2. Themes from the OSSRS**

The recommendations from the OSSRS 2010, consider six major typologies of open space, namely:-

1. Parks & Gardens
2. Natural & Semi-Natural Open Space
3. Amenity Green Space
4. Children & Young People
5. Outdoor Sports Facilities
6. Allotments

Common themes across these typologies include:-

- A need to create clear policies to protect and enhance open space
- Improving marketing of open space and exploit educational value of open space across the Borough including accessibility via public transport, cycling or walking
- Upgrading existing open space to make better use of or provide alternative uses for the open space e.g. change in typology
- Improve management practices to allow for more effective or efficient use of open space e.g. splitting allotments or playing pitches
- Identify linking opportunities of open space, particularly throughout the Soar Valley and Charnwood Forrest
- Act as critical friend to key partners and provide advice and support where possible
- Use best practice and make best use of other stakeholders e.g. access to educational establishments playing facilities and utilising children and young people in the design of facilities
- Ensuring new developments actively contribute towards the standards of open space, in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility

- Consider disposal options on facilities that 'overlap' provision to ensure reinvestment is secured
- In recognition of changing circumstances, continue to monitor and assess provision, need and demand to ensure accurate response by the Council
- Ensure close links with and protection of conservation and biodiversity in all typologies in providing and managing open space
- Ensure the areas of significant deficiency are addressed, in quality, quantity and accessibility across the six typologies

### **6.3. Strategic Urban Extensions (SUE's)**

As part of the Council's Development Strategy there are proposals to provide a number of Strategic Urban Extensions, or SUE's which will address some of the shortfalls identified in the gap analysis referred to in section 6.1 above.

As part of the emerging Core Strategy, The Council has engaged with a number of key stakeholders in a master-planning process to identify the needs, aspirations and priorities of the community, developers and the Council in developing SUE's in the Borough. The Council's Corporate Plan envisages these SUE's will provide quality developments that bring the Council's vision to life and will provide overall benefits for the Borough. This vision and quality provision will include taking into account the Open Spaces Strategy Policy Statements and other key corporate factors that may impact on the type or level of open space in these areas.

This delivery mechanism for the SUE's open space will therefore, be driven by the master-planning process and guided by the Open Spaces Strategy.

### **6.4. Open Space Outside of SUE's**

The relationship between SUE's and the remaining settlements in the Borough is clearly interlinked. Not only will SUE's help bridge some of the existing gaps identified in existing settlements, but new more strategic proposal may come forward as part of the master-planning process that will offer significant broader benefits to a wider community outside of SUE areas.

The priority list already identified in 6.1 above provides the initial set of open space projects required to fill gaps in standards in Charnwood's settlements. An important mechanism for resourcing the delivery of these projects is funding through the planning system e.g. Section 106 or CIL.

As Section 106 funding is directly related to a development site, these projects and priorities are guided to some extent by the developments that come forward in the Borough. CIL on the other hand is not necessarily specific to a single development site. The Council's emerging CIL infrastructure plan will need to take account of key priorities for fulfilling open space deficiencies.

As such this plan will be influenced by the Open Spaces Strategy to ensure it takes account of the key strategic issues such as linking the different areas of green space in the Soar Valley corridor.

### **6.5. Policy Framework**

The evidence gathered during the development of this Strategy therefore supports the need for a set of Open Spaces Policy Statements that reflect the community

expectations for open space. These are summarised in table 11 below and detailed in Section 6.6 below.

In adopting these Policy Statements the Council will guide future development and improvements as well as embed these principles in the way the Council manages open space in the future. The Council will use the Policy Statements to help lead and guide stakeholders and delivery partners in the successful delivery of the Open Spaces Strategy during the period up to 2028.

Collectively, these policy statements provide a policy framework in which open spaces are protected, enhanced, improved, managed or provided in accordance with the Council's strategic aims and objectives (as laid out in the Open Spaces Strategy).

## 6.6. Detailed Policy Statements

**Table 11: List of Policy Statements**

Reference	Policy
1	General
2	Parks & Gardens
3	Natural & Semi Natural Open Spaces
4	Amenity Green Space
5	Provision for Children & Young People
6	Outdoor Sports Facilities
7	Allotments, Community Gardens & Urban Farms
8	Cemeteries, Churchyards & Burial Grounds
9	Green Corridors
10	Civic Spaces
11	Trees & Hedgerows
12	Woodlands

### 6.6.1. General

Policy Statement 1, General, covers all typologies and is overarching across the remaining 11 Policy Statements.

#### (a) **Protection of Open Spaces**

The Council wishes to protect and preserve public open space by

- ensuring that assets are not transferred out of the Council's ownership (with the exception of lease arrangements) except in

exceptional circumstances and where alternative open space provision shall be made;

- ensuring that where open space is lost through development alternative provision is gained to meet the standards set within the Open Spaces Strategy;
- ensuring that development proposals and local improvement works take all reasonable steps to avoid harm to the amenity, heritage, biodiversity or recreational value of existing open space;

**(b) *Standards for Open Space Provision***

The Open Spaces Strategy includes 'standards' for open space in Charnwood, including quality, quantity and accessibility in all settlements across most typologies. The Council will take all reasonable and practicable steps to achieve these standards across all settlements (existing and proposed new developments, including SUE's) and across all relevant typologies.

**(c) *Dealing with Surpluses and Deficiencies in Open Space***

- The Council will ensure that where surplus land exists (where typologies exceed the standards for local communities), modification to the land to address other typology shortfalls within the locality will be considered prior to consideration for disposal where practicable.
- The Council will seek to address deficiencies in open space (where typologies do not meet the standards for local communities) by identifying relevant funding sources, seeking funding applications and consideration of gain through the planning system.

**(d) *Adoption and Liability of New Open Spaces***

In seeking to address the shortfalls identified in the Open Spaces Strategy by creating new open spaces, the Council will reduce its financial liability by actively promoting the transfer to third party organisations e.g. Parish or Town Councils, Management Bodies or Trusts. Where the Council does accept the asset transfer appropriate levels of revenue funding will be agreed in advance and the quality standards identified in the Open Spaces Strategy should be met, where possible, prior to transfer. Revenue funding will be reviewed and adjusted on a regular basis.

**(e) *Open Space Changes***

In recognition of changing circumstances, the Council will continue to monitor and assess provision, need and demand to ensure an effective response by the Council and to upgrade existing open space to make better use of, or provide alternative uses, e.g. change in typology.

**(f) *Consultation***

We will consult with local residents, users and community groups, where reasonable, on proposals for development of or changes to open space, standards or policies to ensure community expectations are met in delivering and managing open space and in order to set good examples to other providers.

- (g) **Partnership Working**  
We will continue to work in partnership with the public, private and voluntary sectors including providing advice and support and acting as a critical friend in order to more effectively manage and enhance our open spaces across the Borough.
- (h) **Management and Maintenance**  
The Council recognises the importance of high quality management and maintenance of open spaces and will seek to ensure that the quality standards identified in the Open Spaces Strategy are met. The Council will continually review how it manages its open space to ensure it provides a high quality service that is sustainable and accessible. Specifications, procedures and protocols will be developed to supplement these policies in order to effectively manage open space.
- (i) **Signage and Interpretation**  
We will ensure that where there is an identified need appropriate marketing materials, signs and interpretation boards are in place for the Council's open spaces. Signage should be sufficient for purpose and positioned to avoid impairing amenity and creating visual clutter.
- (j) **Marketing and Promotion.**  
To improve marketing of open space across the Borough including to fully exploit its value for education, health promotion, improved livability of neighbourhoods and accessibility via public transport, cycling or walking.
- (k) **Investment in Open Spaces**  
We will explore and co-ordinate all investment opportunities in our open spaces including Heritage Lottery Funding, Sport England, etc. We will continue, where appropriate, to seek funding through the planning process e.g. Section 106, for open space provision in relation to new development.
- (l) **Community Cohesion**  
We will work with our partners to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour and improve social cohesion on open spaces.
- (m) **Quality Schemes**  
To encourage and support schemes that promote quality and sustainability, such as Loughborough in Bloom and Green Flag, to enhance the Council's Open Spaces.
- (n) **Biodiversity**  
The Council has an overarching duty to consider the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and the natural environment in the exercise of all its functions. In the management, maintenance and development of open space biodiversity will be a priority.



**(o) *Community Engagement and Volunteering***

The Council recognises the many valuable benefits that volunteering can bring to the individual, to society and to Charnwood's open spaces. The Council will continue to encourage and support volunteering in its many forms including Friends of Groups, Volunteer Warden Schemes or affiliation to nature conservation groups. In committing to providing and extending the range of volunteering opportunities within the open spaces work programme, the Council will provide technical support and advice to community and voluntary groups that are working on projects which support the delivery of the open spaces strategy.

**(p) *Equality and Diversity***

The Council is committed to promoting equality and diversity in the provision and management of open space including improvements to open space facilities. This commitment recognises not only our legal requirements under legislation, but also our drive to ensure we make all reasonable adjustments to ensure that our facilities are accessible to all sectors of the community.

## **2) Parks and Gardens**

### *Vision*

A Borough where an ample provision of high quality parks and gardens ranging from pocket parks to town parks meets the needs of local communities and enhances the quality of life for all. These green spaces provide an excellent range of opportunities for spiritual reflection, informal leisure, active recreation and play. Local communities are encouraged to become involved in managing their local parks and the Borough Council recognises the importance and value they hold for residents and visitors alike.

### *Objectives*

- To ensure that where parks and gardens are provided they meet standards set within the Open Spaces Strategy.
- To protect the heritage and environmental context of the Council's parks and gardens
- To involve local communities and partners to help manage and promote those areas
- To provide access for all for communities to use, appreciate and to enjoy

### *Policies*

- (a)** To sustainably maintain and manage our Parks and gardens.
- (b)** To promote the use of parks for community events and activities
- (c)** To encourage a sense of community ownership, engagement and involvement in parks
- (d)** To provide appropriate on-site supervision and monitoring of Parks.
- (e)** To seek to maintain Green Flag status for Queen's Park.

### **3) Natural & Semi-Natural Green Spaces**

#### *Vision*

A Borough where the natural and semi-natural green spaces enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors and to protect biodiversity. These sites are protected and managed to provide high quality accessible green spaces for people to enjoy for spiritual reflection, recreation, leisure and play and to experience and learn about nature close to where they live. They are managed as important wildlife habitats, in order to improve the biodiversity of the Borough.

#### *Objectives*

- To ensure that where Natural & Semi-Natural Green Spaces are provided they meet standards set within the Open Spaces Strategy.
- To recognise the contribution of these green spaces to nature and wildlife conservation, enhancing and protecting biodiversity, and their heritage value.
- To involve local communities and partners to help manage and promote those areas.
- To provide access for all for communities to use, appreciate and to enjoy these green spaces whilst safeguarding their biodiversity interest

#### *Policies*

- (a) To work with partners and local communities to improve access to, and quality of, natural and semi-natural green spaces and to manage them effectively
- (b) To seek to protect natural and semi-natural green spaces including the use of statutory and non-statutory designation status (such as Local Nature Reserve and Local Wildlife Site) where appropriate.
- (c) To actively encourage the use of volunteers in the effective management of these sites
- (d) To raise awareness and increase appropriate recreational use to enable all sections of the community to use and enjoy these areas, commensurate to the retention of their biodiversity interest
- (e) Seek to maintain Green Flag Status for The Outwoods

### **4) Amenity Green Space**

#### *Vision*

A Borough where well-managed amenity green spaces contributes to the quality of life of local neighbourhoods These sites are managed and developed to take opportunities to provide more interesting and stimulating green spaces whilst maintaining amenity open space for its primary purposes of providing recreational space and visual enhancement of neighbourhoods.

### *Objectives*

- To ensure that where Amenity Green Spaces are provided they meet standards set within the Open Spaces Strategy.
- To recognise the contribution of these green spaces to nature and wildlife conservation, enhancing and protecting biodiversity.
- To involve local communities and partners to help manage and promote those areas.

### *Policies*

- (a)** To expand the use of alternative management techniques such as wildflower and meadowland marginal planting, community orchards etc on large areas of amenity green space to promote biodiversity and amenity value.
- (b)** To work with volunteer groups and local residents to identify opportunities to improve amenity green space for the local community.

## **5) Provision for children and young people**

### *Vision*

A Borough where all children and young people have access to a range of high-quality, safe and well-managed play opportunities and where provision is stimulating and challenging to meet their needs in terms of high play value,

### *Objectives*

- To ensure that the equipment on play spaces and facilities is inclusive, appropriate and stimulating for a range of age groups and abilities and, wherever reasonable, accessible to all
- To ensure that the children and young people have a continuous involvement in the design of play spaces and teenage facilities
- To provide, where appropriate, high quality, safe local/neighbourhood play spaces and teenage facilities to encompass all needs within the local community

### *Policies*

- (a)** To ensure all proposed new play facilities are effectively appraised for play value and appropriate provision etc prior to commissioning and installation
- (b)** To involve children and young people in the design, and positioning of their local play area or teenage facility and take their views into account where possible.
- (c)** To ensure that all play facilities meet high quality standards in their design and construction prior to asset transfer
- (d)** To consider the inclusion of natural play and opportunities for contact with nature and wildlife in designing new open spaces
- (e)** To develop and implement a preventative maintenance, renewal and decommissioning procedure of play equipment.

## **6) Outdoor Sports Facilities**

### *Vision*

A Borough where sufficient good quality publicly accessible facilities are available in the right locations, to meet the need for the widest possible range of formal outdoor sport and recreational opportunities for all those who wish to participate. These spaces will be well managed and maintained to meet the requirements of the relevant sporting bodies and make a positive contribution to the visual amenity of the area.

### *Objectives*

- To provide all residents and visitors with access to quality formal outdoor recreation provision, playing facilities and changing accommodation, to ensure increased participation
- To support a strong voluntary sector across different sports providing facilities and working with their local communities to ensure best use of resources

### *Policies*

- (a)** To encourage school recreation facility provision, wherever feasible, to be made available to the community.
- (b)** To support and encourage the voluntary sector to meet the needs of local people and to increase participation across all communities including community management and asset transfer.
- (c)** To review the allocation and provision of sports provision to improve accessibility across the Borough and allow a full range of sports to be available to the communities in Charnwood.
- (d)** To provide quality, fit for purpose outdoor sports facilities which meet the requirements of the relevant sporting bodies. Where sites do not meet quality standards funding opportunities will be explored or decommissioning and/or change of use considered.

## **7) Allotments, Community Gardens and Urban Farms**

### *Vision*

A Borough where there is well-managed provision of high quality and fully productive allotment plots, community gardens and community orchards which are promoted to ensure high demand. Where appropriate sites will be secure and with good service provision.

### *Objectives*

- To provide allotment sites that meet the standards set out in the Open Spaces Strategy
- To promote establishment of allotment associations to run Council owned allotment sites
- To identify opportunities to develop and establish new allotments, community gardens, community orchards and urban farms.
- To maximise the use of available land to increase plot provision.

### *Policies*

- (a) To ensure that where new allotments are proposed the design takes account of the standards set out in the Open Spaces Strategy
- (b) To encourage community management of allotments through the establishment of allotment associations
- (c) To review the allocation and provision of allotment space and size of allotment plots to improve accessibility across the Borough

## **8) Cemeteries, Closed Churchyards & Burial Grounds**

### *Vision*

A Borough where cemeteries and closed churchyards are managed to ensure they are protected and developed as places for dignified burial services and spiritual reflection and for their importance for heritage, nature conservation and biodiversity.

### *Objectives*

- To ensure that sufficient burial space is available to the community in the future
- To safeguard the cemeteries with regard to important wildlife habitats, heritage or archaeological features
- To ensure the Council complies with its duty to maintain closed churchyards in decent order
- To work with partners and local communities to manage these areas and to maintain and enhance their value including biodiversity and heritage

### *Policies*

- (a) To secure an extension to Loughborough Cemetery or identify an alternative burial site within appropriate financial constraints of the Council
- (b) To review the safety of memorials and undertake remedial action where necessary.
- (c) To work with partners and local communities to manage our cemeteries and closed churchyards to obtain an appropriate balance between maintenance requirements and heritage, biodiversity and archaeology.

## **9) Green Corridors**

### *Vision*

A Borough where an extensive network of green corridors provides active recreational and leisure opportunities, whilst being maintained for their primary purposes as through routes and wildlife corridors which enhance habitat connectivity and visual amenity of neighbourhoods.

### *Objectives*

- To ensure that where green corridors are provided they meet standards set within the Open Spaces Strategy.
- To create green corridors that link existing wildlife habitats within the Borough

### *Policies*

- (a) To work with volunteer groups, partners and local residents to identify opportunities to create and improve green corridors for the local community and to enhance their ecological function.
- (b) Identify linking opportunities of open space, particularly throughout the Soar Valley and Charnwood Forest

## **10) Civic Spaces**

### *Vision*

A Borough where well-managed civic spaces contribute to the quality of life of local neighbourhoods and provide more interesting and stimulating public space whilst being maintained for its primary purposes of functional space.

### *Objectives*

- To ensure that where civic spaces are provided they meet standards set within the Open Spaces Strategy.
- To protect the heritage and environmental context of the Council's civic spaces
- To involve local communities and partners to help manage and promote those areas
- To provide access for all for communities to use, appreciate and to enjoy

### *Policies*

- (a) To sustainably maintain and manage our civic spaces.
- (b) To encourage and support Loughborough in Bloom to enhance the Council's civic spaces in Loughborough

## **11) Trees & Hedgerows**

### *Vision*

A Borough where trees, and hedgerows are valued for the significant contribution they make to wellbeing and quality of life within the area. Trees, and hedgerows are managed to promote biodiversity, climate mitigation, and visual amenity whilst being safe and healthy.

### *Objectives*

- To ensure that the Council's tree stock is maintained in a safe and healthy condition and minimise associated health and safety risks.
- To provide appropriate levels of information and advice to the public on the Council's tree stock.
- To identify and ensure appropriate management of hedgerows which are important for biodiversity, as wildlife corridors or as landscape features.
- To minimise the health and safety risks of the Council's trees.
- To effectively manage the positive contribution made by trees and hedgerows to open spaces.
- To identify opportunities to create new hedgerows and appropriate tree planting schemes including community orchards.

### *Policies*

- a)** Charnwood Borough Council will continue to carry out its rolling programme of tree inspections by independent experts together with associated remedial programme of work.
- b)** The Council will respond positively to tree matters involving safety (including highway safety) and will remove dead, dying (except where biodiversity issues prevail) and dangerous and unsafe trees and branches.
- c)** Where it can be demonstrated that a tree is the primary cause of direct damage to property the Council will act to rectify the problem. In cases of damage to property it must be clearly demonstrated that the tree is the principal cause of the damage. (The effects of tree litter such as leaves, twigs, fruit etc will not be considered as direct damage)
- d)** The Council will not prune its tree stock to alleviate the obstruction of light or telecommunication signals or where branches overhang neighbouring properties.
- e)** The Council may carry out work on trees in response to its development priorities. Development priorities may include site or neighbourhood redesign, the redevelopment of parks, gardens and other green spaces, or woodland management schemes.
- f)** The Council will consider accepting sponsorship for tree work only where this has been identified as good arboricultural practice
- g)** The Council will work with partners and community groups to identify opportunities to increase its tree stock through appropriate tree planting.
- h)** There will be a presumption against removal of existing hedgerows and appropriate management systems will be put into place in order to protect and enhance the quality and condition of hedgerows.
- i)** The Council will consider planting new, species rich, native hedgerows in appropriate locations to meet a variety of objectives, including habitat creation, the screening of unsightly development, the provision of shelter and the enhancement of the landscape
- j)** In planting or adopting hedgerows or tree belts, the Council will be sensitive to the potential for damage or inconvenience, or impeding access as they mature causing by planting in close proximity to other structures. In addition, the Council will recognise and take positive action to prevent the potential conflict of interest where developments are proposed in close proximity to existing trees, treebelts and wooded areas.

## 12) Woodlands

### *Vision*

A Borough where woodlands are valued and sustainably managed in order to provide a multitude of functions including wildlife conservation, spiritual reflection, recreation, carbon sequestration, landscape enhancement and screening. Where existing woodlands are protected and new woodlands are created for future generations to enjoy.

### *Objectives*

1. To ensure that the Council's woodlands are managed with nature conservation and bio diversity as a central objective with other uses only considered where they will not conflict with the needs of wildlife.
2. To promote the development of new woodlands in order to meet a multitude of functions, and to ensure that existing woodlands are sustainably managed in a way that maximizes reflects their individual character.
3. To involve local communities and partners in the management and promotion of woodlands.

### *Policies*

- (a) The Council will aim to ensure that each woodland/wooded area has an up-to-date management plan in place which will be reviewed on a regular basis. Management plans will reflect the complexity and sensitivity of the site
- (b) None-native introductions will be gradually removed from ancient, semi-natural woodland sites and replaced with native species appropriate to the area. Where possible this will be achieved by natural regeneration or by planting stock of local provenance
- (c) The Council will encourage community involvement with Woodland Management through partnership working with nature conservation organisations, and where appropriate through the establishment of Friends Groups and volunteer schemes.
- (d) The Council will encourage the creation of new woodlands in appropriate locations ensuring layout and selection of species reflects the local woodland character. New woodlands will be designed to minimise conflict with local residents and at all stages of the woods evolution.
- (e) The Council will seek to realise any economic potential of woodland through the marketing of timber and other woodland products where this does not conflict with other priorities.

### **6.7. Strategic Delivery Framework**

The delivery of the Open Spaces Strategy is therefore dependant upon a flexible but robust framework. This includes specific issues and methods for dealing with the needs and aspirations of the different communities in the Borough and especially those opportunities provided by the emerging SUE's. These will be managed using a toolbox of options available ranging from policies, management practices, master-planning and working with key stakeholders and engaging the community.



Other strategic objectives will also be taken into account as they emerge including key partner objectives such as those of the University, the Charnwood Forest Partnership or Sports and Recreational Development agencies. This delivery framework will therefore need to be flexible to meet opportunities that might arise but also respond to the demands of the communities they will ultimately serve. Community engagement is therefore key to the success of this delivery framework.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS & NEXT STEPS

The Open Spaces Strategy has been developed using a robust evidence base in the form of the Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study 2010. This Study used extensive consultation with key stakeholders to formulate a set of local standards leading to the identification of key shortfalls in provision of several types of open space across the Borough.

In developing the Open Spaces Strategy the different types of open space were ranked according to their beneficial outcomes with the resultant information used to produce a prioritised list of shortfalls that needed to be addressed. The use of key stakeholders' views on beneficial outcomes has allowed effective community engagement in the Strategy process and the resultant 'Framework for Delivery' will have a level of community buy-in.

Additional consultation, by Leicestershire County Council on Green Spaces in 2011 and the Borough Council on the Draft Open Spaces Strategy in 2012 achieves a greater understanding of community expectations and priorities. This should provide stakeholder confidence in the Open Spaces development process and resultant Open Spaces Strategy for Charnwood. It will aid the delivery of community expectations, subject to the financial constraints and availability of funding sources, and deliver best practice through the management of open space that have embedded the Open Space Policy Statements.

### 7.1. Action Plan

One of the initial tasks upon adopting the Open Spaces Strategy, will be to produce an Action Plan that includes a comprehensive assessment of the resources required to deliver the different elements, recognising that a number of projects have been identified as priorities for the Council. This Action Plan will be regularly reviewed in light of:-

- Availability and ownership of land
- Local knowledge of community needs
- Appropriate methods of delivery of projects, such as community led
- Community consultation on the acceptability of projects
- Statutory obligations
- Amount of funding required
- Availability of suitable funding opportunities and any potential funding criteria
- The development of new facilities near to the Borough boundary.
- Partnership working opportunities and the economic climate.

It will be a 'community owned' tool, which given sufficient support and funding during the life of the Open Spaces Strategy will effectively deliver community expectations. It will encourage access to, and the use of, existing facilities, enabling seldom heard groups to recognise the benefits provided by open spaces.

The Action Plan and associated Open Spaces Strategy will encourage and maximise community use of open spaces through the development of programmes and events. This will include a full complement of sporting and recreational activities, made available to a broad range of the community.

This Action Plan will be guided by the community expectations and priorities, Open Space Policy Statements and consultation to ensure it remains relevant and up-to-date whilst maintaining the Council's policy position on Open Spaces.

Early opportunities within the Action Plan will include:

- To establish a set of key stakeholders across the Borough that can help steer the approach to delivering quality open space to serve local communities;
- To actively identify and map the funding opportunities available for open spaces, for example existing Section 106, revenue and capital, and grants.

The use of key stakeholders will help engage key sectors of the community, such as user groups and 'Friends of' groups, in the delivery of projects. These groups may have a number of different roles, including:

- Assisting in bidding for funding (e.g. unlocking funding opportunities);
- Assisting in the delivery of projects;
- Acting as a sounding board for the feasibility of projects;
- Management of open spaces (e.g. transfer of responsibility to community groups).

## **7.2. Review Periods**

The Open Spaces Strategy is intended as a framework and guide for the delivery of priorities, and local circumstances will be used to inform its implementation. As these priorities will change over time there is clearly a need for regular reviews of the Action Plan to ensure local needs are being met as well as strategic priorities progressed. This short-term Action Plan will therefore be reviewed in 2017.

## **7.3. Partnership Working**

The consultations and research undertaken as part of the development of the Open Spaces Strategy highlight the following opportunities relating to the provision, management and maintenance of open spaces:

- Loughborough University is seen as a key driver of the character of the town. There are significant opportunities to capitalise further on the resources that the university has, as well as maximising the input that the University and its students can have in day to day community life. For example, students with expertise in sports may wish to provide volunteering at local sports clubs.
- There are many examples of effective partnership working across the Borough, including the Charnwood Forest Partnership and the Charnwood Sport and Recreation Alliance (CSARA). Such partnerships are key to helping deliver the Open Spaces Strategy.
- There are opportunities to increase the role that schools play in community life and to maximise use of the facilities that these sites have to offer outside of curricular hours.

In order to maximise the benefits that can be derived from the provision of open spaces, key stakeholders should be identified with a common aim of helping to realise the benefits of the partnership working opportunities e.g. sharing of knowledge and experience, joint funding applications etc, and proactively investigate the opportunities raised.

#### **7.4. Measuring the success of the strategy**

The success of the strategy will be measured through a follow-up study to look at progress in addressing the deficiencies identified in the Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study 2010. The Action Plan will also be used as a barometer of success in respect of key deliverables during the short-term. It is also proposed to review the delivery of the key objectives at least every five years.

#### **7.5. Public Engagement and Communication**

Public engagement in open spaces is essential to reap the greatest benefits available to the wider community. The clear benefits have been identified in the development of this Open Spaces Strategy, ranging from health through social cohesion to biodiversity. Few other activities the Council is proactively involved in offer such a range of significant benefits to a wide cross section of the community.

The Council conducts regular consultation of the level of satisfaction with the services it provides as part the Corporate Plan. This survey shows that clean, tidy and safe open spaces are a key feature for residents and visitors alike in considering where to live and work.

As a result the Council recognises the clear benefits that such open space can provide. Positive customer feedback is therefore significant in measuring how well the service is received. To date the Green Spaces service has seen continued improvements in satisfaction in recent years, reflecting the investment and support the Council has provided in quality open spaces provision across the Borough.

This Strategy therefore will form the cornerstone for measuring this key corporate indicator and as such a comprehensive and robust public engagement process will be maintained throughout the Strategy period.

It is recognised that new developments are key to the delivery of additional public open space. Clearly the planning system will have an important role to play in managing community engagement either through the preparation of the local plan, community led neighbourhood plans or through the determination of planning applications.

Community engagement will range from specific sectors of the community being directly engaged in the design of open space e.g. children's and young peoples play, through to engagement of sports or special interest groups in the identification and support for appropriate funding of open space, and direct consultation with whole communities on specific projects in settlements e.g. Parish or Town Councils.



**Draft Open Spaces Strategy  
Consultation Report February  
2013**

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## Executive Summary

Charnwood Borough Council produced a draft Open Spaces Strategy in 2012. It builds upon the data collected for the Open Spaces Sports and Recreation Study in 2010. It aims to provide a clear framework for practical action to create, protect and improve open spaces in Charnwood to 2028, and to identify the key prioritisation and resource allocation. It will also exploit opportunities to increase the provision of open space, and support and enable bids for funding to improve the network of open spaces.

It includes:

- An action plan for future delivery of open space to meet identified deficiencies
- Guidance and support for the delivery of open space through the Local Development Framework
- Leadership advice and support for alternative open space delivery partners
- Information to the communities of Charnwood on the provision of open space

The draft strategy was produced following consultation and a series of workshops as well as being in accordance with best practice and current guidance.

Consultation on the draft strategy was carried out between 5<sup>th</sup> November 2012 and 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012, through Charnwood Borough Council's webpage, leaflets, One Charnwood, as well as documents available at Area Forums. This gave a variety of stakeholders, other Local Authorities, local businesses, professional partners, community groups, hard to reach groups and individual residents of the Borough the opportunity to comment on the draft Open Spaces Strategy.

Over 100 replies were received covering a wide cross section of ages. This report summarises the responses from the consultation process.

The consultation has shown broad agreement with the approach taken in the strategy with between 82 and 97% of respondents agreeing to the proposals in the questions. Almost two thirds of respondents supplied general comments. The main findings were that the Open Spaces Strategy should:

- identify specific sites for protection
- involve the Council listening to the views of local people
- focus upon addressing allotment and burial space shortages
- focus on improving maintenance including sports pitch maintenance, shrub pruning, removal of dog fouling and litter

There was also some concern raised over the type of questions asked not providing the right level of scrutiny of some of the issues. This was however, compensated for by the opportunity to provide open comments in addition to the specific questions asked.

In concluding the consultation process and bringing together other comments as well as key findings from the County Council's recent consultation on Green Spaces in the County, a number of changes are proposed to be made to the Open Spaces Strategy. These changes will strengthen the protection of open spaces; bring about greater focus on areas identified as priority; ensuring consultation is key to the development and change process for open space; ensuring adopted standards reflect provision and maintenance; put greater emphasis

on the benefits of biodiversity and wildlife habitats; improving marketing, communication and educational value; ensuring the process for changing or managing open space is flexible and adaptable; ensuring key partners and opportunities for linking are exploited to the greatest benefit of the community.

Some comments received related directly to the planning of new developments and hence these have been referred to the Planning and Regeneration Service.

## **2. Reason for Consultation**

The Draft Open Spaces Strategy was produced with the input of three workshops: Member, Community and Officers of the Council, and approved by Cabinet in October 2012.

The consultation was intended to give a variety of stakeholders, local businesses, professional partners, community groups, hard to reach groups and individual residents of the Borough the opportunity to comment on the draft Open Spaces Strategy.

## **3. Consultation Process**

### **3.1 Activities**

The consultation process centred on a survey containing key questions about the Draft Open Spaces Strategy; which could be completed online or on paper. The paper version contained information about the Strategy, and could be returned using a freepost address. All the data was inputted into the Survey Monkey webpage for analysis.

The consultation process was publicised by a number of means:

- Posters displayed at Parish Council Offices, with leaflets available
- Information and a link to the survey sent to a distribution list of individuals and key stakeholders
- Promotion on Charnwood Borough Council's main web site
- A dedicated webpage on the Charnwood Borough Council site, containing information and a copy of the draft strategy, with a link to the electronic survey

The consultation process started on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2012 and ran to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012. In total 106 responses were received.



### 3.2 Consultees

A range of consultees were approached as part of this consultation. These included individual residents, hard to reach groups, and professional partners. The table below shows the range of consultees.

Sector	Example Consultees
Action Groups	Action for a Better Charnwood, Residents Groups, Thurmaston Action Group, Age UK
Businesses	Housing Associations, Local Newsletters
Councils	Borough Councillors, Town & Parish Councils, Leicestershire County Council
Disabled People	Action Deafness, Charnwood Disability Forum, Charnwood Learning Disability Action Group, RNIB College, Royal
Ethnic or National Groups	Bangladesh Social Association, Charnwood Ethnic Minority Forum, Charnwood Racial Equality Council, Polish Community Centre, Sri Niketan Cultural Association
General Public	Community Centres, Community Associations, Schools
Religious Groups	Churches Together in Loughborough, Geeta Bhawan, Loughborough Mosque and Islamic Cultural Association, Meadows Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, Shree Ram Krishna Community Association, The Loughborough Churches Partnership
Seldom Heard Groups	Women's Groups, Children's Centres, Human Rights & Equalities

## 4. Feedback

The findings of the survey are split into those submitted as answers to set questions, and general comments which address the Strategy in general.

The information gathered has been summarised overleaf.

### 4.1 Responses to set questions

A number of set questions were put to consultees via the web-based survey/leaflet. The responses included:-

- Over 97% agreed or strongly agreed that there should be a focus on Parks and Gardens; Facilities for Children and Young People; and Natural Open Space.
- Over 96% agreed or strongly agreed that local people should be included more in the development of open space.
- Over 95% agreed or strongly agreed that we should work more closely with schools; parish and town councils; and other providers to improve open space.
- Over 84% agreed or strongly agreed that we should seek funding from alternative sources and not rely solely on Council Tax.
- Nearly 82% agreed or strongly agreed that open spaces should be able to adapt to meeting the needs of our developing communities in the future. However, 3 respondents thought that the question was unclear.

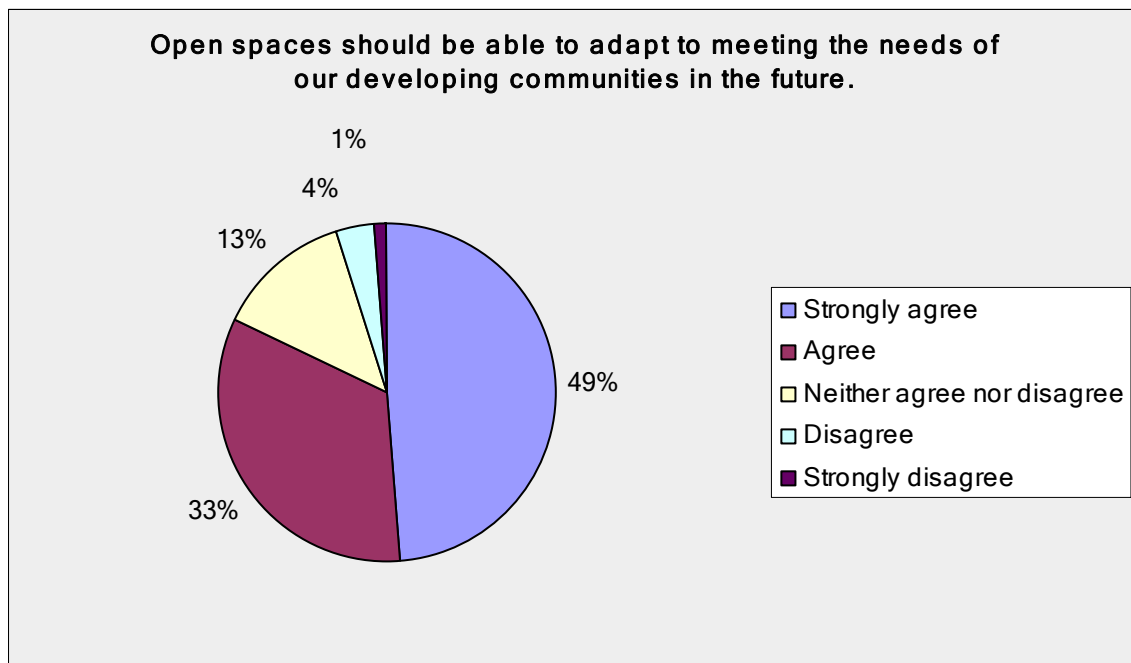
#### a) Question 1. There should be a focus on: Parks and Gardens; Facilities for Children and Young People; and Natural Open Space.

Over 97% agreed or strongly with this statement.

Comments from 2 respondents expressed opposition to such a focus.

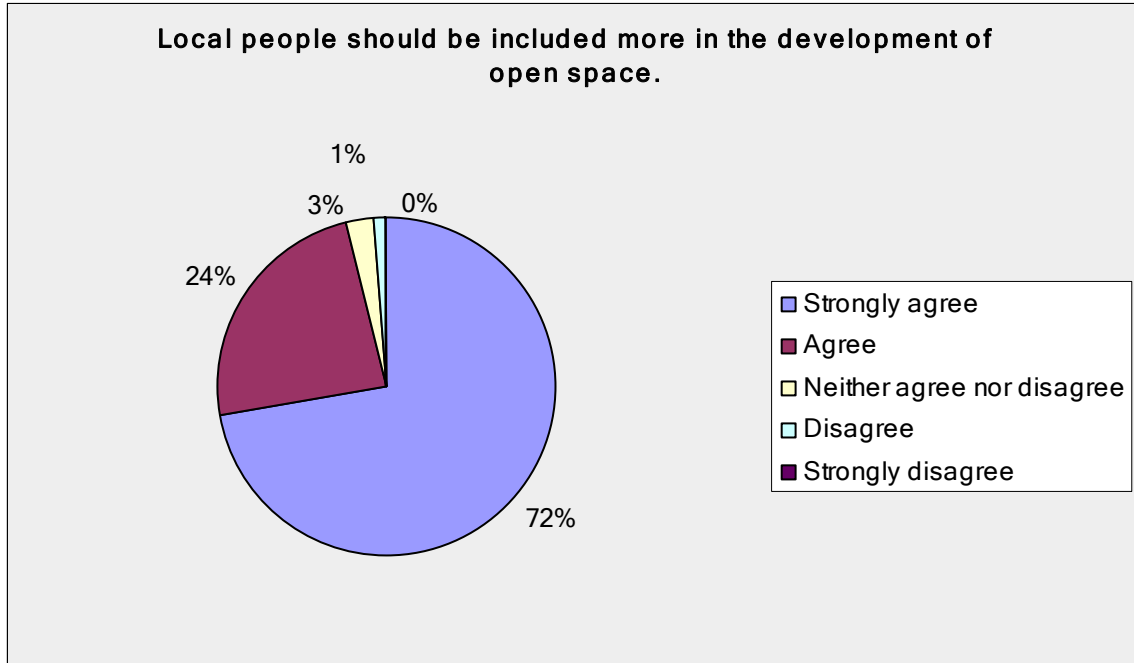
7 respondents wanted more allotments.

3 respondents wanted to ensure adequate burial spaces.



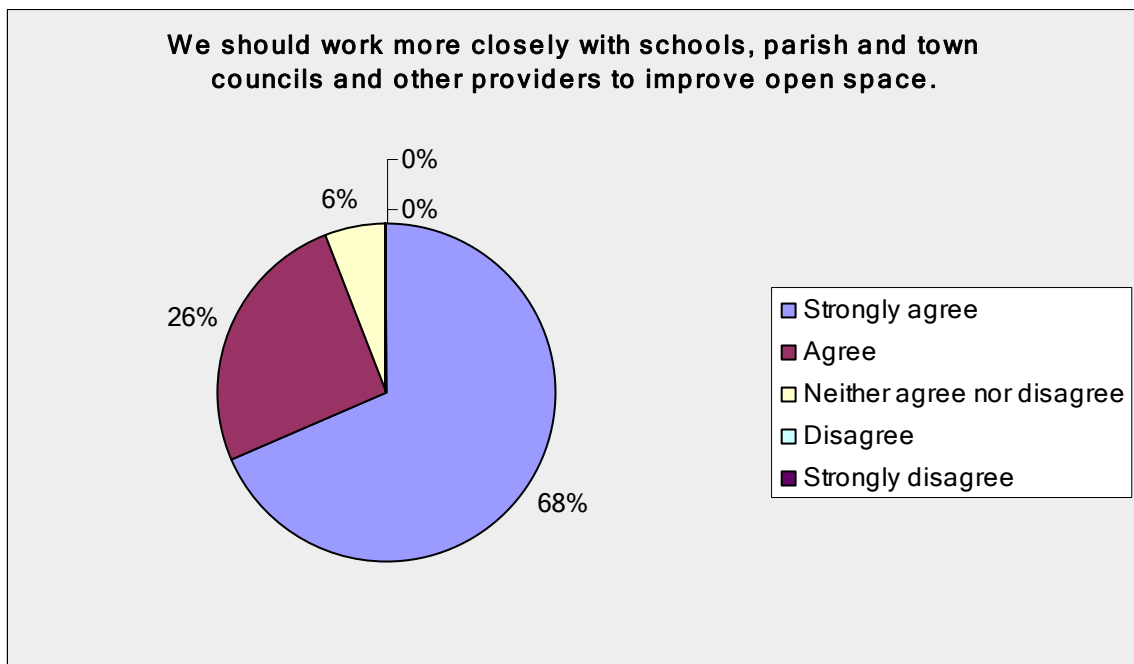
**b) Question 2. Local people should be included more in the development of open space.**

- Over 96% agreed or strongly with this statement.



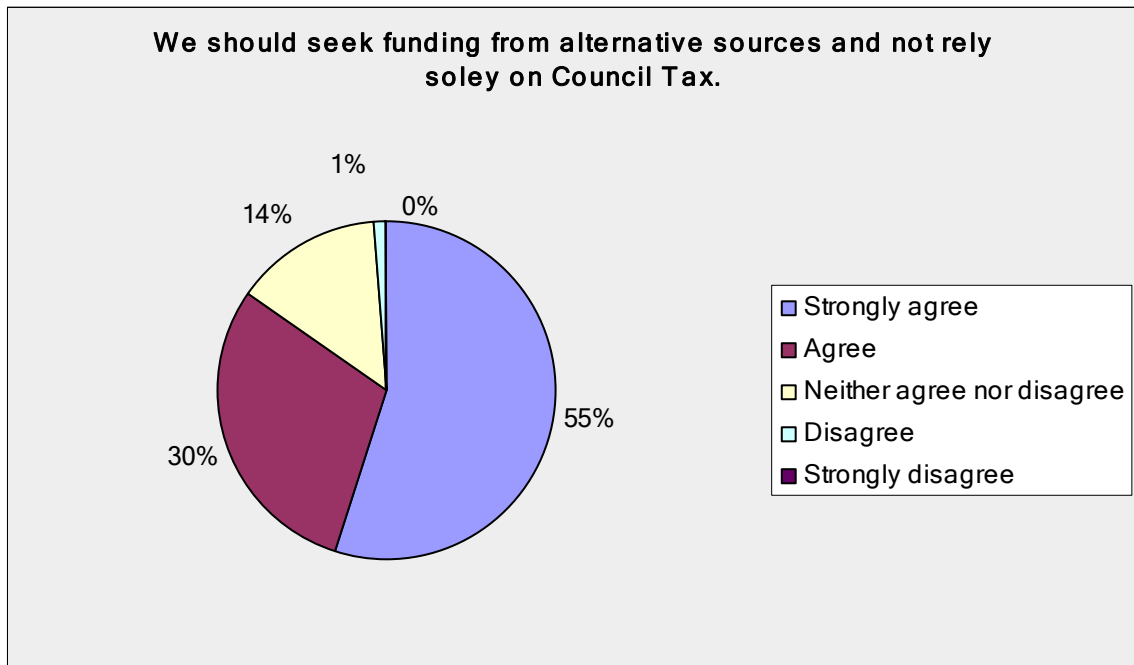
**c) Question 3. We should work more closely with schools; parish and town councils; and other providers to improve open space.**

95% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.



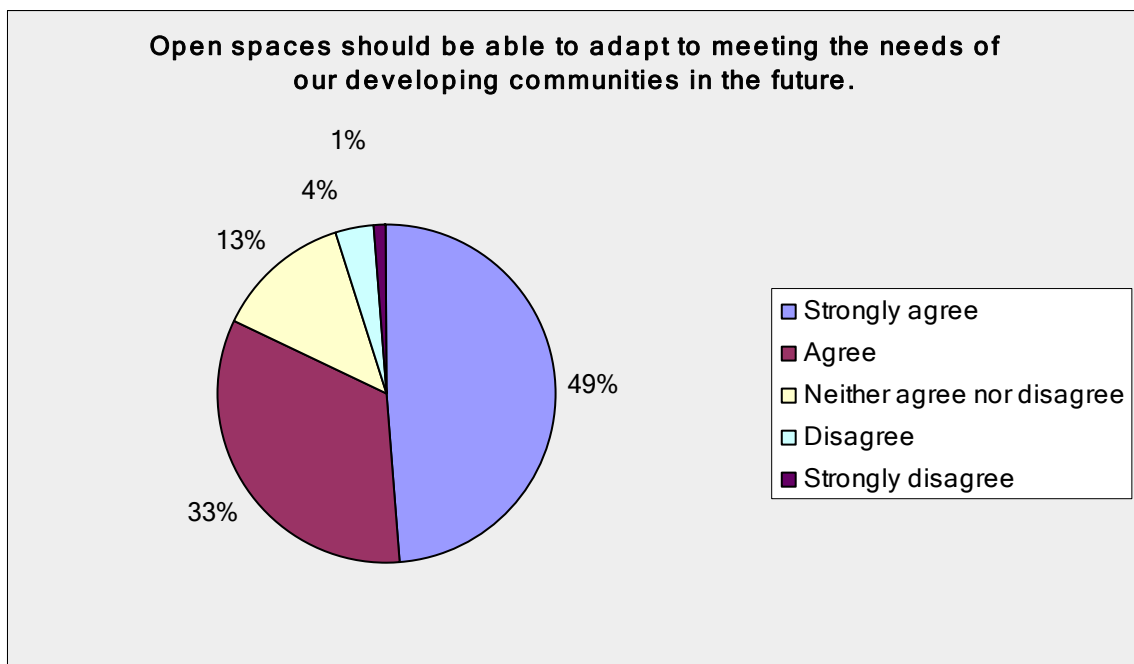
**d) Question 4. We should seek funding from alternative sources and not rely solely on Council Tax.**

84% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement



**e) Question 5. Open spaces should be able to adapt to meeting the needs of our developing communities in the future.**

Nearly 82% agreed or strongly with the statement.  
3 respondents thought that the question was unclear.



## 4.2. General comments on the Strategy

65 respondents supplied general comments. Many of the respondents commented on more than one issue. These issues have been summarised into 27 categories and ranked in order of the most common.

The top 10 issues raised as general comments were:

- Open Spaces should be protected. Sites mentioned e.g. Cumberland Road Playing Fields, Shelthorpe Golf Course
- The Council should listen to the views of local people
- There is a shortage of allotments and long waiting lists
- Criticism that the survey is a tick box exercise
- Requests for improved maintenance including sports pitch maintenance, shrub pruning, removal of dog fouling and litter
- \* There should be better use of Brownfield sites for housing development
- \* Villages must keep their identity by protecting farmland from development
- It is important to ensure sufficient cemetery land for burial
- Question 5 is not clear
- There is not enough open spaces

\* See Section 7. Issues to be referred to Planning

All 27 categories of General comments are listed below.

Summary of General Comments	No. of Respondents
Open Spaces should be protected. Sites mentioned e.g. Cumberland Road Playing Fields, Shelthorpe Golf Course	9
The Council should listen to the views of local people	7
There is a shortage of allotments and long waiting lists	7
Criticism that the survey is a "tick box exercise"	5
Requests for improved maintenance including sports pitch maintenance, shrub pruning, removal of dog fouling and litter	4
* There should be better use of Brownfield sites for housing development	4
* Villages must keep their identity by protecting farmland from development	4
It is important to ensure sufficient cemetery land for burial	3
Question 5 is not clear	3
There is not enough open spaces	3
The Council should provide better facilities and better access for the disabled/elderly	2
Country Parks are useful outdoor class rooms	2
* New development puts pressure on existing infrastructure	2
Objections to Question 1 and the focus on Parks and Gardens, Facilities for Children and Young People and Natural Open Space over	2

other typologies	
Open Spaces should be valued because they improve health and wellbeing	2
* Opposition to the proposed SUE North of Leicester & East of Thurmaston	2
Request to encourage long grass in towns to encourage wildlife	2
Country Parks should be managed better for wildlife	1
Garendon Park should be developed into a Country Park	1
Residents should be the given opportunity to develop and maintain open spaces	1
The Council should be earmarking land for future sporting needs before land is used for housing development.	1
The Council should create better public access to wildlife	1
The Council should prevent parking on verges	1
The Council should provide a list of Council owned land and Council responsibilities	1
The Council should publish a litter and graffiti hotline	1
The skatepark in Southfields Park is overcrowded. The Council should enlarge it.	1
There should be action to reduce the number of empty properties to reduce the need for development	1

## 5. Conclusions

### 5.1 Number of responses

The variety of different methods used to consult on this strategy including text alerts and a web based questionnaire have resulted in a reasonable level of response from a variety of stakeholders. There were 106 responses received.

Whilst it is difficult to establish where responses have been received from (most were received on-line and were anonymous) it is assumed that very few official organizations responded formally e.g. community action groups, Parish Councils, religious groups and hard to reach groups. If this assumption is correct it is disappointing as a significant number were written to individually and invited to respond.

## 5.2 Summary of responses

The following table summarises the responses received to the set questions.

Question	Response
There should be a focus on Parks and Gardens; Facilities for Children and Young People; and Natural Open Space.	Over 97% agreed or strongly agreed
Local people should be included more in the development of open space.	Over 96% agreed or strongly agreed
We should work more closely with schools; parish and town councils; and other providers to improve open space.	Over 95% agreed or strongly agreed
We should seek funding from alternative sources and not rely solely on Council Tax.	Over 84% agreed or strongly
Open spaces should be able to adapt to meeting the needs of our developing communities in the future.	Nearly 82% agreed or strongly agreed

## 5.3 Findings

The consultation offered respondents the opportunity to comment generally on issues related to the Open Spaces Strategy. The issues in the strategy are complex, and may be difficult for people to fully understand. Any future consultation should endeavour to explain the more complex issues. The findings are summarised below:

- There is broad support for the proposed approach outlined in the strategy:  
There should be a focus on Parks and Gardens; Facilities for Children and Young People; and Natural Open Space.  
  
Local people should be included more in the development of open space.  
We should work more closely with schools; parish and town councils; and other providers to improve open space.  
We should seek funding from alternative sources and not rely solely on Council Tax.  
Open spaces should be able to adapt to meeting the needs of our developing communities in the future.
- Many supported greater protection for Open Spaces.
- Many wanted the Council to listen to the views of local people
- Many highlighted a shortage of allotments and long waiting lists
- Some requested improvements to the maintenance standards of Open Spaces
- Ensuring sufficient cemetery land for burials was mentioned
- A few people were confused about what was meant by “adapting” existing Open Spaces. Question 5
- Some stated that there is a shortage of Open Spaces

## 6. Suggested amendments to the Draft Open Spaces Strategy

The responses to the public consultation carried out in late 2012 forms the basis for a number of recommendations on the Draft Open Spaces Strategy. However, whilst the broad consultation was conducted with the community and key stakeholders on the draft Open Spaces Strategy, it is important to recognise some of the broader context of recent consultation on public open space in Charnwood.

Officers within the Council have therefore reflected upon the policy statements and draft open spaces strategy to ensure these accurately reflect the key findings of the development process (the stakeholder workshops) and also, in particular, respond to the key findings and conclusions of the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study, 2010.

In addition, the Green Spaces Consultation, 2011, conducted by Leicestershire County Council asked for views from the public on which local green spaces they particularly valued and why. This was in response to Government proposals to create a new designation to protect green areas of particular importance to local communities. The consultation identified that people see open space as an important part of their local environment, providing a feeling of 'openness and space'. The over-riding concern was to protect green space from potential development, particularly from housing. There was also a call for maintenance, improvement or new provision of a number of types of facilities local to population centres.

It is felt that the draft Open Spaces Strategy consultation process shows broad support for the Strategy and associated Policies, and based on the findings of the survey together with other additional comments identified above, it is proposed to make a number of recommendations to alter the Draft Open Spaces Strategy and Policy Statements, including:-

- Consider strengthening the protection of Open Spaces and perhaps identify specific sites that may be under threat (policy statement 1)
- The Open Spaces Strategy should focus upon Parks and Gardens; Facilities for Children and Young People; and Natural Open Space but also address Allotment and Burial space shortages (policy statements 6 and 7)
- The Open Spaces Strategy should focus on improving maintenance including sports pitch maintenance, shrub pruning, removal of dog fouling and litter (policy statement 1)
- The Open Spaces Strategy should focus on listening to local views Community Expectations, Consultation and Partnership Working (policy statement 1)
- The standards adopted as part of the Open Spaces Strategy should reflect those required for provision as well as maintenance
- Greater emphasis should be placed upon the need for recognising the benefits of open spaces in biodiversity and wildlife habitats (all policy statements)



- Improving marketing of open space and exploit educational value of open space across the Borough including accessibility via public transport, cycling or walking
- Ensuring the Strategy allows for upgrading existing open space to make better use of or provide alternative uses for the open space e.g. change in typology
- Improve management practices to allow for more effective or efficient use of open space e.g. splitting allotments or playing pitches
- Identify linking opportunities of open space, particularly throughout the Soar Valley and Charnwood Forrest
- Act as critical friend to key partners and provide advice and support where possible
- Use best practice and make best use of other stakeholders e.g. access to educational establishments playing facilities and utilising children and young people in the design of facilities
- Ensuring new developments actively contribute towards the standards of open space, in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility

## **7. Suggested issues to be referred to Planning**

- There should be better use of Brownfield sites for housing development
- Villages must keep their identity by protecting farmland from development
- New development puts pressure on existing infrastructure
- Opposition to the proposed SUE North of Leicester & East of Thurmaston

**Report of the Overview Scrutiny Group**

**Part A**

ITEM 7 CHARNWOOD OPEN SPACES STRATEGY

Purpose of Report

To consider the comments and recommendations of the Overview Scrutiny Group concerning the proposed Charnwood Open Spaces Strategy for 2013-2028.

Recommendations of the Overview Scrutiny Group

1. that the Charnwood Open Spaces Strategy for 2013-2028, as set out in Appendix A of the draft report of the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces, be recommended for approval by Council;
2. that the following comments of the Group be considered:
  - To make the document more user friendly for the public and to encourage community engagement, as encouraged within the Localism Act 2011, it would be useful for officers to produce “report cards” for each Ward detailing what assets they contain and identifying any gaps in provisions.
  - That it was important that any elements of the Council’s Play Strategy 2006-2011 that weren’t subsumed within the Open Spaces Strategy 2013-2018 were not lost.
  - It was important that consideration was given to the provision of sports pitches, for all popular sports, for use by the general public.
  - To encourage public interest and engagement it would be worthwhile to publicise who the key stakeholders are and how the Council will liaise with them.

Reasons

1. To enable the Strategy, which forms part of Council's Policy Framework, to be adopted in order to protect and improve open spaces in Charnwood.
2. To bring to the attention of Cabinet the issues and suggestions raised by the Group.

Policy Justification and Previous Decisions

Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 8(d) sets out the procedure by which a report of a scrutiny committee should be considered by Cabinet.

## Implementation Timetable including Future Decisions and Scrutiny

There are no implications concerning the implementation timetable, as a result of the recommendation in this report.

### Report Implications

The following implications have been identified for this report.

#### *Financial Implications*

There are no further financial implications associated with these recommendations.

#### *Risk Management*

There are no specific risks associated with these recommendations.

Key Decision:	Yes
Background Papers:	No additional background papers.
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