

Green Spaces Strategy



Strategy Summary
& Zone Action Plans

August 2006

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& Zone Action Plans

A Report to Solihull Council

Report by Consultants



August 2006

Solihull Green Spaces Strategy Executive Summary & Zone Action Plans

A Report to Solihull MBC

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A vision for Solihull's Green Spaces

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

This is a Summary of the full Strategy document, available to download from the Council's website www.solihull.gov.uk

Green Spaces

Green spaces include the larger parks, common land and village greens, playing fields, children's playgrounds, recreation grounds, allotments, cemeteries, woodlands and other natural areas. The network of traffic free routes, the canals, cycle routes and rights of way, are also part of the green space infrastructure. Currently the total amount of accessible green space varies significantly between wards, from about 3 ha per 1000 people up to 12 ha per 1000. This variation is reflected in the views and concerns of local communities, and in the Strategy proposals.



Environment Day 2005

The purpose of the Strategy

Improving the quality of life

Green space is important to everyone's quality of life. Therefore well-designed and implemented planning policies are fundamental if they are to deliver Solihull's vision, objectives and values. It is essential that the Authority ensures that there are sufficient facilities and green spaces in the right places, of an appropriate quality, well managed and maintained for the future.

Setting Priorities

The Green Spaces Strategy for the Borough will help to deliver networks of accessible, high quality and sustainable green spaces which meet local needs and are valued by the community, both in the urban and rural areas. It will help to ensure that there is an appropriate balance between enhancement, increased access to existing provision, and new provision, and it will provide a clear framework for investment and management action.

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

Developing Planning Policies

The Strategy meets the requirements placed on local authorities by Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation as it sets local standards for provision for each different type of green space. These local standards relate to quantity, quality and accessibility of provision. The standards and policy proposals are consistent with all the relevant plans and strategies of the authority, and with the emerging Local Development Framework. The Strategy will also provide clarity for development proposals in relation to the requirements and expectations of the Authority in respect to new developments.

Implementing the Strategy

The Strategy's proposals provide a long term vision for the provision of green spaces and related facilities across Solihull. The Implementation Plan will help determine the priorities for policy, investment and other work programmes both for Solihull Council and its partners. The Zone Action Plans provide a more detailed set of priorities for each area of the Borough, based on the adopted local standards for green space and the other issues emerging from the Strategy process. The relative priorities between these will emerge from discussions at the Parish or Town Council level, and will also take into account the views of local residents. The achievement of the network of green spaces and related facilities proposed by the Strategy will depend upon the availability of funding. This will include both the capital investment needed to achieve a new element of the green spaces network, and the revenue to enable its effective long term management.

A consultancy team comprising Nortoft Partnerships Ltd and Wardell Armstrong were appointed in November 2004 to undertake the Strategy. This is a summary of the draft report.

The methodology

The Green Spaces Strategy was developed through a number of stages, which can be summarised as:

- An audit of the existing green spaces and their associated features and facilities
- Mapping of the audit findings onto a computer based mapping system (GIS)
- Consultation with stakeholders through topic based and individual meetings
- Consultation via a household survey (5000 randomly selected households from across the Borough)
- Review of the existing policies and strategies, including the planning policies and approaches towards developers' contributions
- Consideration of other policy objectives, including those related to conservation measures
- Comparison with other local authorities and any relevant 'national standards'
- Development of a Green Infrastructure Plan which is the network of spaces across the authority
- Development of proposed 'local standards' for different types of green space
- Development of an Implementation Plan that sets out the actions necessary to achieve the vision and the local standards
- Development of Zone Action Plans.

Because of the diverse nature of the Borough it is difficult to make recommendations and develop policies that are relevant to all areas. It was therefore decided to divide the Borough into 6 zones that would enable similar areas to be considered together.

The importance of green space

The following paragraphs summarise the main findings from the consultation exercises, particularly the stakeholder discussions and the household survey which received a good response rate of 27%. The consultations have demonstrated the high level of commitment people have to green spaces within Solihull, and also their concerns. These are the headline findings.



Easter egg hunt

Positive

The positive comments were:

Most people within Solihull have access to, at least, a small area of green space within 400 m from home, and the amount of accessible green space is high compared to many places. On average there is more than 6 ha of accessible green space for every 1000 people across the Borough, but this varies at the individual ward level.

Parks and gardens are the most used spaces by all age groups in Solihull. They are used, at least occasionally by 90% of residents, and 60% use them at least monthly. These areas also have the highest rate of daily use, reflecting the fact that most people are happy with them.

Green spaces are used mainly for walking, running, relaxing and playing with families and friends, but one in every three visits is by someone on their own, and one in every five visits is to walk the dog. Play areas have high levels of use by families with young children, but are used by more than half of the population at least occasionally.

The rural areas and the north have a fairly high level of use of wildlife and woodland areas. The use of the cycling, walking and canal routes varies across the authority, reflecting the nature of the areas and the availability of these routes.

Access to green spaces locally is important, with about one third of visits being within 5 minutes travel time (whatever mode of travel), and two thirds of visits to sites within 10 minutes travel. People usually go on foot, but there is also a high level of car and vehicle use when visiting green spaces. About one in every 10 journeys to green spaces is by bike.

Problems and issues

Problems and issues raised during the consultation included:

Almost half of the people responding to the survey said that they were discouraged from using green spaces, with the highest level of concern being in the north where the main worry was about safety and anti-social behaviour. Overall across the Borough the three main reasons for not using green spaces were (in descending order)

- Dog fouling
- Feeling unsafe/anti-social behaviour
- Litter and graffiti

The north of the Borough has large amounts of “amenity” land, used for screening, creating road boundaries etc, but very little open space which actually meets the needs of the local community.

There is a reasonable network of skate parks and other ‘young people’s’ provision across much of the authority area, but these facilities do not appear to be fully meeting the needs of young people, particularly in the north and rural areas. Other initiatives may need to be identified which will encourage positive uses of green spaces and facilities by young people, possibly linked, in some places, to new Multi Use Games Areas.

Provision for people with disabilities is generally inadequate, including inaccessible play areas, poorly maintained paths, and a lack of appropriate signage.

There are a number of concerns about the green corridors; their number, quality, usefulness, and safety of use, with these being raised as a particular issue in the north.

Problems with sports facilities have emerged in the parts of the north and the more isolated rural communities.

Most people would like to see improvements in the green space they visit most often, particularly by people living in the north. Authority wide, the main improvements sought are:

- Cleanliness
- Toilets
- Improved safety
- More and better play equipment
- More and better lighting
- Better landscaping/grass maintenance

The highest priorities identified in the survey for investment are (in descending order of priority)

- Parks and Gardens
- Play Areas (both for younger children and teenagers)
- Green Corridors
- Nature Reserves

There is general concern about the implications of development of all types, and particular concern about the expansion of the airport.

Other green space issues

The following points have arisen mostly from other research on green spaces and their planning and management, within Solihull.

Management issues

There is a high level of concern that the current capital and revenue budgets of Solihull Council are inadequate to effectively manage the green spaces and associated facilities. Where Parish and Town Councils provide the facilities, these currently receive no financial support from Solihull Council.

The volunteer network and community involvement in some areas is good, and should be supported and developed. However, the recruitment and retention of volunteers is becoming increasingly difficult, and increasing the scope and levels of community involvement can be a long, slow, time-consuming process.

Planning issues

The Green Spaces Strategy fulfils the requirements of PPG17 and also reflects other national and regional planning policies and guidance. The First Review Revised Deposit UDP policies have been examined, and it is clear that there will be a need to strengthen and review some of the relevant policies as Solihull moves into the new Local Development Framework plan. Other adopted Solihull plans and strategies have also been reviewed and taken into account within the Strategy. There is a need for some updating of the topic strategies.

The Green Spaces Strategy has shown that not enough is currently gained through developers' contributions for green spaces and their features and facilities, either for the capital sums, or the commuted sums that support long-term management. This needs to be addressed as soon as possible, and for all types of development. Furthermore, where new areas are being transferred to the Council, or commuted sums have been agreed, the Council appears ineffective in ensuring the delivery of new provision in accordance with any approved plans and/or obligations, or deal with the adoption of new areas of green space.

Where there are new residential (re)developments, appropriate areas of green space need to be included but must be strategically located and carefully designed to make them feel safe and encourage positive use.

Solihull MBC has recognised that the recommendations of the Green Spaces Strategy should be implemented as soon as possible. It is therefore proposed to develop a Supplementary Planning Document during the next few months.

The Proposals

The Green Space Infrastructure Plan

The Green Space Infrastructure Plan comprises of: the hierarchy of parks and green spaces; strategic links, informal and wildlife sites; and, sites with specific local standards. The links between these are illustrated by Figure 1. The 'local' spaces and related facilities are considered to be:

- Internal/Informal Green Space
- Neighbourhood Green Spaces
- Areas of Accessible Natural Green Space within 300m
- Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP)

The 'strategic' spaces and related facilities are considered to be:

- Local Area Parks/Local Area Green Spaces
- Principal Parks
- Other Major Parks
- Strategic Routes (selected walking and cycling routes, some bridleways, canals)
- Accessible Natural Green Spaces of 10 ha or more
- Local Natural Reserves
- Wildlife Corridors identified by the Nature Conservation Strategy
- Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for play (NEAP)
- Skate Parks and other provision for young people
- Grass playing fields
- Other sports facility provision
- Allotments

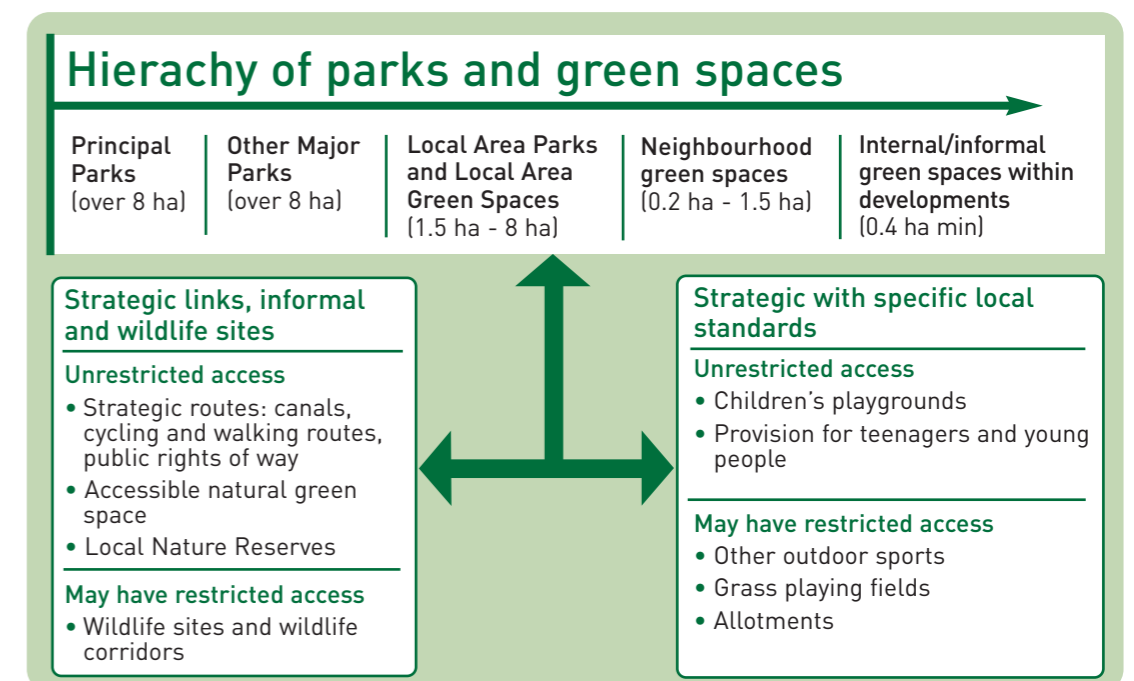


Figure 1

The hierarchy delivers the network of publicly accessible spaces, from the smallest areas of informal green space within new developments up to the principal parks.

These spaces will often also be the location for facilities such as children's playgrounds and may include areas of natural green space or even a Local Nature Reserve. The spaces are linked by both strategic routes and wildlife corridors, and all have unrestricted public access.

The strategic links, informal space and wildlife corridors are the more informal parts of the green space infrastructure. They may exist on their own, for example the canals, or be located within a park or other green space. Some of these sites will have unrestricted access, others may have restricted access.

The sites with specific local standards are for the more formal provision of green space facilities. Some of this provision will have unrestricted access, for example children's playgrounds or provision for teenagers and young people, where they may be located within the hierarchy of parks and green spaces. Other sites may have restricted public access, such as members-only football clubs, or allotment sites, and these will then be provided separately.

The assessment of the Green Space Infrastructure has been undertaken on an area or 'Zone' basis, but the standards also provide guidance on the provision of green space at the site level. Where it is proposed to lose any green space to development, detailed analysis will be needed to assess the impact of the proposal on the provision of green space locally, using the proposed standards as benchmarks. Consideration will also need to be given by developers to ways in which current identified deficiencies could be addressed either on-site, or through off-site mitigation measures.

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

- A quantitative and qualitative assessment of different types of green spaces, their features and facilities
- Consultation with stakeholders and residents on issues and priorities
- A review of existing policies and strategies
- Comparison with benchmark and other authorities
- Identification of best practice
- National and regional 'standards' from national agencies and others
- Consideration of the costs of provision; both capital and long-term maintenance
- Consideration of the realistic opportunities to meet the proposed standards within Solihull.

Hierarchy of Parks and Green Spaces

The green space associated with any new development will also contribute towards the Borough-wide network of spaces, directly through provision on-site (usually for the smaller spaces), and make contributions off-site e.g. to Principal Parks, other strategic green spaces, and strategic routes. New developments can also make an important contribution towards the delivery of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP).

For example, the nature of a new development might require a children's playground and informal green space on-site, and these could be located in a single area (such as a new Neighbourhood Green Space or a Local Area Park).

The hierarchy of parks and green spaces comprises:

Principal Parks

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

These may contain formal gardens, informal horticultural features, nature conservation areas, equipped children's playgrounds, skate parks or other provision for young people, formal sports facilities and artistically designed features or elements of public art. They should be linked by, and contribute towards, the traffic-free network of routes for walking and cycling. All such parks should achieve Green Flag award status.

Other major parks and major green spaces

Areas of unrestricted public access of over 8 ha.

These other large parks may contain similar features to the Principal Parks but tend to have a less formal character, and often more nature conservation interest. This category can include recreation grounds (which are mainly football pitches with open access) and the green spaces between houses which are part of larger landscape features, village greens, accessible woodland and natural green space over 8 ha. Blythe Valley Country Park falls within this category. These parks contribute towards the network of green spaces of over 8 ha and they should also be linked by, and contribute towards, the traffic-free network of routes for walking and cycling. These parks should be managed using the Green Flag principles, but will not generally be submitted for an award.

Local area parks/local area green spaces

Areas of unrestricted public access between 1.5 and 8 ha within one km of all settlements of more than 300 people.

These areas can vary in character, and may contain informal horticultural features, nature conservation areas, equipped playgrounds, provision for teenagers and young people, formal sports areas, informal green space areas and artistically designed features or elements of public art. They should also be part of the local network of traffic-free walking and cycling routes. The design of these areas should follow generic good practice, and they should also contribute to wildlife conservation by appropriate management measures.

This is a minimum standard, and where an area of green space greater than 8 ha is provided within one km, the standard will have been met.

Neighbourhood green spaces

Areas of unrestricted public access between 0.2 and 1.5 ha, with at least 0.2 ha of space within 400 m of homes in all settlements with more than 300 people.

These areas may contain informal horticultural features, equipped children's playgrounds, nature conservation areas, informal green space, possibly a mini or junior football pitch and artistically designed features or elements of public art. The design of these areas should follow generic good practice, and should be part of the local network of traffic-free walking and cycling routes.

These areas should also contribute to wildlife conservation by appropriate management measures.

This is a minimum standard, and where an area greater than 1.5 ha of green space is provided within 400 m, the standard will have been met.

Internal/informal green space

Areas within new developments with unrestricted access. A minimum of 0.4 ha per 1000, with a minimum area of 0.2 ha, for all settlements of over 300 people.



Snowdrops

Strategic links, informal and wildlife sites

These link the parks and green spaces, and may form part of them. They may have unrestricted public access as part of a park or green space, restricted access as on some nature conservation sites, or no public access as on railway embankments, which can be important wildlife corridors.

Strategic routes

These include the canals and their towpaths, and the most important cycling and walking routes.

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



Colebank step stones

Accessible natural green space

These spaces all have unrestricted public access but also relatively less intervention by man, and include areas such as woodlands, scrub, semi-improved grassland, ponds, river and canal sides, wetlands and geological features. These areas may also include statutory designated wildlife sites such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), non-statutory selected wildlife sites such as Sites of importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs), and Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGs) where they have unrestricted public access. The proposed specific standard is:

- one accessible natural area greater than 0.09 ha within 300 m of home for all settlements with a population greater than 300.
- one accessible 10 ha or greater site of natural green space within 2 km catchment of home for all settlements with a population greater than 5000.



Ecology visit

Wildlife corridors

These link areas of similar types of natural habitat, and also link the designated wildlife sites with wider areas. The main wildlife corridors are identified on the UDP proposals map, but there are many others at the local level including ancient hedgerows and ditches.

Local Nature Reserves

These are the formally designated Local Nature Reserve sites. A specific standard is proposed:

- a minimum of one hectare of Local Nature Reserve per 1000 population.



Babbs Mill

Sites with specific local standards

The total amount of green space provision within new developments, is a total of 2.86 hectares per 1000 population, made up of the areas for each of the green space facilities/types below, plus 0.4 ha per 1000 population for internal/informal green space. This provision may be on-site or off-site (number of units and criteria still to be determined). Where there is already sufficient specific provision in the locality, the equivalent value will be used towards improvements. Funding will be sought for both capital, and for commuted sums to support the long term maintenance of the facilities.

A Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP) should be provided with a maximum catchment distance of 400 m from housing in all settlements greater than 500 population. Minimum provision of one LEAP per 4300 population in urban areas. The LEAP should be inclusive, providing for people with a range of abilities and disabilities.



Lavender Hall play area

A Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP) should be provided with a maximum catchment distance of 1000 m in all settlements of greater than 1000 population. Minimum provision of one NEAP per 8600 population in urban areas. The NEAP should be inclusive, providing for people with a range of abilities and disabilities. Where a NEAP is provided, this can take the place of a LEAP if it is within 400 m.

Skate and other youth provision: one site per zone. Details of provision to be determined on site by site basis.



Skate board park

Multi-use games areas (MUGA): to be provided according to future MUGA strategy.

Other outdoor sports: 0.42 ha per 1000 for outdoor sports other than football, cricket and rugby in all new developments. The provision of synthetic turf pitches is in addition to this standard.

Allotments: 0.3 ha per 1000 population with minimum total allotment area of 0.5 ha, which includes ancillary facilities. Where population exceeds 1000, sites to be within 1000 m of housing. Quality criteria includes; nature of site, size of plot, minimum number of plots, provision of ancillary facilities including car parking and water provision.



Allotments

Grass playing field space: 1.64 ha per 1000 which provides for football, cricket and rugby. For new sites, a minimum playing field size of 4 ha, unless a site is specifically designed for cricket, when a site size of 3 ha is acceptable. Quality: standards to meet Sport England and Governing Body guidance.



Synthetic Turf Pitch

Implementation Plan

The following Implementation Plan draws together the key themes from the Green Spaces Strategy, together with the specific proposals and priorities for each Zone that have emerged during the strategy process. The proposals are grouped into the main areas for action: Whole Authority, Planning, Management, Sport and Leisure, and Zone Summaries.

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

Whole Authority

There is a need to give greater recognition to the contributions that green spaces can make to the wider agenda. For example, the Council Plan could have more targets for green spaces, their design, use and management, whilst the LSP Strategic Framework and Action Plan for Reducing Health Inequalities in Solihull could make more of green space opportunities. There are also clear issues that need to be addressed in relation to Crime and Disorder, and innovative schemes to address the problems need to be developed.

In discussions about specific projects and proposals it will be necessary to consult both local organisations and the local community, with particular effort being made to include young people and those with disabilities.

On a more technical point, the computer mapping of green spaces developed for the project is a unique resource, and needs to be made fully available both internally within the Council, and to outside interests. It needs to be fully maintained, managed and regularly updated. This resource would assist many of the Council's partners, in both the statutory and voluntary sectors.

Planning

There is a need to review the UDP planning policies in the light of the Green Spaces Strategy, to produce new policies to support the proposed local standards and the green space network. New policies would also help to ensure that the design of new developments takes into account both quality issues and the development's potential contribution towards wildlife conservation, local distinctiveness and landscape character. The design policies should be supported by a new topic strategy to assist developers.

It is important that the proposals in the Green Spaces Strategy - which could unlock developers' contributions for residential, commercial and industrial developments - are implemented as soon as possible. This would require a Supplementary Planning Document, which could be introduced as an early part of the Local Development Framework.

There is also a need to update and review the relevant topic plans and strategies to support the SPD. These are:

- Play Areas – categories of play provision, design and play value, Action Plan
- Countryside Strategy – Action Plan with timescales and priorities for investment
- Nature Conservation – update generally, and review wildlife corridors in particular. Production of an Action Plan
- Arden Landscape Guidelines – update and map areas onto the GIS system
- Rights of Way - produce Rights of Way Improvement Plan
- Cycling

New topic strategies are also required for:

- Allotments
- Canals

Other planning related initiatives may include undertaking a joint study with English Nature (or its successor body) to enhance the nature conservation status of the River Blythe and Cole corridors, and encouraging the development of more areas of accessible natural green space of at least 20 ha in size, possibly linked to farm diversification or mineral restoration.

Management

In the light of the Strategy findings, there is a need to seek an overall increase in revenue budgets to improve levels of maintenance for green spaces and associated facilities, and also to review the current management and grounds maintenance priorities and contracts. There is also a need to consider increasing the capital and revenue support given to Parish and Town Councils for their provision and management of green space and related facilities.

The topic strategy 'Parks and Open Spaces Strategy' requires a general updating and a new Action Plan. This would be an opportunity to consider how best to strengthen the role of the Neighbourhood Managers, giving them greater ability to make local management agreements and decisions. Ways to encourage more and stronger Parks Action Groups and other local community groups should also be considered, together with better mechanisms to fund agreed Park improvements and monitor the results. The production of Park Development Plans/Action Plans should continue and be expanded to cover all of the major green spaces.

The existing programmes of work with conservation volunteers and allotment groups also need further encouragement and support, as the involvement of the community is vital for the long term future of green spaces. In relation to allotments, the Council should continue to encourage and support greater self-management, and also expand the community gardening scheme to other sites.

Sport and Leisure

There is an urgent need in relation to the sport and leisure elements of green spaces to review the number of teams and clubs playing sport in Solihull, to confirm participation rates both on a whole authority basis and by zone. This review will help to confirm the proposed local standard for grass playing fields.



Closer work with local schools is also a priority, particularly the securing of community use where this takes place on an informal basis, and the development of school-club links. Of particular importance in relation to securing use are mini and junior football. New school-club links would benefit both cricket and rugby, especially in the north where there is only one community cricket site, and no rugby club.

A programme of partnership with all clubs could bring major benefits to sport, as some partnership funding by Solihull MBC in support of club site improvements could help deliver sports development objectives, especially in relation to encouraging more women, girls and disabled players.

These proposals, and the need to address the poor quality of many Solihull Council playing field sites, have significant budgetary implications. It is recognised that the programme of improvements may take a number of years to come to fruition, but the Green Spaces Strategy has been able to identify where the priorities lie.

To develop the details of the proposed programmes, there is a need to update and review the topic plans and strategies for the Leisure and Cultural Strategy, and the Physical Activity Strategy. Both of these need to recognise more strongly the importance of green spaces and the need to enhance and maintain them.

A new topic strategy for Multi-Use Games Areas is needed to guide their development. These sites should ideally be linked to youth development programmes, including schemes to reduce crime, and sports development.

Green spaces also provide a setting and venue for public and performance art, and the current review of the Arts Strategy gives greater consideration to the opportunities that may be available.

Resourcing the Proposals

The long-term achievement of the network of green spaces and facilities as proposed in the Strategy will depend upon strong partnerships between Solihull Council, and other agencies and organisations. Many of these bodies have their own funding available to achieve their corporate objectives. As such projects could be developed in partnership and funding could potentially be unlocked from a number of different sources. The success of the Implementation Plan is therefore largely dependant upon the ability of Solihull MBC to strengthen existing links and develop new partnerships.

Developers' contributions could be a significant source of funding towards specific projects and programmes, linked to the growth and regeneration of Solihull. If the existing UDP policies can be used to their full extent, strengthened where indicated, and supported by a Supplementary Planning Document, it should be possible to generate significant amounts of money from developers of residential, commercial, retail and industrial developments.

The character and wide ranging use of green spaces means that there are a large number of different potential grant aid opportunities, linked with a range of different objectives including sport, education, health initiatives, landscape, biodiversity and environmental improvements. Whichever external grant aid is sought, the main considerations for any project will be:

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

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

- The North Solihull Regeneration area is able to attract significant amounts of capital and revenue funding from a large number of external grant schemes.
- That many grant schemes will allow 'partnership funding' from private sector companies.



Meriden Lake

- That many grant schemes will allow money from 'developers' contributions' as partnership funding.
- Private sector companies may be prepared to offer financial support, or free professional support, for projects as part of community sponsorship, marketing or staff training.

Potential sources of grant aid

One of the most important potential sources of funding is the Big Lottery Fund. This recently announced a series of new programmes, due to come on stream in October 2005, following further consultation and programme development. The following programmes are most likely to be relevant:

- Children's Play (£155 million)
- Environmental Programmes (£354 million)
- Wellbeing Programmes (£165 million)

Other potential sources include the Football Foundation and Sport England's Community Investment Fund.

The Green Spaces Strategy will provide a basis on which to make any future funding bids, but these will also need to be supported by up to date topic strategies, as identified in the Implementation Plan.



Hillfield Beavers in brook

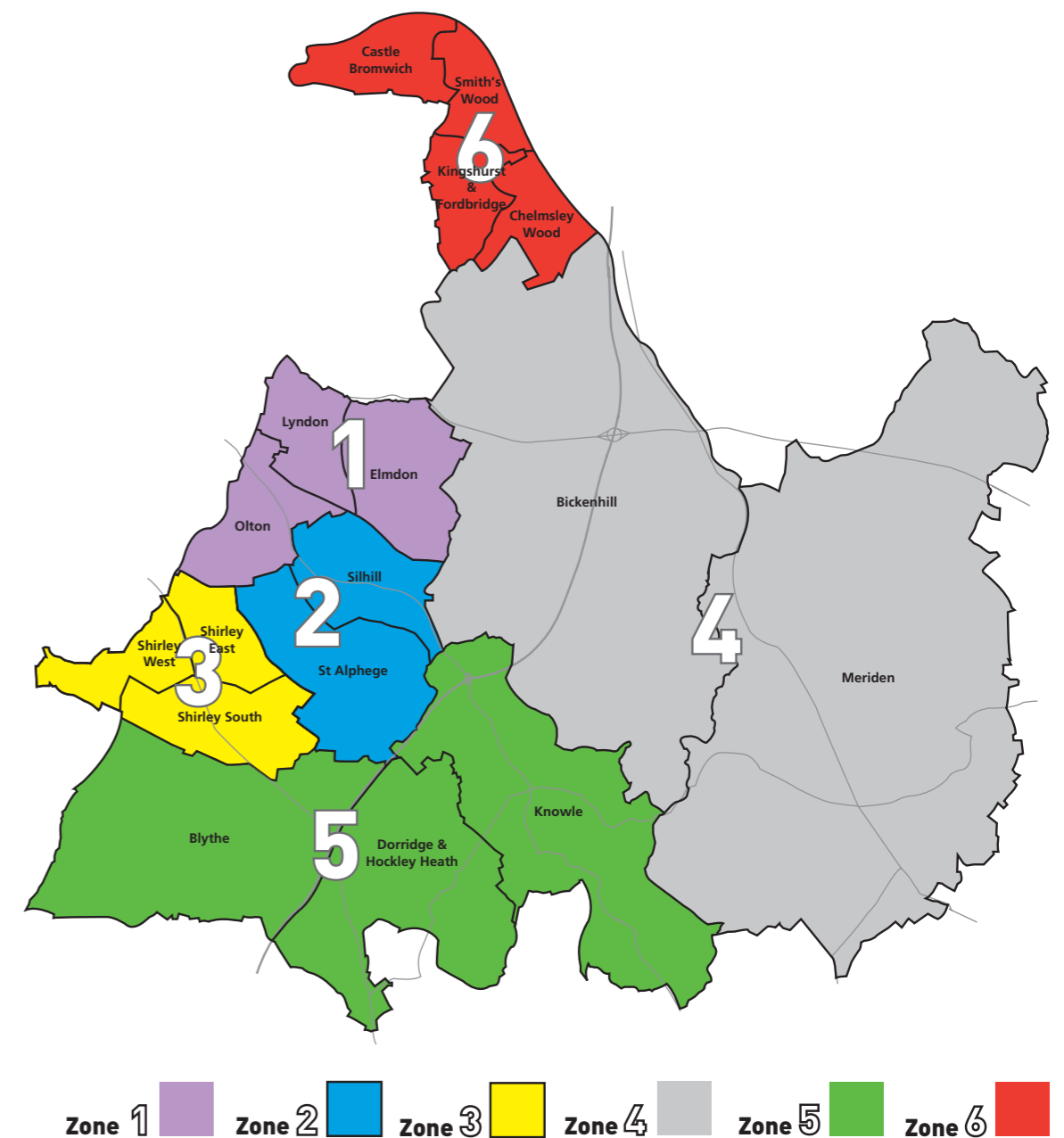
Zone Summaries

These zone summaries provide an overview of each area of the Borough. The assessment of sufficiency or otherwise is based on: the amount, location and quality of existing facilities, the issues raised during the consultations with local residents and others, 'national standards' where they exist, and best practice from other authorities.

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

A fuller analysis of the current green space provision within each Zone is provided in the Zone Action Plans that form part of the full Green Spaces Strategy report.

Green Spaces Strategy Zones



Zone 1 - Lyndon, Olton and Elmdon

The total amount of accessible green space per thousand people in this Zone is close to the average for the Borough, but there are significant differences between the wards, with Olton having amongst the least amount of green space of all wards, and Elmdon having amongst the most.

There is a need to make the existing green spaces cleaner and safer, and to provide more local green space opportunities in some areas, together with more children's playgrounds, provision for teenagers and young people, and some playing field space for rugby. A new Principal Park is needed in the area, and priorities should also include work with British Waterways to achieve greater public access to Olton Mere and the canal. The National Cycle Route 53 will be an important strategic route, but improvements are also needed to the other cycle networks in the area. Where possible some of the management regimes for areas of green space should be changed to improve wildlife habitats, and make more 'natural areas'. A new Local Nature Reserve should be developed if the opportunity arises.



Elmdon Park

Zone 2 - Silhill and St Alphege

This zone has huge contrasts in its character. Overall it has the second greatest amount of publicly accessible green space per thousand for the whole of Solihull, with St Alphege ward having the second highest amount of space per thousand compared with the other wards. At the same time, Silhill is the worst provided ward of all, in terms of the total amount of accessible green space.

There is a need to make the existing green spaces cleaner and safer, and also to provide more Local Equipped Areas for Play, and around 6 ha of new allotment space. Securing the informal community use of school sites for mini and junior football would largely overcome the lack of pitch space for football, although there may be a need to remark some senior pitches for junior use. The provision of one or more Multi-Use Games Areas should be considered, and any provision linked to programmes of positive activities for young people and site management. There is a need to improve the cycle network, linking the Town Centre with other areas including green spaces, and also to extend and improve the wildlife corridors and other 'natural areas'.



Malvern Park

Zone 3 - Shirley East, Shirley West and Shirley South

The total amount of accessible green space per thousand population in this Zone is the lowest for the whole of Solihull, but provision within the area varies from the lowest in Shirley East (2.87 ha per 1000) to over 5 ha per 1000 in Shirley South. However, the distribution of the spaces which are accessible means that most people have access to green space within 400 m.

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



Shirley Park

Zone 4 - Bickenhill and Meriden

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



Meriden Village Green

Zone 5 - Blythe, Dorridge & Hockley Heath and Knowle

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

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



Dorridge Park

Zone 6 - Castle Bromwich, Chelmsley Wood, Kingshurst & Fordbridge and Smith's Wood

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

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



Bluebells Yorkswood

Summary

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

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

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

Green Spaces Strategy

Zone Action Plans

The Zone Action Plans provide an overview of how each area of the Borough currently compares to the proposed Green Space Standards.

The assessment of sufficiency or otherwise is based on: the location and quality of existing facilities, the issues raised during the consultations with local residents and others, 'national standards' where they exist and best practice from other authorities.

The specific projects proposed will help set the green spaces agenda over the next few years. The relative priorities between these will emerge from discussions at the Parish or Town Council level or other related stakeholder level, and will also take into account the views of local residents. The achievement of the network of green spaces and related facilities proposed by the strategy will depend upon the availability of funding. This will include both the capital investment needed to achieve a new element of the green spaces network and the revenue to enable its effective long term management.

Zone 1 - Lyndon, Olton and Elmdon

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

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

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

Zone 2 - Silhill and St Alphege

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

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

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

Zone 3 - Shirley East, Shirley West, Shirley South

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

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

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

Zone 4 - Bickenhill and Meriden

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

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

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

Zone 5 - Blythe, Dorridge & Hockley Heath and Knowle

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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