

Strategy, key priorities and planning implementation

Introduction

12.1 This section sets out the strategy framework for the future delivery of open space, sport and recreation facilities across the London Borough of Bexley, summarising:

- the role of green spaces
- the local context
- the current position
- aims and objectives for future provision
- key priorities.

12.2 The vision, issues and priorities are derived from an assessment of open space, outdoor sport and recreation facilities across the Borough and consultations considering local needs and aspirations. They build upon the detailed analysis set out in Sections 4-11 and the priorities and issues identified within these Sections.

Why are green spaces in Bexley important?

12.3 There has been a national recognition in recent years of the continuing importance of parks and green spaces. Various policies and strategies have shown a commitment to renewal of this vital part of our heritage including Government Planning Policy Guidance Note 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation¹ and the CABE Green Space Report². The role that green spaces can have in meeting policy objectives linked to other agendas, such as education, diversity, health, safety, environment and regeneration is also recognised. *Green Spaces, Better Places*, the report of the Government's Urban Green Spaces Task Force (2002)³ highlighted that parks and open spaces:

- contribute significantly to social inclusion because they are free and accessible to all
- can become a centre of community spirit
- contribute to child development through scope for outdoor, energetic and imaginative play
- offer numerous educational opportunities
- provide a range of health, environmental and economic benefits.

12.4 The contribution that parks and open spaces make to the quality of life in London is further reinforced by the London Plan. The London Plan advocates the need for proactive planning of open space provision through the protection and promotion of a network of open spaces throughout London.

12.5 It highlights the importance of:

- realising the value of open space
- protecting the Green Belt, Metropolitan Open Land and locally important open space including green corridors and wildlife habitats

¹ Department of Communities and Local Government, Planning Policy Guidance Note 17, July 2002,

² Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), "A guide to producing parks and green space management plans."

³ DTLR, 2002: *Green Spaces, Better Places* (Urban Green Spaces Task Force 2002)

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- supporting the creation of networks of strategic open spaces such as green chains and improved access to and connections between spaces
 - creating new open spaces in areas where there is inadequate provision and promotion of improvements in existing provision
 - ensuring that everyone has equal access to and can use London's open spaces.
- 12.6 Sport and physical activity makes a key contribution to the overall quality of life in London. The London Plan for Sport aims to:
- increase overall participation rates by an average of 1% per year
 - increase participation by all under-represented groups
 - provide the structures needed for individuals to realise their sporting potential.
- 12.7 The effective provision of open space, as well as sport and recreation facilities, can play a key role in achieving these aims. Increasing sport and physical activity is a key target both nationally and locally and parks and open spaces provide an alternative means of encouraging local residents to participate. The recent Active People survey indicates that only 18.4% of residents of Bexley undertake regular sport and moderate physical activity, less than the national average (21.4%). Results also indicate that residents in some areas of the Borough are less likely to participate than others.
- 12.8 The value of open space is not just recreational. The strategic contribution that open spaces can make to the wider environment includes:
- defining the local landscape character
 - providing an appropriate context and setting for built development and infrastructure,
 - contributing to the historic value and understanding of some listed buildings
 - helping to achieve a softer interface between urban and rural environments
 - emphasising the presence of particular natural features within the landscape such as river valleys, ridgelines etc
 - supporting habitats and local wildlife
 - mitigating climate change and flood risk
 - promoting and protecting biodiversity and habitat creation
 - promoting and improving links between open spaces.
- 12.9 Parks in Bexley also offer significant opportunities for social interaction and social rehabilitation. The parks serve are frequently used for field studies and provide opportunities for long-term unemployed and probation teams to undertake volunteer work. Children are also brought from the inner city areas elsewhere in London to experience outdoor play and fresh air and groups of disabled residents frequently visit parks with the social services team.
- 12.10 The East London Green Grid project promotes local and regional working to improve and address open space deficiency, create and improve green corridors and public access to open space and to enhance local wildlife and biodiversity.

Linking green spaces

- 12.11 As highlighted, the provision of appropriate high quality green space results in an

array of benefits that far exceed the recreational value that these sites offer to residents. Linkages between green spaces further enhance the benefits that can be achieved.

- 12.12 Green Infrastructure (GI) comprises a network of multi-functional greenspace set within, and contributing to, a high quality natural and built environment. Green Infrastructure is widely considered to be an essential requirement for the enhancement of quality of life, for existing and future generations, and to be an integral element in the delivery of 'liveability' for sustainable communities. Its provision, and importantly, its connectivity is relevant at every level from county wide rural landscapes down to a local level both within larger urban areas as well as small rural settlements. It also provides the framework for supporting a wide range of 'environmental processes'.
- 12.13 This PPG17 study provides a starting point for understanding the wider green infrastructure across the Borough and it's surrounding areas and the benefit that this can bring to the local community.
- 12.14 An effective green infrastructure considers not just the linkages for humans but also takes into account opportunities for maximising biodiversity and wildlife. Linked open spaces provide opportunities for the creation of wildlife corridors. This is emphasised within the East London Green Grid project. Although not considered within this study, private gardens are also important in the overall green infrastructure of the local area.
- 12.15 The East London Green Grid project recognises the importance of green space in eleven Boroughs of East London (including Bexley) and promotes the regional planning of parks, informal areas and linkages between open spaces. The key objectives are:
- increasing access to open space
 - increasing access to nature
 - managing flood risk
 - making sustainable connections
 - enhancing the visitor offer of East London
 - enhancing local distinctiveness
 - promoting healthy living.
- 12.16 Implementation of priorities emerging through this study will assist in the achievement of these objectives. These priorities are central to the framework set out in this document and are also central to the principles of Bexley's Draft Public Rights of Way Access and Improvement Strategy.

Planning green space, sport and recreational facilities at a local level

- 12.17 At the local level, the importance of parks is highlighted by a range of policies and initiatives to increase and enhance green space across Bexley. The award of Beacon Council status during 2002/2003 emphasised the Council's commitment towards the provision and enhancement of green spaces, commending the Council's clear and simple strategy that demonstrates leadership support and a clear vision of the role and benefits of green spaces, and how they could be improved.
- 12.18 The role that green spaces play in the achievement of wider corporate objectives is recognised, both within the parks strategy, sports strategy and physical activity strategy, and within more overarching strategic documents such as the Sustainable Community Strategy, Corporate Plan, Unitary Development Plan and Local

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Development Framework documents. Open spaces are central to the development of a strong, sustainable and cohesive community, the key objective of the community plan. The achievement of individual well-being and development, alongside economic prosperity and opportunity and a safe, secure and attractive environment are the other key targets outlined in the community plan.

12.19 The Local Strategic Partnership's Local Area Agreement (LAA), is developed around the four building blocks that are instrumental in the achievement of the long-term vision **to build a strong, sustainable and cohesive community**. The Sustainable Community Strategy, *Bexley Together*, aspires to achieve this broad aim through tackling four components:

- Building safer and stronger communities
- Developing healthier communities for adults
- Developing services for children and young people
- Promoting economic development and the environment

The effective provision of green space can play a key role in the delivery of targets within these four areas. **Table 12.1** summarises the contributions that achievement of some of the key objectives arising from the assessment of local needs and existing provision can generate.

Table 12.1 - Achievement of wider Bexley Partnership objectives through the provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities

Children and young people	Stronger and safer communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • addressing identified deficiencies in the provision for children and young people in quantitative terms. The recommended increase in the provision of amenity space will also provide more informal opportunities for children and young people • ensuring that the quality of facilities and the type of facilities meet the needs of local young people • maximising the involvement of children and young people in the day to design and planning of facilities for children and young people • maximising the role of school facilities in the provision of open space, sport and recreational facilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promoting and encouraging community involvement in the provision, maintenance and management of open spaces • enhancing the safety of open spaces and the perception of safety of open space sites through the promotion of good quality design and planning • addressing identified deficiencies to ensure that all residents have access to high quality open spaces.
Economic development and enterprise	Healthier communities and older people
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivering attractive places and enhancing local identity and image through investment in the quality of facilities • maximising opportunities through regeneration to enhance the quality of open spaces and provide open spaces of the right type and in the right place • ensuring that new development results in positive change in the provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maximising use of open spaces and sports facilities for physical activity and achievement of the Council's targets for increasing participation in sport and physical activity • investing in the quality of sports facilities to increase access to local residents and ensuring that all residents have access to local facilities • promoting the wider benefits of open space on physical and mental health • ensuring that open spaces meet the needs of all sectors of the community.

Current position – Where are we now?

Local context

12.20 Consideration of the current context and demographics of an area is essential in the interpretation of the adequacy of existing open space, sport and recreation facilities. The key issues arising from interpretation of the current profile of the Borough for the provision of open space include:

- At the time of the 2001 Census, 9% of Bexley's population was from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups, similar to that of England but lower than Outer London as a whole. The diversity of population provides challenges for the provision of open space as it is essential to ensure that provision meets the needs of all sectors of the community
- despite relatively high levels of employment, there remain pockets of deprivation and high unemployment within the Borough. Maximising local access to facilities in these areas will be essential to ensure that the provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities meet the needs of all residents and communities
- in comparison to the national average, the Borough has a high housing density, meaning that the provision of public open space is both challenging and necessary
- significant cross boundary movement between residents of Bexley and neighbouring Borough's occurs.

12.21 The detailed analysis and interpretation discussed in Sections 4-11 of this report analyses the adequacy of the current provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities and the future demand for open spaces. The key conclusions arising by typology include:

Parks and gardens

- Parks in Bexley are multifaceted and provide a range of opportunities for local residents. Their diverse nature is integral to the character of the Borough and larger parks have received significant investment in recent years and are of award winning quality. Local parks are important to residents in the Borough and are perceived to be of lower quality, providing a poor range of facilities and are less well maintained. Future efforts should focus on qualitative enhancements to smaller sites.
- Parks provide opportunities to participate in moderate exercise and physical activity. Shortfalls in these areas also raise the importance of increasing access to the marshes in order to ensure that residents have access to informal recreational opportunities.
- Many parks in the Borough are surrounded by housing development and therefore lack connectivity to other open spaces and to the wider area that they serve. Linkages to other areas would maximise the benefits of these sites and facilitate the effective management and marketing of parks. The draft Public Rights of Way Access and Improvement Plan also seeks to address these issues.
- New parks should be designed to maximise the integration of the facility with the local community and other open spaces and landlocking should be avoided.

Natural and semi-natural open space

- Despite the urban character of the Borough, Bexley has significant quantities of natural and semi-natural open space. This is enhanced by the presence of semi-natural areas within many of the Borough's larger parks. Large natural areas such as the Crayford and Erith Marshes provide a variety of habitats for wildlife as well as opportunities for recreation.
- Maintaining a balance between recreation and biodiversity is seen as a key challenge going forward. Facilitating access to existing natural and semi-natural open spaces and developing links between current sites is as important as providing local natural and semi-natural open spaces. Green corridors are therefore of significant importance, even where there is no public access as plants and animals still need to move from site to site to maintain genetic diversity.
- Maximising access to natural open space in Welling, Bexleyheath and Sidcup is seen as a key challenge over the LDF period and the provision of semi-natural areas within parks is encouraged. The draft Public Rights of Way Access and Improvement Plan also seeks to address these issues.

Amenity spaces

- The overlapping role of amenity spaces with parks is recognised and the majority of areas devoid in parks are well provided for in terms of amenity space, as sites are predominately focused to the east of the Borough.
- In areas where access to parks is poor, the amenity spaces take on greater importance in meeting the needs of local residents and the diversity of facilities provided should be increased.
- Many existing sites serve no particular purpose and offer few amenity facilities. All sites should have a clear function and high quality facilities. Improvements to the quality of existing amenity spaces should be prioritised over the Local Development Framework period. There are some recent examples of good practice across the Borough.

Provision for children

- Equipped provision for children was a key area for discussion throughout consultations and diverse opinions regarding the quantity, quality and access to existing facilities were expressed. The quality of provision is of particular importance and a renewed focus on ensuring that provision is challenging, stimulating and varied is required.
- Existing facilities are varied in quality and unevenly distributed across the Borough presenting a range of options for the future delivery of children's play which includes new provision (particularly in Sidcup, Welling and Bexleyheath), qualitative improvements and rationalisation and subsequent improvement in other areas.

Provision for young people

- Equipped provision for young people was the overriding theme of consultations throughout the study with residents expressing concerns over the quantity of

provision, as well as highlighting that the quality of many facilities is insufficient and that facilities are perceived to be boring and not challenging.

- Analysis demonstrated clear links between the quality and perceived quantity of provision although new facilities are required in some areas to meet existing needs, particularly in Sidcup and Crayford. Location of facilities at school sites provides a key opportunity to maximise resources and ensure that all residents are able to access at least one facility.

Outdoor sports facilities

- The PPG17 outdoor sports facilities typology takes into account a wide range of outdoor sports facilities including pitches, tennis courts, netball and bowls facilities. It is clear that there are two key priorities for the provision of outdoor sports facilities in the future.
- Firstly the need to enhance existing facilities (both playing areas and ancillary accommodation) and secondly, a requirement to ensure the provision of sufficient pitches and other facilities to meet demand (currently, the majority of demand is for pitches for junior football teams).
- Opportunities include the negotiation of community use at clubs / facilities in private ownership and school sites, development of an existing or new sports hub or new provision to accommodate existing teams.

Allotments

- Demand for allotments has risen in recent years and the number of vacant plots has declined as a consequence. Existing facilities require qualitative enhancements to ensure that they are accessible to all sectors of the community.

Cemeteries and churchyards

- Cemeteries and churchyards are a significant provider of open spaces and provide opportunities for recreation as well as wider benefits. The wider benefits of churchyards are key and it is wrong to place a value on churchyards and cemeteries focusing solely on quality and accessibility. In addition to offering a functional value, many cemeteries and churchyards have wider benefits including heritage, cultural and landscape values. Indeed, several cemeteries and churchyards are registered as being important sites in terms of local nature conservation. Cemeteries and churchyards offer significant opportunities in terms of enhancing biodiversity in the borough.
- space for burials is limited and based upon the current rate of burial, it is estimated that current sites are only able to meet demand for new graves for the next 15 to 20 years.
- the quality of existing cemeteries and churchyards is perceived to be average

Green Corridors

- improved linkages between open spaces and local neighbourhoods were perceived to be one of the key priorities for the enhancement of open spaces within Bexley and within the wider green infrastructure of the region. This is also recognised in the Draft Public Rights of Way Access and Improvement Plan

- green corridors are an integral element of Bexley's future plans as identified in the Area Strategy of the ELGG. These incorporate new linear links to proposed regeneration and development in Erith, Crayford and Thamesmead.
- further emphasis on the importance of green corridors is evident through Bexley's inclusion in the South East London Green Chain alongside Bromley, Greenwich and Lewisham. This Strategy aims to improve and develop the green infrastructure of the region through effective linkages. 33 spaces in Bexley are contained within the green chain and many of these spaces form part of the Regional Park. Site assessments suggested that the quality of green corridors is poorer than any other type of open space, with scores ranging from 48% to 68%. A full breakdown of scores is provided in Appendix I.
- river corridors contribute to the achievement many objectives in the borough, including regeneration and nature conservation as well as being a focal point for recreation. Integration of the River with the rest of the Borough and the promotion of the benefits the river offers is a key priority. Close liaison and partnership working with the Port of London Authority will be essential.

Where do we want to be?

- 12.22 In order to maximise the impact that the provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities can have in Bexley, a key stage in the process is the identification of a range of objectives that address the need for the delivery of parks and open spaces and inform the future priorities for the service.
- 12.23 As highlighted, analysis of current provision across Bexley highlights several opportunities for the improvement of the existing open space across Bexley. Improvements to the delivery of the service would further increase the wider benefits derived from the provision of green space and would ensure that facilities better meet local need.
- 12.24 Key issues likely to impact the future demand for open space include:
- the age profile of Bexley is similar to the national picture, although the proportion of elderly residents is increasing
 - future population growth is likely to be uneven. This will generate pressures on the land for development as well as affecting demand for open space, sport and recreation facilities. Recent population growth has seen increases in the north east of the Borough but reducing populations in other areas.

The vision for open space in Bexley

- 12.25 This strategic framework sets out the key objectives of the London Borough of Bexley (the Council) in the future delivery of green space. These long and short term objectives all target the achievement of a vision to:

“Lead and implement the Open Space Strategy, through partnership working, creating an attractive, safe, secure and sustainable environment that protects and enhances the quality of life for all residents and visitors to the London Borough of Bexley.”

- 12.26 **Table 12.2** summarises the long and short terms objectives relating to this study. These aims and objectives have been derived from the findings of extensive local consultation and the local priorities of the Council.

Table 12.2 - Key objectives for the future delivery of open space

Long term/ongoing objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate stronger, sustainable communities. • Create a safe and secure environment, ensuring that facilities are designed to discourage crime and promote usage of open spaces • To ensure that population change, new employment sites and regeneration initiatives act as a catalyst for improvement. • Provide a linked network of open spaces that meet the needs of all residents.
Short term objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To enhance the quality of open spaces in the Borough in terms of both recreation and biodiversity • To ensure the quantity of open space is sufficient to meet local needs. • To maximise access to existing open spaces. • To maximise the use of open space, sport and recreation facilities.

12.27 Table 12.3 overleaf summarises the role of open space (measured against the key short term aims and objectives of this study) in the achievement of the priorities of other regional and local strategies. The key objectives of each of the document is summarised in Section 3. There are particular links with the draft Public Rights of Way Access and Improvement Plan, which shares a number of the key objectives of this open space assessment.

Table 12.3 – Contribution of the provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities to wider strategic objectives

Document	Short term objectives for the future delivery of open space			
	Enhance the quality of open spaces in the Borough	Ensure the quantity of open space is sufficient	Maximise access to existing open spaces	Maximise the use of open space, sport and recreation facilities
Regional				
London Biodiversity Strategy	✓			
London Plan	✓	✓	✓	✓
Providing for Children and Young People's Play and Informal Recreation - The London Plan SPG (2006)	✓	✓	✓	✓
East London Green Grid	✓	✓	✓	✓
Green Chain	✓	✓	✓	✓
Local				
Bexley Sustainable Community Strategy	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bexley Cultural Strategy	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bexley Local Implementation Plan for Transport			✓	

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Document	Short term objectives for the future delivery of open space			
	Enhance the quality of open spaces in the Borough	Ensure the quantity of open space is sufficient	Maximise access to existing open spaces	Maximise the use of open space, sport and recreation facilities
Bexley Diversity and Inclusion Strategy		✓	✓	✓
Bexley Health Inequalities Strategy	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bexley Biodiversity Action Plan	✓	✓		
Bexley Sports Strategy	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bexley Unitary Development Plan	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bexley Local Development Framework	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bexley Draft Public Rights of Way Access and Improvement Plan			✓	✓
Bexley Climate Change Strategy	✓	✓		

12.28 As summarised, the provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities can play a key role in the delivery of the wider objectives of the Council and other regional partners.

Delivering, monitoring and review

- 12.29 The Council requires a framework for the delivery of green space in order to maximise the use of public open space and to ensure that open space, sport and recreation facilities meet the needs of local residents. The assessment will encourage a strategic approach and proactive planning of improvements to green spaces across Bexley.
- 12.30 This framework will inform policies emerging in the Local Development Framework (LDF) portfolio of documents, including the Core Strategy. It will provide important evidence for decision-making across the borough to ensure open space is provided with new developments. In addition, the key findings provide baseline information that will guide service delivery strategies (such as a parks strategy) and action plans.
- 12.31 This study identifies a series of issues for each type of open space that need to be addressed in order to maximise the benefits derived from open space provision. In doing so, it provides baseline information to guide delivery strategies (such as a parks strategy) and management / action plans.
- 12.32 These plans will prioritise the recommendations made in this report and identify specific projects that will achieve the long and short-term objectives.
- 12.33 The resulting delivery action plans should be reviewed periodically in order to monitor progress towards the achievement of specific targets as well as outline new priorities to be achieved over the action plan period.

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- 12.34 **Table 12.4** sets out the key priorities arising from the analysis undertaken as part of this study and summarises how they help to achieve the overall objectives. It also outlines the mechanisms for achievement of the key priorities.
- 12.35 In addition to reviewing and updating priorities for the future delivery of open space, changes to the open space stock should be monitored and updated periodically. This will ensure that decisions are taken based on the most up to date information available. It will be the responsibility of the LDF Team to ensure that information is updated and feed into emerging LDF documents, including the Core Strategy.

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Table 12.4 - Key priorities for the future delivery of open space

Aim/Objective	Key Priorities	Specific Issues for consideration	Action/Management Plan	Responsibility	Timescales	Indicators
To enhance the quality of open spaces in the Borough	Maintain the quality of larger parks and undertake a rolling programme of improvements to enhance the quality of local parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide a greater range of facilities in local parks 	Develop a prioritised programme of projects/sites for improvements in order to address local needs. This may include the development of site management plans	Head of Parks and Open Spaces	By 2010	Programme of projects in priority order for all sites prepared
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> improve standards of maintenance in local parks and implement a programme of improvements to gates and signage at smaller sites 	Work with internal and external partners to access and exploit funding opportunities, S106 contributions, grants and external funding sources.	Head of Parks and Open Spaces	By 2012	Review site specific Management Plans for larger parks.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that the development of parks policy and its implementation takes into consideration the long term sustainability of all activities and projects 	Work with friends group, and other voluntary groups and other organisations to encourage greater community involvement in parks.	Head of Regeneration Unit	Ongoing	Produce annual account for external funding and 106 contributions
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> maintain current knowledge of user satisfaction levels relating to the quality of parks and open spaces 	Build on the local needs assessment undertaken as part of this study and undertake a detailed programme of user satisfaction surveys	Head of Parks and Open Spaces	Ongoing	Maintain or improve membership level of Friends Groups. Explore new links with local community
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> facilitate the delivery of improvements to open space through the inclusion of appropriate policies within the Local Development Framework (LDF) 	Develop appropriate policies for inclusion within emerging LDF documents.	Head of Strategic Planning and Development	Ongoing	Completion of annual parks survey
				Head of Strategic Planning and Development	Summer 2009	Consultation of Proposed submission Core Strategy DPD

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Aim/Objective	Key Priorities	Specific Issues for consideration	Action/Management Plan	Responsibility	Timescales	Indicators
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that open spaces are designed with crime prevention and provision of safe secure environments in mind 	Develop appropriate policies for inclusion within emerging LDF documents and other local strategies	Head of Strategic Planning and Development; Head of Community Services; Head of Neighbourhood Services	Summer 2009	Consultation of Proposed submission Core Strategy DPD
Improve the quality of sports facilities across the Borough		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify opportunities to invest in ancillary accommodation at pitch sites, for example, built facilities and car parking etc., as budgetary provision allows and opportunities arise 	Align the Council's Building Maintenance and Capital budget allocated to parks, pavilions and changing rooms to comply with new quality standards.	Head of Culture; Head of Parks and Open Spaces	As funding opportunities arise and bids are submitted for Capital funding to the Council	Buildings refurbished to meet new Standards Annual Capital programme review
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> investigate the possibility of developing a 3 court netball site with appropriate facilities 	Explore the potential of a three court site as opportunities arise.	Head of Culture	As opportunities arise	Projects programmed in priority
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> continue the programme of improvements to pitch sites 	Continue to identify pitch improvement requirements in line with playing pitch demand and the Playing Pitch Strategy	Head of Culture	Ongoing	Season review April 2009 and September 2009
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> encourage and guide private clubs in their endeavours to enhance the quality of sports facilities as opportunities arise. 	Identify key partners within the emerging new sports strategy.	Head of Culture	Ongoing	Programme of projects in priority order for all sites prepared
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure quality standards are maintained when management arrangements are appointed to external partners 	Identify all maintenance issues and implications for each site at the outset of any negotiation.	Head of Culture	Ongoing	Detailed site list prepared for any new sporting projects
Improve the quality of allotments across the Borough		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> maximise the utilisation of the Council's allotment provision 	Work with the Allotment Federation to improve the utilisation of allotment sites	Head of Parks and Open Spaces	Ongoing	Maintain optimal tenancy levels

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Aim/Objective	Key Priorities	Specific Issues for consideration	Action/Management Plan	Responsibility	Timescales	Indicators
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> maximise the quality of allotments through the provision of secure boundaries, good water supply and on site facilities to ensure that all sections of the community have the opportunity to access allotment gardening 	Provide continuing support to delegated site committees to assist them in meeting their site management responsibilities.	Head of Parks and Open Spaces	Ongoing	Regular liaison meetings with BFALG ⁴ Committee
			Maintaining the awareness of the availability of vacant allotments as a key priority.	Head of Parks and Open Spaces	Ongoing	Effective advertising campaign
	Provide a range of quality play opportunities for children and young people that meets local needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that new provision for young people is developed in consultation with target users 	Consult with young people as new opportunities for this group are created.	Heads of Parks and Open Spaces; Culture; Strategic Planning and Development; Regeneration Unit; Youth Services; both Heads of Integrated Youth and Access	Ongoing	Accurate feed back from potential users to inform projects
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that all new provision is reflective of local needs and aspirations 	Develop a prioritised programme of improvement projects for play facilities within parks and open spaces in order to address local needs.	Heads of Parks and Open Spaces; Culture; Strategic Planning and Development; Regeneration Unit; Youth Services; both Heads of Integrated Youth and Access	By 2009	Detailed site list for new build play projects
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that the desire for high quality challenging facilities is met with contributions reflected in guidance for planning obligation (S106) contributions 	Facilitate the delivery of new provision arising from new development through policies in the Unitary Development Plan and emerging LDF documents.	Head of Parks and Open Spaces	Ongoing	Modern bespoke facilities for users on non-council land

⁴ Bexley Federation of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners

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Aim/Objective	Key Priorities	Specific Issues for consideration	Action/Management Plan	Responsibility	Timescales	Indicators
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop a strategic programme of upgrading existing facilities. 	Local Development Framework (LDF) Documents	Head of Strategic Planning and Development	Summer 2009	Consultation of Proposed submission Core Strategy DPD
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that facilities are designed with crime prevention and safety in mind 	Ensuring contributions sought from S106 planning obligations are effectively distributed and monitored to enhance or provide new facilities that meets the needs arising from new developments.	Head of Development Control	By April 2009	Annual Monitoring Report to Planning Control Committee
				Head of Parks and Open Spaces	Ongoing	Implementation of projects to secure relevant planning obligations
	Promote environmental management and conservation to increase biodiversity at the Borough's open spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> promote biodiversity and habitat creation in allotments and cemeteries encourage an abundance of flora and fauna in parks and promote the inclusion of natural areas within parks 	Implement the key priorities of the regional and local biodiversity action plans	Head of Parks and Open Spaces	Ongoing	Delivery of projects specific to Action Plans
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> maintain and improve the natural resources of the Borough in terms of biodiversity including the sustainable management of the river corridors 	Work with key partners to promote the sustainable improvement of the Thames Corridor	Head of Parks and Open Spaces	Ongoing	Successful implementation of viable open space schemes
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> maximise the opportunities to mitigate climate change through the effective provision of open spaces 	Consider climate change in the planning, development and management of open spaces	Head of Parks and Open Spaces	Ongoing	Increase in number of planting and maintenance schemes to mitigate climate change

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Aim/Objective	Key Priorities	Specific Issues for consideration	Action/Management Plan	Responsibility	Timescales	Indicators	
To ensure the quantity of open space is sufficient to meet local needs	Protect and maintain the Council's existing open space and consider opportunities to increase or enhance existing provision in line with local development when opportunities arise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> protect and enhance existing open spaces monitor future demand linked to increases in use and changes in the population profile regularly review provision requirements and longer term growth scenarios in order to proactively plan new and improved provision 	Incorporate appropriate policies within the Council's Local Development Framework (LDF) for both the protection of existing open space and the generation of new open space as part of new development	Head of Strategic Planning and Development; Head of Parks and Open Spaces	Summer 2009	Consultation of Proposed submission Core Strategy DPD	
	Secure opportunities to provide additional outdoor sports provision or sports pitches to meet the identified shortfalls in provision		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> investigate opportunities to accommodate teams currently without a home pitch either through increasing community access to schools, expanding existing multi sport sites to provide a community sports hub or identifying sites for new provision. Future demand linked to increases in participation and changes in the population profile should also be monitored 	Identify key partners within the emerging sports strategy.	Head of Culture	Ongoing	Delivery of projects specific to Action Plans
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify opportunities to provide additional sports facilities on the River Thames and protect existing facilities 	Regularly monitor and review the opportunities presented through the Building Schools for Future (BSF) and extended schools programmes. Incorporate appropriate policies within the Local Development Framework to facilitate the provision of new outdoor sports facilities where required and have policy to seek planning obligation contributions towards outdoor sports facilities required as part of new development.	Head of Culture	Ongoing	Delivery of projects specific to Action Plans
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> be aware of national and local sports participation trends and data and understand the implications for potential changes\impacts upon service provision at local level. 	To annually review participation trend data where available and changes in local private and public sector provision to determine the impact upon service needs.	Head of Strategic Planning and Development	Summer 2009	Consultation on proposed submission Core Strategy DPD
				Head of Culture	By May 2009	Quarterly Monitoring Statements and Local Area Agreement indicators	

SECTION 12 - STRATEGY, KEY PRIORITIES AND PLANNING IMPLEMENTATION

Aim/Objective	Key Priorities	Specific Issues for consideration	Action/Management Plan	Responsibility	Timescales	Indicators
	Address deficiencies in the provision of facilities for children and young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> shortfalls in provision for young people were identified in Sidcup and Crayford. Location of new facilities for young people at other sites, including schools, should be considered where possible. 	Integrate the key objectives of the play strategy into the delivery of provision to meet local needs. Produce a prioritised list of projects.	Principal Officer, Extended Services and Children's Centres on behalf of Children & Young People's Services (CYPS)	Ongoing	CYPS will be meeting with relevant stakeholders to agree priority works.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> undertake a strategic review of play provision in specific areas across the Borough and consider opportunities for rationalisation (and subsequent improved quality) in Thamesmead and Erith and the need for additional facilities in Sidcup, Welling and Bexleyheath. 	Work with wider partners as highlighted within the play strategy.	Head of Children & Young People's Services	Ongoing	CYPS will be meeting with Leisure to agree opportunities and priority work in schools
Provide access to additional local parks in areas currently devoid of provision		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> in areas deficient in parks and amenity spaces, monitor opportunities for new provision 	Develop a prioritised programme of projects to increase access to existing open spaces in areas devoid of provision.	Head of Parks and Open Spaces; Head of Engineering Services; Head of Traffic and Transport	Ongoing	New areas made available for public use and amenity
			Include appropriate policies within Area Action Plans or emerging LDF documents. Use of Planning Obligations (S106), where applicable in order to facilitate the delivery of new sites.	Head of Strategic Planning and Development Head of Development Control	Winter 2008/2009	Consultation on draft Rights of Way and Access Improvement Plan
			Monitor development and opportunities for new provision	Head of Parks and Open Spaces	Summer 2009 By Apr 2009	Consultation on proposed submission Core Strategy DPD Annual monitoring with report to Planning Control Committee.
					Ongoing	Creation of new open spaces, built to contemporary standards

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Aim/Objective	Key Priorities	Specific Issues for consideration	Action/Management Plan	Responsibility	Timescales	Indicators
	Increase access to school facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> negotiate agreements with schools for community use of sports facilities to assist in offsetting existing deficiencies and meeting future demand maximise the role of schools in providing for young people 	Monitor opportunities emerging through the Building Schools for Future (BSF) and extended schools programmes. Take into account longer term growth scenarios when planning future provision	Head of Culture; Head of Development (Children & Young People's Services).	Ongoing	Reviewing BSF and primary capital programme.
	Provide burial space within the Borough that meets the needs and expectations of the bereaved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> given that burial space in the Borough is limited, ongoing consideration will be required to ensure that local provision remains sustainable 	Keep under review the supply of and demand for burial space.	Head of Parks and Open Spaces; Head of Property Services; Head of Strategic Planning and Development	Ongoing Summer 2009	Ensure provision of burial space for Borough residents Consult on Core Strategy proposed submission document
To maximise access to existing open spaces	Increase access to natural and semi-natural open space sites – this may involve increasing access to existing public open space or negotiating access to private open spaces where residents are currently deficient in public open space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increase access to existing large natural and semi-natural open spaces where there is currently limited access for local residents. The Erith and Crayford Marshes, and the River Cray and River Shuttle corridors provide significant opportunities for recreational use 	Produce a prioritised list of projects designed increase access to existing public open space in order to offset existing deficiencies. This may include the development of linear routes between existing open spaces and improvements to signage and entrances	Head of Parks and Open Spaces; Head of Traffic and Transport; Head of Engineering Services; Head of Regeneration Unit	By 2010	Have in place a priority site list for access improvements with funding plan
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> address deficiencies in access to wildlife and biodiversity. 	Negotiate with landowners of private open spaces located in areas of deficiency to allow access to the public for recreational purposes. Identify opportunities for the creation of habitats and enhancement of biodiversity	Head of Parks and Open Spaces Head of Parks and Open Spaces	Ongoing Ongoing	Increased public access to areas previously unavailable New areas within Parks specifically managed with biodiversity in mind

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Aim/Objective	Key Priorities	Specific Issues for consideration	Action/Management Plan	Responsibility	Timescales	Indicators
	Incorporate the principles of the green grid project and draft Rights of Way Access and Improvement Plan within future land use planning and prioritise the development of effective linkages between public open spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide access through effective signposting and management of paths. Focus on connecting existing and proposed communities 	Produce a list of prioritised projects to meet this objective. There are several key actions set out in the draft Public Rights of Way Access and Improvement Strategy that reflect this objective	Head of Engineering Services; Head of Traffic and Transport; Head of Regeneration Unit	Winter 2008/2009	Consult on draft Rights of Way and Access Improvement Plan to identify priority list.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop new linkages between open spaces, particularly in areas of informal open space deficiency such as Erith and improve links to Belvedere green grid. This is particularly important for natural and semi-natural open spaces 	The implementation of projects within the East sub area green grid strategy will contribute to the achievement of this objective.	Head of Regeneration Unit	By March 2011	Completion of Belvedere improvements programme by March 2011
To maximise the use of open space, sport and recreation facilities	Promote the use of green chains for recreational use and sustainable transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> educate residents on the presence of existing routes promote the use of sustainable transport through and between green spaces 	Actively promote the use of green grid and open space opportunities for undertaking informal moderate exercise and seek external funding to support regeneration projects. Encourage the development of cycle and pedestrian routes	Head of Parks and Open Spaces; Head of Traffic and Transport; Head of Culture, Head of Strategic Planning and Development Head of Transport and Traffic; Head of Regeneration Unit	Ongoing	Increased number of users specifically using parks for exercise and/or routes across Borough
	Continue to support existing community involvement and promote the development of new partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> build on the network of friends and conservation groups establish user forums for sports pitch users to enable cross working and sharing of good practice 	Encourage friends and conservation groups and environmental improvements in parks and open spaces. Maintain the football user group to improve forward planning and sharing of good practice.	Head of Parks and Open Spaces Head of Culture	Ongoing Summer 2009	Increased number of projects attended/participated in by volunteers Working with football clubs to promote clubs and work towards Football Association Charter Marks

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Aim/Objective	Key Priorities	Specific Issues for consideration	Action/Management Plan	Responsibility	Timescales	Indicators
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> maintain partnership with schools, Bexley Care Trust and other key user groups 	<p>Identify other opportunities for sharing good practice through the emerging sports strategy.</p> <p>Explore opportunities to access external funding for regeneration-led projects.</p>	<p>Head of Culture</p> <p>Head of Regeneration Unit</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Working in partnership with key groups</p> <p>Working with Department of Communities and Local Government, London Development Agency and Heritage Lottery Fund.</p>
	Promote the array of green spaces available and maximise awareness of opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> encourage awareness through the provision of taster sessions and other events in parks 	Facilitate and encourage a balanced programme of events from both the Commercial and Voluntary Sectors	Head of Parks and Open Spaces; Head of Culture	Ongoing	Regular parks and open space focused events and community based use

Implementing the key priorities through the planning system

- 12.36 The open space, sport and recreation study is also an invaluable tool in the formulation and implementation of planning policies. This relates to both the protection and enhancement of existing open space and access to them through the implementation of new developments and contributions received from planning obligations.
- 12.37 The key findings of this study should inform policies in the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD), while more specific guidance should be set out within other Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and or Supplementary planning documents (SPDs).
- 12.38 Specific objectives relating to the implementation of this study through the planning system therefore include:
- protection or enhancement of open spaces through saved policies in the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) and emerging policy documents adopted as part of the Local Development Framework (LDF)
 - increasing the provision of open spaces including new facilities for young people, outdoor sports facilities and local parks through s106 agreements, where applicable, and area action plans. In line with Circular 05/05, Planning Obligations, and other legislation and policy, in July 2008 the Council adopted a Planning Obligations Guidance SPD. The SPD requires certain developments to make contributions towards open space in relation to the development or to mitigate the impact of new development.
 - ensuring that increased open space, sport and recreation facilities, and improved access to them, are provided in line with population growth through the implementation of planning conditions and planning agreements (section 1065). The adopted Planning Obligations Guidance SPD, July 2008, when revised will need to consider delivering the recommended local standards of this Open Space Strategy by providing contributions that may be put towards quantitative and qualitative improvements to open spaces.

Applying the Local Standards – An illustrative example

- 12.39 The application of the local standards set as part of this study enable proactive planning of open spaces in areas of new development and in areas undergoing regeneration. Quantity standards provide information regarding the amount of each type of open space that can be expected in the local area while accessibility standards drive the location of different facility types. Quality standards also guide the quality that is expected and the essential and desirable features to meet residents' needs.
- 12.40 The local quantity and accessibility standards set as part of this study are summarised in **Table 12.5**. It must be noted that these standards are minimum standards which have been derived locally and are reflective of the urban nature of Bexley. Standards set by national agencies such as Natural England and the Woodland Trust, which advocate a higher level of provision should be considered as a long-term target.

⁵ Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Acts (1991 and 2004)

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12.41 Decisions regarding the minimum acceptable size of sites should be taken and set out within a Supplementary Planning Document. Minimum size criteria will guide decisions on whether provision should be made on site or contributions should be directed towards off site facilities.

Table 12.5 – Local Quantity and Accessibility Standards

Type of Open Space	Local Quantity Standard	Local Accessibility Standard
Parks and Gardens	1.12 ha ⁶ per 1000 ⁷ (metropolitan parks) 0.38 ha per 1000 (district parks) 0.88 ha per 1000 (local parks)	3.2 km ⁸ (metropolitan parks) 1.2km (district parks) 400m ⁹ (local parks) - 10 minute walk time
Natural and Semi-Natural open space	2.60 ha per 1000	720m – 15 minute walk time
Amenity areas	0.16 ha per 1000 Small local parks 0.02ha per 1000 population	400m – 10 minute walk time
Outdoor Sports Pitches	1.32 ha per 1000 (of which 0.52 is community accessible sports pitches)	768m – 16 minute walk time (pitches and tennis courts) 20 minute drive (bowling greens, synthetic pitches)
Allotments	0.22 ha per 1000	720m – 15 minute walk time
Provision for children	1.43 facilities per 1000 children	480m – 10 minute walk time
Provision for young people	1.15 facilities per 1000	720m - 15 minute walk time
Cemeteries and churchyards	2.16 plots per 1000 residents	No standard set
Green Corridors	No standard set	No standard set. The draft Public Rights of Way Access and Improvement Plan has already commenced accessibility mapping and will highlight areas of priority.

12.42 The scenario of a new master plan area containing sufficient dwellings to accommodate 2,000 residents can be used by means of example to demonstrate the application of the quantity standards, and the level of open space that would be required to meet the standards. All standards represent minimum levels of provision.

12.43 Based on the local standards set as part of this study, and applied to a population of 2,000 new residents, it would be expected that in the range of 12 hectares of open space would be required alongside the provision of at least one facility for young people and one facility for teenagers.

⁶ 1 ha (hectare) is the same as approximately 2 senior sized football pitches (each measuring 100m x 50m)

⁷ Ha per 1000 is used as a standard to measure an area (hectares) for every 1000 people.

⁸ 1 km or 1 kilometre equals 1,000 metres or 0.621 miles

⁹ 1 m or 1 metre is equivalent to approximately 1.094 yard or 39.37 inches.

- 12.44 This requirement would be split between on- and off-site provision according to the location and characteristics of the surrounding area.
- 12.45 Given that circa 20 hectares would be required to provide sufficient dwellings to accommodate 2000 residents, it can be concluded that the aspiration would be that every hectare of housing is accompanied by 0.6ha of green space (although some of this may be provided off site, for example Metropolitan Parks).

Proactive planning and decision-making

- 12.46 The study provides the tools in which the value of an open space can be assessed on a site-by-site basis, as and when a development proposal is submitted for an existing piece of open space. Similarly, this approach can be the basis for determining what type of open space provision is appropriate to be provided within a housing development and for pre-empting growth implications as part of the LDF. The study will be essential in maximising the effect of the regeneration opportunities and population growth.
- 12.47 Integration of key priorities within the LDF will maximise the opportunities for proactive planning of sport and recreation facilities.
- 12.48 This document should provide a key evidence base for the LDF as well as informing other more specific strategies such as the parks strategy, sports strategy and play strategy. The achievement of the aims and objectives of this study will contribute to the achievement of wider local, regional and national targets.
- 12.49 In order to ensure that the outline recommendations within this strategy framework are deliverable both capital and revenue investment to enable increased maintenance will be required. Opportunities for savings on the current maintenance regime should also be explored.
- 12.50 The local standards included as part of this document will be considered in the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF). The LDF Design for Living Supplementary Planning Document sets out principles to support Unitary Development Plan Policy H6 for the provision of amenity space on new developments. Site specific requirements for new developments will be negotiated with developers.