

Bexley Open Space Strategy

Adopted
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London Borough of Bexley Open Space Strategy

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Introduction

- 1.1 Bexley's Open Space Strategy and PPG17¹ Audit and Assessment (referred to as the Open Space Strategy), sets a framework for the future planning and management of open spaces, outdoor sport and recreation facilities by encouraging various service areas to effectively plan for the future delivery and implementation of improvements. The London Borough of Bexley has formally adopted both this Open Space Strategy and the Open Space Strategy Technical Paper, published separately. The Strategy and Technical Paper will therefore be a material consideration when making decisions on planning applications.
- 1.2 The Strategy will help to inform any new management or action plans produced by various service areas. The Strategy therefore includes an **Action Plan** with key priorities, timescales and indicators, which is included as **Table 7.1** in this document and in Section 12 of the Technical Paper. The Council will periodically review the Action Plan.

Open Spaces in Bexley

- 1.3 The London Borough of Bexley is located on the edge of London and is one of the greenest boroughs, with almost 12% of its land considered to be green. Parks and open spaces are central to the character and identity of the Borough. They provide a number of benefits to the local community and balancing the urban environment, whilst contributing to the quality of life of local residents. Open space, sport and recreation facilities provide a focal point for healthy exercise and community interaction. They can also improve the well-being of residents and visitors.
- 1.4 Open spaces in Bexley are also rich sources of nature conservation and biodiversity. The River Thames runs along the north of the Borough and this and other rivers offer open views and provide great benefits to support biodiversity, and sport and recreation facilities. Bexley has a number of nationally- and regionally-designated open spaces, including areas of Metropolitan Green Belt, Metropolitan Open Land, Sites of Scientific and Special Interest (SSSI) and Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC).
- 1.5 The Council owns and maintains over 100 green spaces, including large parks, amenity space, woodland and sports facilities. There is a diverse range of open spaces varying in size from small amenity areas to large sites such as Danson Park and East Wickham Open Space. There are also many sites in private ownership, including private gardens; and some sites are managed by organisations or voluntary groups.
- 1.6 Many open spaces in Bexley are of particularly high quality. Danson Park, Foots Cray Meadows, East Wickham Open Space, Lesnes Abbey and Hall Place Gardens have all been awarded the nationally-renowned Green Flag Award. Danson Park



¹ National Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17), *Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation*, Department for Communities and Local Government, July 2002, available online at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/planningpolicyguidance17>

was awarded the prestigious title of London's Best Park in 2007 and 2008: it was unprecedented for a park to receive this award for two consecutive years. The Council is committed to the provision of diverse leisure opportunities, balanced with nature conservation, and strives to continue to enhance the quality of open spaces.

What do we mean by open space?

- 1.7 National Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17), *Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation*, encourages local authorities to effectively plan for the future delivery of appropriate open space, sport and leisure facilities. It highlights the importance of undertaking assessments of existing and future needs for open space, sports and recreational facilities.
- 1.8 The London Plan defines open space as, *“all land in London that is predominantly undeveloped other than by buildings or structures that are ancillary to the open space use. The definition covers a broad range of different types of open spaces within London, whether in public or private ownership and whether public access is unrestricted, limited or restricted”*.
- 1.9 PPG 17 defines open space as *“all open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can also act as a visual amenity”*.
- 1.10 PPG 17 suggests a range of facilities that should be included within an open space, sport and recreation strategy. This Strategy, therefore, considers a variety of different types of open space in Bexley, specifically:
 - parks and gardens (Metropolitan Parks, District Parks and Local Parks);
 - natural and semi-natural open space (including Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation);
 - amenity green spaces;
 - facilities for children (aged up to 12);
 - facilities for young people (aged over 12);
 - outdoor sports facilities;
 - allotments;
 - cemeteries and churchyards; and
 - green corridors (including rivers and public rights of way).
- 1.11 All open spaces within Bexley falling into one of the above definitions (based on its primary purpose) are included within this document. A consistent definition of open space will ensure that long term monitoring of provision is possible. It will also maximise the opportunities for the Council to work with neighbouring authorities and other partners. Full details of the categories used are provided within Annex A.
- 1.12 In addition to open space, river corridors are important in Bexley and include the Rivers Thames, Cray, Shuttle and Wyncham. These corridors are a key focus for leisure and recreational activities as well as being important in terms of nature conservation and biodiversity. The Council works with external partners, including the Port of London Authority and Environment Agency, to make sure any leisure activities on or adjacent to rivers are not detrimental to them.

Why are open spaces in Bexley important?

- 1.13 Green Infrastructure comprises a network of multi-functional green space 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 with neighbouring boroughs and at a local level.
- 1.14 The London Borough of Bexley has seen significant improvements to the quality of its open space, sport and recreation facilities over recent years. Over the next 20 years, Bexley will face bigger challenges associated with population growth and changes to the profile of the resident population. The effective provision of parks, open spaces, sport and recreation facilities will be essential if quality of life is to be maintained and enhanced.
- 1.15 Local networks of high quality, well-managed and maintained green spaces, sport and recreation facilities help create environments that are attractive, green and safe. Open spaces and parks provide settings for a wide range of social and recreational activities; enhance the visual environment and can contribute in a number of ways to the economic development of the Borough.
- 1.16 Increasing sport and physical activity is a key target, both nationally and locally, and parks and open spaces provide an alternative means of encouraging residents to participate. The Active People survey² indicates that only 18.4% of residents of Bexley undertake regular sport and moderate physical activity, less than the national average (21.4%). The survey also indicates that residents in some areas of the Borough are less likely to participate than others.
- 1.17 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 character of conservation areas, parks and open spaces and providing a setting for 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 and ridgelines, etc.;
 - supporting habitats and local wildlife (biodiversity);
 - adapting to mitigate the impact of climate change and flood risk;
 - promoting and protecting biodiversity and habitat creation;
 - promoting and improving links between open space; and
 - educating the local community.
- 1.18 The role of open spaces in adapting to and mitigating climate change is of particular importance. Open spaces that are softer, greener, more organic and natural will

² Sport England's Active People Survey 2005/2006, was completed October 2006. The Active People Survey for 2007/2008 is out on consultation and closes in October 2008.

store water and are critical to modifying urban temperatures. Open spaces with adequate trees create a network of cooler, cleaner air, thus improving air quality. The provision of appropriate woodlands and natural habitats will also ensure that wildlife is able to adapt to climate change and that the natural balance of our ecosystem will continue to function.

- 1.19 Our parks offer significant opportunities for interaction, social education and rehabilitation. They serve a wide population and are frequently used for field studies. They also provide opportunities for long-term unemployed people and probation teams to undertake voluntary work. Children from Bexley, and from inner city areas elsewhere in London, experience outdoor play and fresh air in the Borough. Groups of disabled residents frequently visit parks with Social Services staff and carers.

Vision for open space in Bexley

- 1.20 Open space and recreation provision in Bexley has an important role to play in supporting the implementation of national and regional objectives and, more locally, in the achievement of key Council priorities.
- 1.21 It is essential that a clear vision for open spaces is adopted to guide the proactive planning of open spaces across the Borough and ensure that all partners are working to achieve a common goal.
- 1.22 The purpose of this Strategy is to provide a framework for the future planning and management of open space, sport and recreation facilities in the Borough. It forms part of the evidence base for the Local Development Framework (LDF) and will also guide the production of service-specific plans.
- 1.23 This Open Space Strategy sets out the London Borough of Bexley's vision for open spaces and the goals it wants to achieve. It also summarises some of the ways in which it is anticipated that these goals will be achieved. This Strategy provides a real chance to work together to prioritise and deliver local targets.
- 1.24 The vision for the future delivery of open space across the London Borough of Bexley is to:

“Lead and implement the Open Space Strategy, through partnership working, creating an accessible, 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 and its biodiversity.”

- 1.25 The remainder of this Strategy summarises:
- the national, regional and local strategic context;
 - the methodology used to produce the Strategy ;
 - the existing provision in Bexley;
 - local needs and aspirations;
 - key issues for consideration; and
 - future priorities.

National, regional and local context

National policy context

- 2.1 The three key objectives of National Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17) and its Companion Guide are to:
- create networks of accessible, high quality open spaces and sport and recreation facilities which meet the needs of residents and visitors, are fit for purpose and economically and environmentally sustainable;
 - generate an appropriate balance between new provision and the enhancement of existing provision; and
 - provide clarity and reasonable certainty for developers and land owners in respect of open space and sport and recreation provision.
- 2.2 This Strategy provides a framework for the Council to meet these key objectives. In addition, the Strategy contributes to the achievement of several other key national objectives, in particular:
- Central Government acknowledges the value of access to quality public space by recognising it as a key component of sustainable communities. The Sustainable Communities Plan underlines the government's commitment to the 'liveability' agenda (Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2003). This Strategy will ensure that open space is seen as a key vehicle to the improvement of quality of life in Bexley.
 - Green Spaces, Better Places (Urban Green Spaces Task Force, 2002) clearly sets out the multiple functions and the crosscutting benefits of open space, including for recreation; health; culture, education and tourism; economic development and regeneration; visual amenity, community identity; and biodiversity. This Strategy will help the Council to realise some of these benefits.
 - The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 promotes the practice of partnership working to reduce crime and disorder and places a statutory duty on police and local authorities to develop and implement a strategy to tackle problems in their area. Section 17 highlights that local authorities, when carrying out their core activities, can significantly contribute to reducing crime and improving the quality of life in their area. It aims to ensure that crime prevention and safety is at the heart of local decision-making and highlights the importance of working in partnership to maximise the opportunities to achieve these objectives. The promotion of design and management of open spaces that give consideration to crime prevention and the creation of a safe environment will help the Council to achieve the objectives of this Act.
 - The Planning and Climate Change Supplement to Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1, 2005): *Delivering Sustainable Development*, sets out how spatial planning should contribute to reducing emissions and stabilising climate change making particular reference to opportunities for open space to contribute to urban cooling, sustainable drainage systems, and conserving and enhancing biodiversity. This Strategy aims to maximise the role that open space in Bexley can play in combating climate change.
 - Planning Policy Guidance 15 (PPG15, 1994): *Planning and the Historic Environment*, sets out Government policies for the identification and protection of historic buildings, conservation areas, and other elements of the historic

environment. This Strategy promotes the role of open spaces in the protection of historic sites.

- Planning Policy Guidance 16 (PPG16, 1990): Archaeology and Planning sets out the Government's policy on archaeological remains on land and how they should be preserved or recorded.
- *Easy Access to Historic Landscapes* (English Heritage, 2005) provides advice on improving access and reconciling access with conservation interests. The guidance promotes an inclusive approach to design and management of access, improving the accessibility of historic open spaces can also add value to and improve public enjoyment of existing sites, both in terms of intellectual access and physical access to the site itself. This Strategy promotes inclusive access and strives to increase the usage of open spaces in Bexley.

Regional policy context

- 2.3 As well as meeting national policy objectives, the production of this Strategy will be of strategic importance on a regional level, contributing to the aims and objectives of several key strategies including:

Mayor of London - London Plan (2008)

- The London Plan identifies the importance of realising the value of open spaces and green infrastructure in achieving sustainable development. Policy 3D.8 states that "the Mayor will work with strategic partners to protect, promote and improve access to London's network of open spaces, to realise the current and potential value of open space to communities, and to protect the many benefits of open space, including those associated with health, sport and recreation, children's play, regeneration, the economy, culture, biodiversity and the environment."
- Of particular relevance to this Strategy, Policy 3D.11 of the London Plan reinforces the importance of the development of an open space strategy, suggesting that Boroughs should, in consultation with local communities, the Mayor and other partners, produce open space strategies to protect, create and enhance all types of open space in their area. Policy 4C.4 focuses on the contribution of the Blue Ribbon Network, which recognises the inter-relationships of all of London's waterways as part of the open space network. It suggests that local authorities should recognise and identify opportunities alongside waterways for the creation and enhancement of open spaces. The importance of the protection of green chains is also referenced within the London Plan.
- A key objective of the London Plan is to accommodate London's growth within its boundaries without encroaching on open spaces. The production of this Strategy has followed the Mayor of London's Guide for the Production of Open Space Strategies, which sets five key objectives:
 - to protect and improve open space provision in terms of quality, quantity, accessibility and safety;
 - to improve linkages within and between the open space network;
 - to ensure open spaces meet the needs of all local people and promote greater social inclusion;
 - to ensure open spaces enhance the quality of the local environment; and
 - to provide a clear framework for investment priorities and action.

Mayor of London – Providing for Children and Young People’s Play and Informal Recreation (March 2008)

- The plan focuses on delivering a child and young-person friendly environment and raising expectations for play. It relates to the implementation of London Plan Policy 3D.13 and sets local standards for play in new developments and promotes the provision of a high quality play environment. This Strategy provides local evidence for the implementation of these priorities.

East London Green Grid Framework: Supplementary Planning Guidance to the London Plan (February 2008)

- The vision for the East London Green Grid is “to create a network of open spaces, river and other corridors connecting urban areas to the river Thames, the Green Belt and beyond to provide attractive, diverse landscapes and green infrastructure managed to the highest standards for people and wildlife.”
- The framework identifies areas of the region, strategic priorities and key projects that could help to enhance links to open spaces including access to rivers. The implementation of this vision will support the achievement of the objectives of this Strategy.

The London Trees and Woodland Framework, Connecting Londoners with Trees and Woodlands (2005)

- The Framework aims to provide a strategic approach to trees and woodlands aiming particularly to maximise the contribution of trees and woodlands to London’s sustainability and quality of life.
- It encourages natural regeneration and new planting in appropriate locations to further enhance the contribution of trees and woodlands to London life

The London Plan for Sport and Physical Activity 2004-2008 (Sport England, 2004)

- The Plan aims to increase overall participation rates by an average of 1% per year, as well as increasing participation by all under-represented groups.
- It also targets improvements to the structures needed for individuals to realise their sporting potential; and states that the effective provision of open space, as well as sport and recreation facilities, can play a key role in achieving these aims.

Thames Gateway, Creating Sustainable Communities (2005)

- The Thames Gateway Project will provide the transport infrastructure, schools and hospitals, required to create communities and will improve existing towns and cities and create better quality new development and open space.
- This Strategy will provide a framework for the ongoing creation and improvement of open spaces. The Thames Gateway Project will be a key delivery vehicle for the improvement of open spaces in Bexley.

Mayor of London – Biodiversity Strategy: Connecting with London’s Nature (2002)

- The Strategy aims to ensure that all Londoners have access to wildlife and natural green spaces and looks to maintain and increase access to open space. Biodiversity and conservation are recognised as an essential part of sustainable development and as such are an integral component of this Strategy. Annex D of

this document includes a map produced by the Greater London Authority showing access to nature and areas of deficiency.

Local policy context

- 2.4 Consideration of the local policy context has been of particular importance for the development of this Strategy. The key themes of other local strategies and strategic priorities have been central to the development of the vision for this Strategy and open space is a vehicle for the achievement of many important objectives.
- 2.5 Key issues arising out of a review of local priorities include:

Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2018 (June 2008)

- Bexley's Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), *the Partnership for Bexley*, adopted the Sustainable Community Strategy, *Bexley Together*, in June 2008. This outlines the long term vision to build a strong, sustainable and cohesive community to enable everyone within the Borough to enjoy a better quality of life, now and in the future.

Bexley's Local Area Agreement 2008-2011 (April 2008)

- The Sustainable Community Strategy builds on the four building blocks of the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and plans to develop strong, sustainable and cohesive community through:
 - building safer and stronger communities;
 - developing healthier communities for adults - including vulnerable adults and older people;
 - developing services for children and young people; and
 - promoting economic development and the environment.
- The Local Area Agreement sets out a range of indicators to measure the Local Strategic Partnership's success in achieving the objectives set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy: open spaces will play a key role.

Bexley's Climate Change Strategy (2008)

- The Strategy focuses on eight key areas and indicates that while parks and open spaces may be at significant risk from flooding, they could also play a key role to help the mitigation of climate change. Key actions relating to open spaces include:
 - protect and create green spaces and corridors between them;
 - seek to increase tree cover; and
 - use of sustainable urban drainage to provide habitats for wildlife.

Local Development Framework: Core Strategy Issues and Options Paper (2006)

- The Core Strategy Issues and Options paper identifies the key issues that need to be addressed over the Local Development Framework period. Of particular relevance and issues relevant to this Strategy are to:
 - promote development that assists the regeneration of the Borough and improves the quality of life;
 - take account of the impacts of climate change;
 - protect and improve the natural environment;

- make Bexley a healthier place;
 - encourage the creation of sustainable communities;
 - maintain and develop leisure and entertainment facilities;
 - sustain and enhance vibrant and visible town centres; and
 - protect the Borough's open space.
- The key challenges are:
 - relevant working to minimise climate change;
 - strengthening and revitalising town centres;
 - improving poor public transport and promoting sustainable transport; and
 - improving equality of access to services and opportunities.

Local Development Framework: Design for Living Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (2006)

- The SPD provides guidance for new residential developments and includes principles for providing amenity areas within developments and the potential importance of open spaces and access to them.

2.6 Implementation of the priorities arising in this Strategy will help overcome these key challenges. The provision of appropriate open space will contribute to the objective of minimising climate change. The equitable location of accessible open space and green linkages across the borough will maximise opportunities for all residents to benefit from open spaces and encourage the use of sustainable means of transport.

Bexley's Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (2004)

- Saved policies in the UDP provide a framework for development in Bexley until they are superseded by new policy documents emerging through the Local Development Framework. Numerous policies included within the UDP relate to this Strategy, including policies: protecting open spaces and green chains; facilitating the development of new open space; and identifying areas where new open space may be required. Maximising the benefits that the River Thames can offer, in terms of recreation and biodiversity, is also a key priority of the UDP.

Bexley's Biodiversity Action Plan (2002)

- The Action Plan focuses on the conservation of biodiversity in Bexley. The Plan supports the Council's six key aims and has a number of habitat action plans relating to specific types of open space, in particular:
 - Allotments - the Plan aims to make Bexley's allotments sustainable, increase the uptake of allotments and encourage the keeping of biodiversity records;
 - Parks and open spaces - the Plan aims to encourage the public to get involved in their local park, encourage a greater diversity and abundance of flora and fauna within parks and to provide local people and schools with regular contact with nature;
 - School playing fields - the Plan targets an increase in the number of schools actively managing their grounds to encourage biodiversity; and
 - Woodland - the Plan aims to protect and increase the amount of woodland in the borough, and to protect and increase the biodiversity in this woodland.

- This emphasises the importance of different open spaces in the creation and protection of habitats across the Borough.

Bexley's Tree and Woodland Strategy (1997)

- The Strategy provides a framework for the maintenance and enhancement of trees in Bexley and aims to encourage the expansion of tree cover in Bexley. In particular it aims to protect trees and woodland, promote sustainable management and promote the economic and amenity value of trees.

Methodology

- 2.7 The emphasis of PPG17 is on undertaking a local needs assessment, as opposed to following national trends and guidelines. The Mayor of London's Guidance also emphasises the importance of analysing the local situation, as well as promoting consistency across London boroughs.
- 2.8 The Companion Guide to PPG17 sets out four guiding principles in undertaking a local assessment:
- (i) understanding that local needs will vary even within local authority areas according to socio-demographic and cultural characteristics;
 - (ii) recognising that the provision of good quality and effective open space relies on effective planning but also on creative design, landscape management and maintenance;
 - (iii) considering that delivering high quality and sustainable open spaces may depend much more on improving and enhancing existing open space rather than new provision; and
 - (iv) taking into account that the value of open space will be greater when local needs are met. It is essential to consider the wider benefits that sites generate for people, wildlife and the environment.
- 2.9 PPG17 recognises that individual approaches appropriate to each local authority will need to be adopted as each area has different structures and characteristics. The process set out in PPG17 has therefore been adopted to ensure that the needs and expectations of residents in Bexley are adequately addressed.

The geographical area

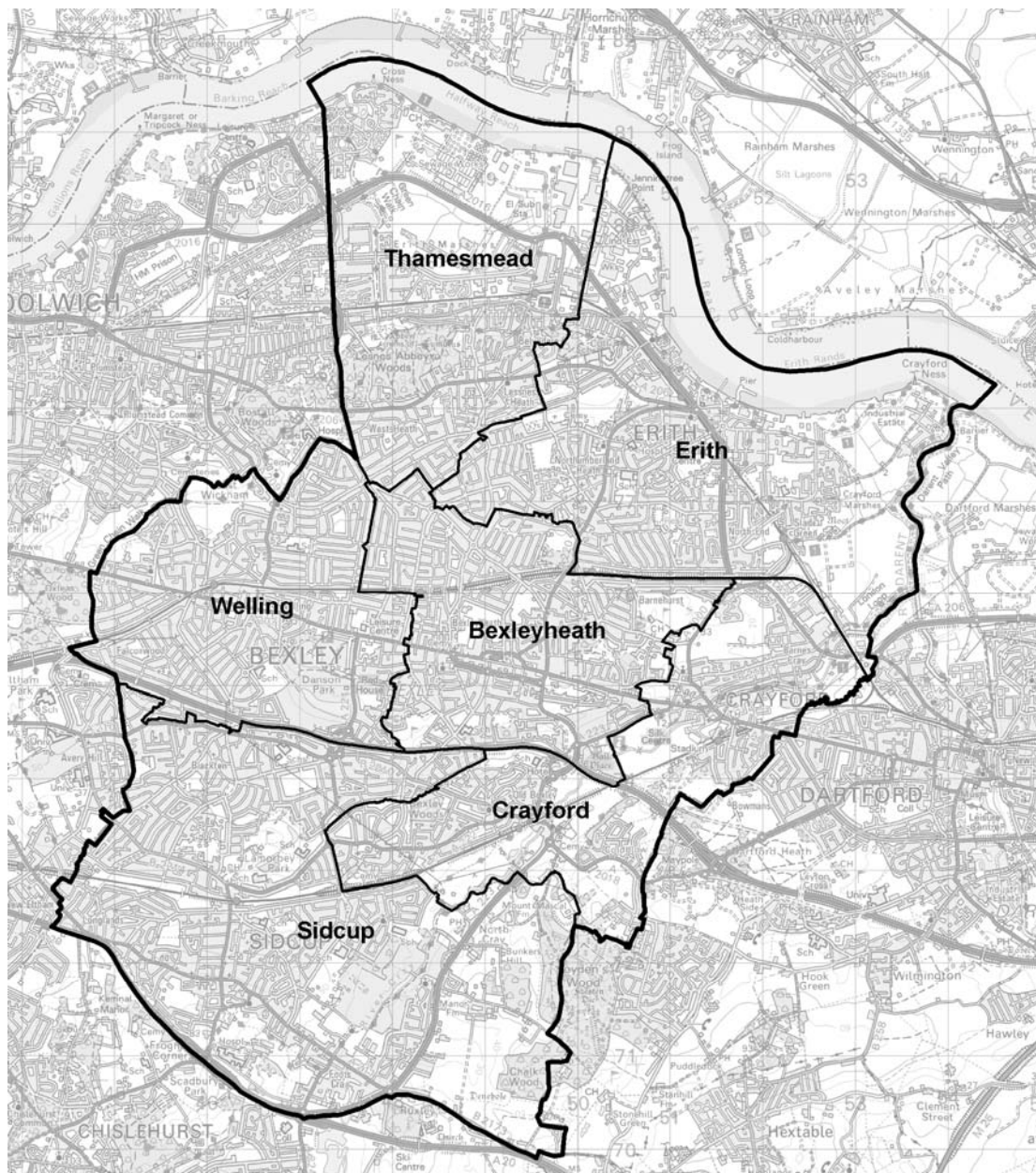
- 2.10 Analysis of the open space, sport and recreation facilities across the Borough has been undertaken by looking at the supply and demand in six different geographical areas (referred to as clusters in this Strategy). These clusters take into account the location of town centres, growth areas and extended schools clusters and are made up by the amalgamation of Wards. **Table 2.1** details the clusters that are discussed in this Strategy, which are shown on the map below.

Table 2.1 – The geographical areas of London Borough of Bexley

Cluster name	Population	Wards included
Thamesmead	32,487	Belvedere, Lesnes Abbey, Thamesmead East
Erith	41,353	Colyers, Erith, North End, Northumberland Heath
Crayford	20,333	Crayford, St Marys
Bexleyheath	31,054	Barnehurst, Brampton, Christchurch

SECTION 2 – NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL CONTEXT

Welling	41,905	Danson Park, East Wickham, Falconwood and Welling, St Michaels
Sidcup	51,175	Blackfen and Lamorbey, Blendon and Penhill, Cray Meadows, Longlands, Sidcup



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- 2.11 Open, accessible, good quality green space is more important to residents in areas of deprivation not least because many of them may not have the means to travel to parks and other facilities outside their immediate neighbourhood. The social profile of the area is therefore of significant importance in decision making and prioritisation.
- 2.12 Annex M of the Open Space Strategy Technical Paper provides a full outline of the demographics of each area of the Borough. The Technical Paper can be found online at www.bexley.gov.uk/ldf.

PPG 17 – Five step process

- 2.13 The PPG17 Companion Guide sets out a five step logical process for undertaking a local assessment of open space, specifically:
- Step 1 - identifying local needs
 - Step 2 - auditing local provision
 - Step 3 - setting provision standards
 - Step 4 - applying provision standards
 - Step 5 - drafting policies – recommendations and strategic priorities.
- 2.14 The key findings of steps 1 and 2 of PPG17 (identifying local needs and auditing local provision), are outlined in sections 3 and 4 of this Strategy. The final stage – the development of a strategic framework for the future delivery of open space, sport and recreation facilities in the Borough – encompasses steps 3, 4 and 5 of the methodology set out in PPG17. This is detailed in sections 5, 6 and 7 of this Strategy and identifies key findings and ways for the Council to implement this Strategy by means of the Action Plan (Table 7.1).
- 2.15 This Summary Strategy highlights the key issues arising from the Technical Paper, which provides further detail of issues arising from the audit and assessment work (as outlined in steps 1-2 above). The Council has also formally approved the Technical Paper.

Open space across Bexley - audit of existing provision

- 3.1 In order to identify priorities for the future delivery of open space, it is essential to understand the current provision in the Borough considering particularly the quantity, quality and accessibility of existing open space, sport and recreation facilities.
- 3.2 PPG17 states that audits of provision should encompass all existing open space, sport and recreation facilities irrespective of ownership and the extent of public access. The logic for this is that all forms of provision can contribute to meeting local needs. These principles are reinforced within the Mayor of London's Guidance to the Preparation of Open Space Strategies in London, which highlights the importance of taking into account all sites within the Borough's boundaries.
- 3.3 Sites have been classified by their primary purpose into one of thirteen typologies listed in **Table 3.1** below, as recommended by PPG17. Some types of open space are located within a larger space. Where this occurs and the primary purpose is clearly defined, it is important that these sites are considered separately as they have different roles and fall into different typologies. A good example is the location of a children's play area within a park.

Table 3.1 – Number of open space sites in Bexley

Typology	Number of sites
Metropolitan Parks	3
District Parks	3
Local Parks	35
Natural and semi-natural open space	71
Small Local Parks	6
Amenity green space	31
Children's play areas	49
Young people's facilities	20
Outdoor sports facilities	203
Allotments	40
Cemeteries and churchyards	20
Civic spaces	2
Green corridors	24
Total	507

- 3.4 According to English Heritage's Register of Park and Gardens of Special Historic Interest, five open spaces in Bexley contain listed buildings:
- Danson Park, Bexleyheath
 - Hall Place, Bexley
 - Foots Cray Meadows, Foots Cray
 - The Glade, Lamorbey Park, Sidcup
 - Lesnes Park, Belvedere
- 3.5 This reinforces the historic value of these sites. In addition to recreational value, many sites are of particular value in terms of their biodiversity and the habitats that they offer. Appendix C of the Technical Paper sets out those sites of national, regional and local importance for biodiversity and nature conservation. Six sites in Bexley are considered to be of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation, while a further 26 are of Borough Importance and 14 are of Local Importance.

Existing provision - key findings

Quantity

- 3.6 507 open spaces were identified within Bexley, of which 201 are privately-owned (although the majority of these are accessible to the local community). This includes four privately owned allotment sites. The number of sites classified into each type of open space is set out in Table 3.1 overleaf.
- 3.7 Of these 507 open spaces, 205 are outdoor sports facilities (this includes school sites). Despite the urban nature of the Borough, there are 71 natural and semi-natural open spaces. Of these, only 30 have unrestricted public access, the lowest proportion of all types of open space. Appendix L of the Technical Paper provides a list of sites included within each category and their primary purpose.
- 3.8 **Table 3.2** below outlines the current level of provision of each type of open space in terms of hectares per 1,000 people. Green corridors are excluded from this calculation as the linear nature of these routes means that it is not appropriate to measure provision this way. Across the Borough, in total, there are currently six hectares per 1,000 people of open space, sport and recreation facilities. This supports the claim that Bexley is a green Borough.

Table 3.2 - Provision of open space in Bexley

	Bexleyheath	Crayford	Erith	Sidcup	Thames-mead	Welling	TOTAL
Population	32,487	20,333	41,353	31,054	41,905	51,175	218,307
Open space types in hectares							
Metropolitan Park	0.00	0.00	0.00	96.24	85.52	63.93	245.69
District Park	26.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	26.97	28.77	82.24
Local Park	42.25	11.74	17.72	41.23	10.47	3.57	126.98
Natural/semi-natural open space	0.39	206.24	127.05	115.00	105.37	10.05	564.10
Small local park	0.69	0.97	1.13	0.00	3.3	0.00	6.09
Amenity green space	5.71	1.51	8.92	10.76	4.90	2.51	34.31
Allotments	3.29	8.54	6.45	16.20	4.35	9.14	47.97
Outdoor sports facilities	45.78	36.88	33.31	96.64	32.80	38.41	283.82
Total provision	124.61	265.88	194.58	376.07	273.68	156.38	1391.20
Provision per 1,000 population	3.84	13.08	4.71	12.11	6.53	3.06	6.37
Provision for children and young people – number of facilities							
Children 0-11	4	5	14	7	13	6	49
Young people 12+	3	4	4	2	4	3	20
Total provision for children and young people	7	9	18	9	17	9	49

- 3.9 Overall, the Sidcup Cluster contains the largest quantity of open space in the Borough (376 hectares). The quantity of open space in the Bexleyheath Cluster equates to less than half of this total (125 hectares).
- 3.10 When taking into account the number of people that live in the area and the amount of open space provided, the Crayford Cluster has the highest provision per 1,000 population (13.08 hectares). Table 3.2 shows that the quantity of facilities varies across the Borough.
- 3.11 **Larger parks** (metropolitan and district) are concentrated in the Sidcup, Thamesmead and Welling clusters. However, **local parks** are predominantly focused in the Bexleyheath and Sidcup clusters. **Natural and semi-natural open space** is unevenly distributed across Bexley, with the majority of sites found within the Crayford, Erith and Sidcup clusters.
- 3.12 The Mayor of London's Access to Nature Report (Greater London Authority) suggests that, although there are several areas of high value in terms of **nature conservation and biodiversity**, there are also four key areas within the Borough considered to be deficient in access to wildlife. **Annex D** identifies these areas in south west of Sidcup, Welling and Erith.
- 3.13 **Amenity green space** is unevenly distributed across Bexley, with the majority of sites found within the Sidcup, Erith and Bexleyheath clusters. **Play areas for children** (aged under 12 years old) are concentrated in the Thamesmead and Erith clusters, with a small number of sites located in the Bexleyheath and Crayford clusters. **Provision for young people** (aged over 12 years old) is evenly distributed across Bexley with a similar number of sites located in each cluster.
- 3.14 There is a high level of provision of **outdoor sports facilities** in the Borough and a significantly greater number of sites located in the Sidcup Cluster. The greatest quantity of grass pitches and tennis courts is located in the Sidcup Cluster. The greatest number of bowling greens is in the Bexleyheath cluster.
- 3.15 **Allotments** are fairly evenly distributed across Bexley, with a similar number of sites found within each cluster. The greatest number of allotments is located within the Sidcup Cluster. Cemeteries and churchyards are evenly distributed across the Borough and a local standard is not set.
- 3.16 Provision for children and young people was measured in terms of the number of facilities provided, rather than the size of the facility. Only equipped provision is included. For children this focuses predominantly on play areas; for young people this takes into account skate parks, BMX tracks, multi-use games areas and teen shelters.
- 3.17 **Green corridors** are of particular importance in the Borough and provide linkages between neighbourhoods and open spaces. Improved linkages are key features throughout this Strategy and in particular, new linear routes near regeneration and new development are proposed.
- 3.18 **The River Thames** contributes to the achievement of a number of objectives in the Borough, including regeneration and nature conservation. As well as being of metropolitan significance in terms of nature conservation, the River is currently the focus for rowing, sailing, fishing, walking and cycling. The role of the River and the potential for the further development of this role in terms of recreation is also evident. Integration of the River with the rest of the Borough and the promotion of the benefits the river offers should be a key priority for the Council. Continued close liaison and

partnership working with the Port of London Authority and other key agencies will be required.

- 3.19 The London Plan promotes the use of waterways for leisure, passenger and tourist traffic, and the transport of freight and general goods. The River Cray is also included within this network. The Blue Ribbon Network policies promote sustainable uses of the river and advocate that the water should be a starting point for decision making.

Quality

- 3.20 The quality of open spaces was assessed using a detailed site assessment matrix and all publicly accessible sites in the Borough were visited. Sites were assessed against criteria relevant to their respective typology (such as the quality of ancillary accommodation, quality of play equipment and site security) to provide an indication of their quality and potential areas for improvement. Site scores were expressed as a percentage.
- 3.21 The quality scores achieved ranged significantly, between 33% and 95%. While there are some examples of good practice, there are also some sites where there are opportunities for improvement. The average score for a site in the Borough is 68%, indicating that the overall quality of open space, sport and recreation facilities is good.
- 3.22 **Table 3.3** below summarises the quality scores recorded across Bexley. There is minimal variation between the qualities of different facility types. In light of the nature of green corridors, quality assessments were not carried out on these sites.

Table 3.3 – The quality of different types of open space in Bexley

Typology	Average quality score	Lowest quality score	Highest quality score
Parks and gardens	72%	56%	95%
Natural and semi-natural open space	62%	33%	79%
Amenity green space	62%	33%	77%
Children's play areas	79%	46%	94%
Outdoor sports facilities	66%	44%	84%
Allotments	64%	21%	88%
Cemeteries and churchyards	66%	44%	89%

- 3.23 As can be seen, overall, **children's play areas** were assessed as having the highest quality facilities in the Borough, with an average quality score of 79%. Despite this, the lowest quality score awarded was 46%, indicating that the standard of provision varies.
- 3.24 **Parks** are also of high quality, with the average site achieving a quality score of 72%. Assessments revealed that the quality of larger parks is higher than the quality of smaller more local facilities.
- 3.25 **Natural and semi-natural open space** and **amenity areas** were the lowest quality sites in the Borough. Despite this, natural and semi-natural open spaces, as well as

allotments and **cemeteries and churchyards** were of significant value for biodiversity and nature conservation.

Accessibility

- 3.26 Accessibility is particularly important when considering the value of a site to the general public. Sites where there is no public access (or access constraints) have limited recreational value although they still offer landscape and environmental benefits.
- 3.27 Site assessments considered access to the site, including the visibility of the main entrance and ease of finding the site, as well as the quality of the signage and footpaths to the site.
- 3.28 Although the majority of sites are accessible, it was clear that there are opportunities to increase the usage of sites. This may include improvements to the signage of sites or to the entrances to sites. The draft Public Rights of Way and Access Improvement Plan places a particular focus on improving access to open spaces.

Local consultation

- 4.1 It is essential to understand local aspirations and expectations in order to identify key priorities for open spaces across the Borough.
- 4.2 A series of consultations was therefore carried out as part of the development of this Strategy. These included:
- household questionnaires;
 - neighbourhood 'drop in' sessions;
 - internet survey for children and young people;
 - consultation with external agencies;
 - officer consultation questionnaire;
 - one-to-one consultations with Council officers;
 - user group workshops;
 - questionnaires to external agencies; and
 - telephone consultations with neighbouring local authorities.
- 4.3 The key findings were:
- open space is valued by residents across Bexley and is perceived to be integral to the character of the Borough. Many people live in Bexley because of the proximity to large areas of green space;
 - parks and natural open spaces are the most frequently used of all types of open space in Bexley: only 7% of residents indicated that they never visit a park;
 - access to different open spaces is split between people who use the car and people who use sites within walking distance of their home. Residents are willing to travel greater distances to reach larger parks and sports facilities. Over 90% of residents think that facilities for children should be accessible on foot;
 - the quality of some types of open space is more important than the quantity. Despite this, residents in some areas of the Borough perceive there to be insufficient open space to meet their needs;
 - 55% of residents feel safe in the open spaces of the Borough while a further 22% sometimes feel safe. A lack of facilities, safety concerns and the distance required to travel are the main barriers to increased usage of open space;
 - the lack of provision for young people was seen to be a particular problem across the Borough;
 - an improvement in the quality of sports facilities is a key priority identified by members of local sports clubs. Some clubs also expressed a need for new facilities; and
 - the use of allotments is becoming an increasingly popular activity. Maintaining the awareness of the availability of allotments is a key priority.
- 4.4 Some of the main issues raised through each of the main consultation methods are summarised in **Table 4.1**.
- 4.5 The issues raised during consultations have informed the future priorities discussed in **Section 6**.

Table 4.1 - Summary of Local Needs Assessment

Consultation Technique	Main issues raised
Household Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• the importance of the protection of existing open space was emphasised• parks are particularly important to the local community with more residents visiting Danson Park than any other type of open space• for the majority of types of open space, there was an overall emphasis on the importance of high quality open space rather than a desire for new provision• positive and improving perceptions of the quality of all open spaces although the key issues consistently identified included dog fouling and misuse of sites• the lack of provision for young people is a key issue throughout the survey findings. The quantity of natural and semi-natural open space was also highlighted as an issue and there is a degree of dissatisfaction with provision for children• there was particular dissatisfaction with the quantity of provision in the Erith and Thamesmead clusters. Residents in Bexleyheath appear to be more satisfied overall.
Drop in Sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• problems are caused by antisocial behaviour of young people - knock on effect to all types of open space• there is a lack of parking at some large sites• there are perceptions that large quantities of open spaces are being lost to development, meaning those remaining are highly valued by local residents. Particular concerns were raised in Erith cluster.
Officer Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• the general consensus is there is not enough provision for teenagers and young people• the number of parks (metropolitan, district and local), play areas for children, allotments and civic spaces is deemed to be about right• local parks and indoor sports facilities are the most frequently visited open space, sport and recreation facility• the value of cemeteries and churchyards to the local community was perceived to be important and issues relating to the shortage of provision were raised
IT Young People Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• socialising with friends and playing sports are some of the main activities young people enjoy doing• cost and a lack of facilities are seen as key barriers to using open space, sport and recreation facilities more often• the perception is that there are insufficient facilities for young people, furthermore, the quality of current facilities is insufficient• a local park is deemed to be a young persons 'favourite' open space, sport and recreation facility, with walking being the most means of getting there. A good place to meet friends, being close to home and free of charge are the main reasons why people like parks.

SECTION 4 - ASSESSMENT OF LOCAL NEEDS

Consultation Technique	Main issues raised
Sports Club Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• the vast majority of clubs stated that their membership levels are increasing• in terms of quantity of provision, there is a split in opinion with an even number of clubs rating this as good, average and poor - this suggests that there are variations between different sports• the modal response rates the quality of leisure facilities within Bexley as average. Furthermore, of the three factors (quantity, quality and accessibility), the quality of facilities is deemed to be the biggest issue• respondents would like to see more synthetic turf/all weather pitches, youth facilities and sports halls• if new facilities are provided, maintaining a low cost to access has been stated as the highest priority
User Group Sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• there is a strong base of volunteers across the Borough• delegated management is perceived to be effective• there are opportunities to increase partnership working and knowledge sharing• opportunities were highlighted to improve communication• perception of safety is a key issue across the Borough• evidence of increasing links with schools (sports clubs, allotments groups and friends clubs)• parking can be problematic at larger open spaces• varying perceptions regarding the balance between the quality and quantity of facilities:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- friends groups suggested that there should be an emphasis on the quality of sites and that investment should not just focus on the larger facilities- varying issues for sports clubs - pressures on existing pitches are evident. Some quality issues particularly around the provision of changing facilities, social facilities and the quality of synthetic turf pitches for hockey- there are waiting lists at some allotment sites, security perceived to be the key issue• access to sports pitches perceived to be problematic

Interpreting the key findings

- 5.1 PPG17 recommends that information gained from the local consultation and the analysis of existing provision should be used to set local standards for open space. For each type of open space these local standards should consider:
- quantity - how much open space should be provided?
 - quality - what should a high quality open space include?
 - access - how far should people expect to travel (and by what mode of transport?) to reach each type of open space?
- 5.2 These local standards can then be used to:
- measure the adequacy of existing provision for each type of open space;
 - identify areas where there is not enough open space;
 - identify areas where the quality of open space needs to be improved; and
 - provide a guide to developers as to the amount of open space expected in conjunction with new development.
- 5.3 The local standards for Bexley, derived from the findings of the local consultation and the analysis of existing provision are summarised in **Tables 5.1 and 5.2** below. A full explanation of the consultation informing each standard can be found in Appendix G of the Technical Paper, available online at www.bexley.gov.uk/ldf. The standards set out in Tables 5.1 and 5.2 should be treated as minimum standards. In light of the urban nature of Bexley and the focus on the quality of provision (as well as quantity and quantity), some standards are below those suggested by national agencies. The long-term aspiration is for all areas of the Borough to meet the standards specified by national agencies. These standards are referenced in detail in Appendix H of the Technical Paper and include standards set by Natural England, the Woodland Trust and the National Playing Fields Association.
- 5.4 These local standards will be considered in the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF). The LDF has some adopted Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) that are relevant. In particular: the *Design for Living* SPD (adopted January 2006) sets out principles to support Unitary Development Plan Policy H6 for provision of amenity space on new residential developments; and the *Planning Obligations Guidance* SPD, which is relevant for all new residential developments; and the LDF *Planning Obligations Guidance* SPD (adopted July 2008) also sets out criteria for securing developers' contributions towards improving open space, sports and leisure facilities.

SECTION 5 - INTERPRETING THE KEY FINDINGS

Table 5.1 - Local Standards for Open Space in Bexley

Type of Open Space	Local Quantity Standard	Local Accessibility Standard
Parks and Gardens		
Metropolitan Park Over 60 ha ³	1.12 ha per 1,000 ⁴	3.2 km ⁵
District Park 20-60 ha	0.38 ha per 1,000	1.2km
Local Park Over 2 ha	0.58 ha per 1,000	400m ⁶ – 10 minute walk time
Natural and Semi Natural open space	2.58 ha per 1,000	720m – 15 minute walk time
Amenity areas	0.16 ha per 1,000	400m – 10 minute walk time
Small local parks	0.03 ha per 1,000	
Outdoor Sports Pitches	1.30 ha per 1,000 (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 1,000	720m – 15 minute walk time
Provision for children (aged under 12)	1.43 facilities per 1,000 children	480m – 10 minute walk time
Provision for young people (aged over 12)	1.15 facilities per 1,000 young people	720m - 15 minute walk time
Cemeteries and churchyards	2.16 plots per 1,000 residents	No standard set
Green Corridors	No standard set	No standard set. The draft Public Rights of Way Access and Improvement Plan identifies accessibility and areas of priority.

- 5.5 The recommended quality standards for each typology are set out in Table 5.2. All sites were assessed using a site assessment matrix and were awarded a score. The aspirational score represents the minimum percentage score that should be targeted for improving each type of open space. The Technical Paper outlines the key areas for improvement that will be required to meet these objectives and this can be found at www.bexley.gov.uk/ldf. In addition to meeting the standards overleaf, improved nature conservation and biodiversity should be targeted at all sites in line with the Biodiversity Action Plan.

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

⁴ Ha per 1,000 population is used as a standard to measure an area (hectares) for every 1,000 people.

⁵ 1 km or 1 kilometre equals 1,000 metres or just over half a mile (0.621 miles)

⁶ 1 m or 1 metre is equals just over 39 inches or 3 ft 3 inches. 400m is approximately a quarter of a mile.

SECTION 5 - INTERPRETING THE KEY FINDINGS

Table 5.2 – Local Quality Standards in Bexley

Typology	Essential features	Desirable features	Aspirational quality score
Metropolitan parks	Clean/litter free, flowers and trees and well kept grass	Well laid out, good access, natural features and nature conservation	The quality of Metropolitan parks is excellent, with the average quality score of a site being 91% The Council should aim to maintain and enhance this current high quality standard
District parks	Flowers/trees, clean/litter free and well kept grass	Footpaths, well laid out, good access and nature conservation.	The quality of District parks is good, with the average quality score of a site being 79% The Council should aim to maintain and enhance this current high quality standard
Local parks	Good access, clean/litter free and well kept grass	Footpaths, dog bins, flowers trees and nature conservation	71%
Natural and semi-natural open space	Nature features, flowers/trees and footpaths	Clean/litter free, good access, dog bins and nature conservation	66%
Small Parks and Amenity green space	Clean/litter free, flowers/trees and footpaths	Nature features, well kept grass, dog bins and nature conservation	67%
Children's play areas	Clean/litter free, play equipment and good access	Well kept grass, litter bins and well laid out	87%
Young people's facilities	Good access, range of facilities and on site security	Clean/litter free, well laid out and changing facilities	Not Applicable
Outdoor sports facilities	Parking facilities, clean/litter free and good access	Toilets, well kept grass and well laid out. Nature conservation	76%
Allotments	Good access, nature features and parking facilities	Flowers/trees, toilets and clean/litter free. Nature conservation	80%
Green corridors	Clean/litter free, footpaths and nature features	Litter bins, level surface, flowers, trees and nature conservation	Not Applicable
Cemeteries and churchyards	Seating, footpaths and clean/litter free	Well kept grass, flowers/trees, litter bins and nature conservation	74%

Current position - Where are we now?

- 5.6 The local standards are applied in order to understand the key issues arising for each type of open space.
- 5.7 By measuring existing provision against the local standards, it is possible to identify where there is not enough open space and where the quality could be maintained or improved. In addition to ensuring that there is enough open space and that it is of good quality, it is essential to look at the location of different facilities. The distribution of open space sites is illustrated in the map at Annex B.
- 5.8 The key findings of the application of the quantity standards are fully explained in the supporting Technical Paper on our website www.bexley.gov.uk/ldf. These findings, when combined with the quality and quantity of open spaces will help to define future priorities. It is important to note that while quantity standards are analysed on a cluster basis, the application of the accessibility standards ensures that the distribution of sites is considered. This is particularly important when sites are located on the edge of a cluster and also serve residents in neighbouring clusters.
- 5.9 It can be seen that most clusters within Bexley have a deficiency of at least one type of open space. As highlighted earlier, the effective provision of open spaces is instrumental in mitigating climate change and providing habitats for wildlife, as well as providing recreational opportunities for residents. The main issues arising when considering the quality, quantity and accessibility of each type of open space 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. As well as providing recreational opportunities, parks are also important from a nature conservation perspective.
- Future efforts should focus on qualitative enhancements to smaller sites and improved access to open spaces. While there is an even distribution of parks across the Borough, there are deficiencies particularly on the eastern side of the Borough, in Erith and Crayford and in central areas of Bexleyheath. Increasing access to parks and open spaces in these areas will be a key priority and it is important to ensure that all residents have equal access to facilities.
- 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 and Access Improvement Plan also seeks to address these issues. New parks should be designed to maximise the integration of the facility with the local community, other open spaces and land locking should be avoided.

Key issues for parks and gardens

- sufficient provision of metropolitan and district parks to meet current needs
- overall shortfall in the quantity of local parks and projected shortfalls in all three hierarchies during the Local Development Framework Core Strategy period (up to 2026)
- future focus on the maintenance of the quality of larger parks and improvement of smaller parks
- there is a need for improved access linking parks to other open areas. These links should be well-designed, safe and secure for residents and visitors. In light of the importance of parks to residents, sites should be protected from development
- there is significant potential to enhance the quality and quantity of biodiversity in parks. Some parks are high in biodiversity, for example Lesnes Abbey, designated as a site of high metropolitan importance, while others offer little in the way of habitat and biodiversity. Improving the array of biodiversity in parks is a key target of the biodiversity action plan. The provision of habitats in parks is also an important way of offsetting deficiencies in access wildlife
- partnership working should be encouraged

Natural and semi-natural open space

- With the suburban character of the Borough, Bexley contains a variety 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. In addition, there is potential conflict between biodiversity and flood protection in respect of climate change. Appropriate provision of open space can help to address this issue. The map in **Annex D** highlights areas of biodiversity deficiency in the Borough.
- Facilitating access to existing larger 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. The draft Public Rights of Way Access and Improvement Plan also seeks to address these issues. The provision of semi-natural areas within parks is encouraged in order to provide access to local natural areas for residents and the creation of new woodland may be required in order to meet deficiencies in access to natural and semi-natural open space.

Key issues for natural and semi-natural open space

- insufficient natural and semi-natural space to meet current and future needs
- focus efforts on increased provision of natural areas within parks
- provide increased access to natural and semi-natural areas in the Bexleyheath and Sidcup clusters and create green links to sites across the Borough
- maintaining a balance between recreation and biodiversity is a key challenge
- retain, protect and enhance sites that support wildlife, biodiversity and their habitats
- in light of the importance of natural and semi-natural open space for both recreation and biodiversity, sites should be protected
- partnership working should be encouraged
- address areas of wildlife deficiency as defined by the Greater London Authority -Access to Nature report and the deficiency map, attached at annex D

Amenity spaces

- Amenity spaces may provide local access to open space. 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 LDF period up to 2026. The provision of amenity space and the important value of public open spaces is included in the LDF *Design for Living* SPD (adopted January 2006), which is relevant for all new residential developments. The *Planning Obligations Guidance* SPD (adopted July 2008) also refers to open space, sport and leisure.

Key issues for amenity spaces

- the current provision is sufficient to meet demand in quantitative terms, although there are some deficiencies in the location of where new space is required. There will be a shortfall of provision in the LDF Core Strategy period (up to 2026)
- improvements to the function and quality of amenity space are particularly important
- improvement of linkages between open spaces and from settlements to existing facilities will be a future priority

Provision for children

- Equipped provision for children (aged up to 12 years old) 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, including new provision (particularly in Sidcup, Welling and Bexleyheath), qualitative improvements and rationalisation and improvement in other areas.
- Partnership working will be essential in order to ensure that sites are designed safely and securely with crime prevention in mind.

Key issues with provision for children (aged up to 12 years old)

- the provision of children's play areas is sufficient across the Borough as a whole in quantitative terms, however based on future population projections there will be insufficient provision by 2026. Provision in some areas falls below the minimum standard based on current populations
- some residents in Sidcup, Welling and Bexleyheath clusters do not have access to facilities
- there is a need for facilities to be more challenging and varied. Sites should be designed with low maintenance, safety and crime prevention in mind

Provision for young people

- Equipped provision for young people (aged over 12 years old) was the overriding theme of consultations 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 thought 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. The 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. The value of other types of provision for young people such as youth clubs should also not be underestimated.
- Partnership working will be essential in order to ensure that sites are designed safely and securely with crime prevention in mind and so that they are designed working with young people.

Key issues for provision for young people (aged over 12 years old)

- the provision of young people's facilities is insufficient to meet current and future demand
- there are particular issues with provision in the Sidcup and Crayford clusters
- there is a need to involve young people in the design of facilities

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 (in particular, demand is increasing for junior football).
- Opportunities include the negotiation of community use at clubs and facilities in private ownership and at school sites, development of an existing or new sports hub or new provision to accommodate existing teams. The River Thames is central importance to the provision of water sports in the Borough.

Key issues for outdoor sport facilities

- the quality of outdoor sports facilities is particularly important
- there are some deficiencies in provision which will need to be addressed if increased participation targets can be met
- the River Thames provides an important resource for water sports
- partnership working will be essential in the future delivery of outdoor sports facilities
- protect outdoor sports facilities from development

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. As highlighted within the Local Biodiversity Action Plan, allotments are also an important resource in terms of biodiversity.

Key issues for allotments

- there are pressures on some existing allotment sites with many waiting lists
- current allotment provision is not accessible to all members of the community.
- allotments are an important resource for biodiversity and habitat creation
- in light of the importance of allotments to both tenants and for biodiversity purposes, these sites should be protected from development

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 important 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 designated as Borough Importance for 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.

Key issues for cemeteries and churchyards

- the management and maintenance of cemeteries and churchyards is an ongoing challenge and the quality of sites is currently perceived to be average
- cemeteries are an important resource in terms of biodiversity and conservation
- burial spaces are a finite resource and the Council will need to closely monitor supply and demand indicators to ensure adequate provision

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 East London Green Grid Strategy. These incorporate projects with new linear links to proposed regeneration areas 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, a regional park (within London) alongside Bromley, Greenwich and Lewisham. This Strategy aims to improve and develop the green infrastructure of the region through effective linkages. Some 33 spaces in Bexley are contained within the Green Chain. 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 of the Technical Paper.
- 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 and other agencies will be required.

Key issues for green corridors

- improve access to and between existing open spaces and neighbourhoods through the enhancement of the green corridor network in line with the priorities of the East London Green Grid and the green chain
- encourage partnership working
- protect existing green corridors
- improve the quality of green corridors focusing particularly on improved signage

and the identification and promotion of routes

- promote and develop the role of the River Thames as a cycle and walking route

Where do we want to be?

- 6.1 In order to maximise the impact that 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 inform the future priorities for delivery and the Strategy Action Plan (Table 7.1).
- 6.2 The analysis of current provision highlights several opportunities for the improvement of the existing open spaces across Bexley. Ongoing improvements would further increase the wider benefits derived from the provision of green space and would ensure that facilities better meet local need.
- 6.3 In order to realise the vision of the Strategy, the Council has adopted the key long-term objectives set out below.

Long-term objectives for the future delivery of open space

Long-term / ongoing objectives to:	<p>Facilitate stronger, sustainable communities – the Council recognises that open space can play a key role in the development of stronger and sustainable communities and seeks to improve the provision and quality of open space with this in mind.</p> <p>Create a safe and secure environment – the Council recognises the importance of the provision of safe open space to contribute to the overall environment. Provision of safe and appropriate spaces will encourage more visitors to use them.</p> <p>Ensure that changes in population, new employment sites and regeneration initiatives can act as a catalyst for improvement – the impact that change has on both existing provision, and on demand for provision is highlighted. It is important that this is proactively integrated and addressed within long term strategies. This supports the key principles of national government guidance contained in Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17).</p> <p>Provide a linked network of open spaces that meet the needs of all residents – linkages between and within open spaces will be as important as the spaces themselves in maximising the wider benefits derived from open space, sport and recreation facilities.</p>
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- 6.4 In order to deliver the long term objectives, the Council will work to achieve the following short term objectives.

Short term objectives for the future delivery of open space

Short-term objectives to:	<p>Enhance the quality of open spaces in the Borough in terms of both recreation and biodiversity</p> <p>Ensure the quantity of open space is sufficient to meet local needs</p> <p>Maximise access to existing open spaces</p> <p>Maximise the use of open space, sport and recreation facilities.</p>
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- 6.5 **Table 6.3** summarises the role of open space (measured against the key short-term aims and objectives of this Strategy) in the achievement of the priorities of other regional and local strategies.

SECTION 6 - AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND KEY PRIORITIES

Table 6.3: Strategy cross cutting short term objectives and relationship with other strategies (regional and local).

Document Name	Short term objectives for the future delivery of open space to			
	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	✓	✓	✓	✓
East London Green Grid	✓	✓	✓	✓
Green Chain	✓	✓	✓	✓
London Trees and Woodland	✓	✓	✓	
London Plan for Sport	✓	✓	✓	✓
Local - London Borough of Bexley				
Sustainable Community Strategy	✓	✓	✓	✓
Local Area Agreement	✓	✓	✓	✓
Climate Change Strategy	✓	✓		
Bexley Cultural Strategy	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bexley Local Implementation Plan for Transport			✓	
Bexley Diversity and Inclusion Strategy		✓	✓	✓
Bexley Health Inequalities Strategy	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bexley Biodiversity Action Plan	✓	✓		
Bexley Sports Strategy	✓	✓	✓	✓
Playing Pitch Strategy	✓			✓
Unitary Development Plan (saved policies)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Local Development Framework	✓	✓	✓	✓
Draft Public Rights of Way Access and Improvement Plan	✓	✓	✓	✓

Delivering, monitoring and review

Proactive planning and decision-making

- 7.1 The Council requires a framework for the delivery of open spaces 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 open spaces across Bexley.
- 7.2 This Strategy 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 specific delivery strategies (such as a parks strategy) and management and/or action plans.
- 7.3 These plans will prioritise the recommendations made in this Strategy and identify specific projects that will achieve the long and short-term objectives.
- 7.4 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.
- 7.5 The planning system will facilitate the delivery of other service specific plans. In relation to this Strategy, the Local Development Framework (LDF) will look to 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 LDF;
 - increasing the provision of open spaces including new facilities for young people, outdoor sports facilities and local parks through external funding opportunities and any potential planning obligation agreements, where applicable, and area action plans. In line with Government Circular 05/05: *Planning Obligations*, legislation and policy, in July 2008 the Council adopted Planning Obligations Guidance as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) as part of the LDF. 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/or any relevant planning obligations;
 - as this Open Space Strategy was not considered before the adoption of the Planning Obligations Guidance SPD, any future revisions to that SPD will need to consider how to deliver the recommended local standards in this Strategy.
 - service areas will also be able to consider this Strategy for future capital programmes of proposed improvements to open spaces. In some instances, provision of higher quality existing open space may be of greater value to the community than new provision.
- 7.6 In addition to reviewing and updating priorities for the future delivery of open space, changes to the amount of open space should be monitored and updated periodically. This will ensure that decisions are taken based on the most up to date information available. The LDF Team will be responsible for ensuring that information is updated and fed into emerging LDF documents, including the Core Strategy.

- 7.7 **Table 7.1** below sets out the key priorities arising from the analysis of local needs and aspirations and the audit of existing provision and summarises how they help to achieve the overall objectives. It also outlines the mechanisms for achieving the key priorities; and provides indicative timeframes where these are known. These priorities should be reviewed periodically and any review will directly feed into the service delivery plans.

SECTION 7 - DELIVERING, MONITORING AND REVIEW

Table 7.1 – Key Priorities for the Future Delivery of Open Space ('Action Plan')

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.
				Head of Regeneration Unit	Ongoing	Produce annual account for external funding and 106 contributions
		<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 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"> 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	Completion of annual parks survey
		<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	Summer 2009	Consultation of Proposed submission Core Strategy DPD

SECTION 7 - DELIVERING, MONITORING AND REVIEW

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

SECTION 7 - DELIVERING, MONITORING AND REVIEW

Aim/Objective	Key Priorities	Specific Issues for consideration	Action/Management Plan	Responsibility	Timescales	Indicators
Provide a range of quality play opportunities for children and young people that meets local needs		<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 ⁷ Committee
			Maintaining the awareness of the availability of vacant allotments as a key priority.	Head of Parks and Open Spaces	Ongoing	Effective advertising campaign
		<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

⁷ Bexley Federation of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners

SECTION 7 - DELIVERING, MONITORING AND REVIEW

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

SECTION 7 - DELIVERING, MONITORING AND REVIEW

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 opportunities to provide additional sports facilities on the River Thames and protect existing facilities 	Identify key partners within the emerging sports strategy.	Head of Culture	Ongoing	Delivery of projects specific to Action Plans
			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
				Head of Strategic Planning and Development	Summer 2009	Consultation on proposed submission Core Strategy DPD
		<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 Culture	By May 2009	Quarterly Monitoring Statements and Local Area Agreement indicators

SECTION 7 - DELIVERING, MONITORING AND REVIEW

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 	<p>Develop a prioritised programme of projects to increase access to existing open spaces in areas devoid of provision.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Monitor development and opportunities for new provision</p>	<p>Head of Parks and Open Spaces; Head of Engineering Services; Head of Traffic and Transport</p> <p>Head of Strategic Planning and Development Head of Development Control</p> <p>Head of Parks and Open Spaces</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Winter 2008/2009</p> <p>Summer 2009 By Apr 2009</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>New areas made available for public use and amenity</p> <p>Consultation on draft Rights of Way and Access Improvement Plan</p> <p>Consultation on proposed submission Core Strategy DPD Annual monitoring with report to Planning Control Committee.</p> <p>Creation of new open spaces, built to contemporary standards</p>

SECTION 7 - DELIVERING, MONITORING AND REVIEW

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	Ongoing	Increased public access to areas previously unavailable
				Head of Parks and Open Spaces	Ongoing	New areas within Parks specifically managed with biodiversity in mind

SECTION 7 - DELIVERING, MONITORING AND REVIEW

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 	<p>Actively promote the use of green grid and open space opportunities for undertaking informal moderate exercise and seek external funding to support regeneration projects.</p> <p>Encourage the development of cycle and pedestrian routes</p>	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 	Encourage friends and conservation groups and environmental improvements in parks and open spaces.	Head of Parks and Open Spaces	Ongoing	Increased number of projects attended/participated in by volunteers
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> establish user forums for sports pitch users to enable cross working and sharing of good practice 	Maintain the football user group to improve forward planning and sharing of good practice.	Head of Culture	Summer 2009	Working with football clubs to promote clubs and work towards Football Association Charter Marks

SECTION 7 - DELIVERING, MONITORING AND REVIEW

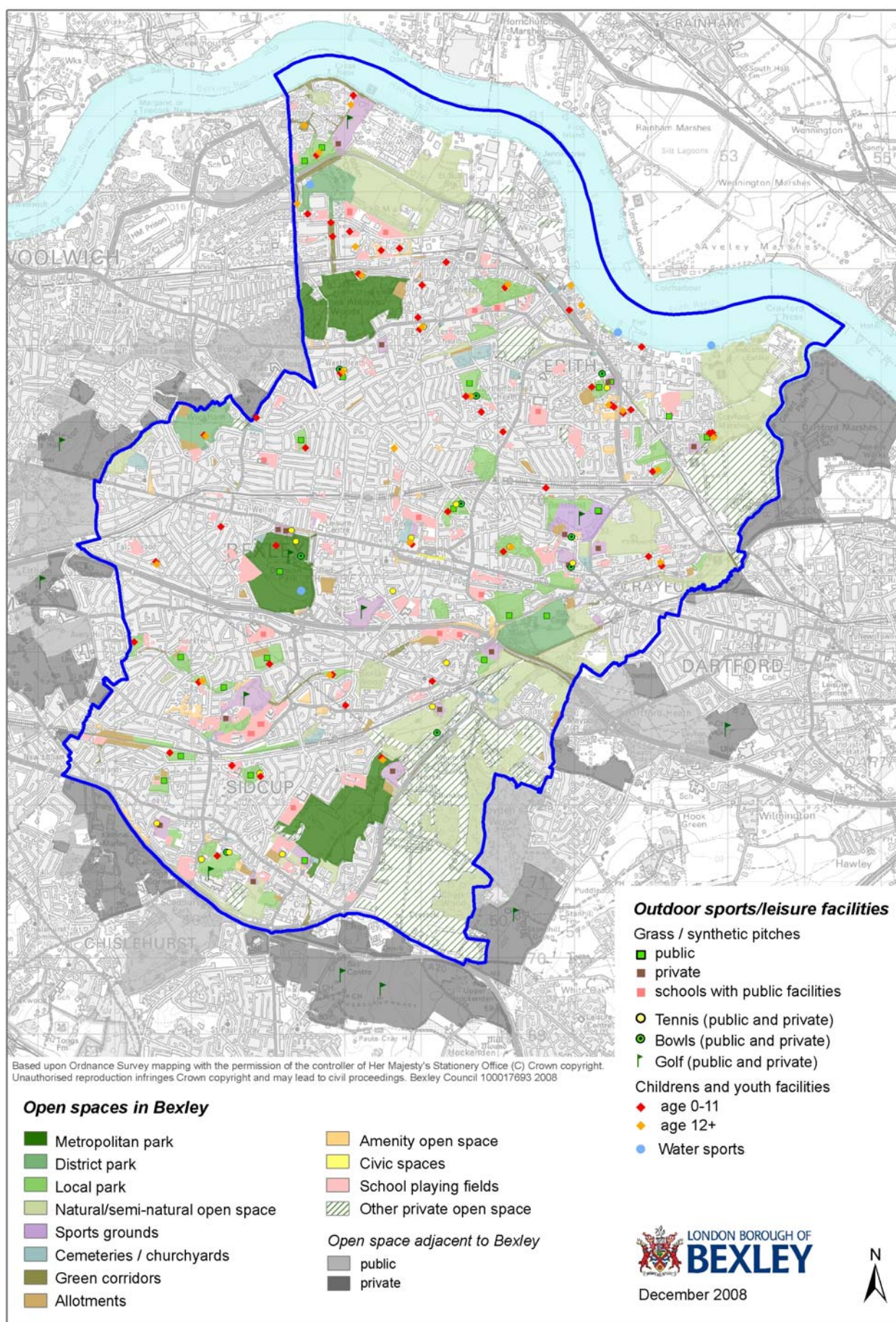
Aim/Objective	Key Priorities	Specific Issues for consideration	Action/Management Plan	Responsibility	Timescales	Indicators
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> maintain partnership with schools, Bexley Care Trust and other key user groups 	<p>Identify other opportunities for sharing good practice through 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

Type	Definition	Primary Purpose
Parks and gardens	<p>Parks have been subdivided into three categories in line with London Guidance (London Plan, 2008, Table 3D.1), specifically:</p> <p>Metropolitan Parks (size: over 60ha; and distance: 3.2km from homes) are either:</p> <p>a) natural heathland, downland commons, woodland etc, or</p> <p>b) formal parks providing for both active and passive recreation. May contain playing fields, but at least 40 hectares for other pursuits</p> <p>District Parks (size: 20-60ha; and distance: 1.2km from homes) - landscape setting with a variety of natural features providing for a wide range of activities, including outdoor sports facilities and playing fields, children's play for different age groups, and informal recreation pursuits. Should provide some car parking</p> <p>Local Parks (size: over 2ha; and distance: 400 metres from homes) - providing for court games, children's play, sitting-out areas, nature conservation areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • formal and informal recreation • community events
Natural and semi-natural green spaces	Includes publicly accessible woodlands, urban forestry, scrub, grasslands (e.g. downlands, commons and meadows), wetlands and wastelands)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wildlife conservation, • biodiversity • environmental education and awareness
Amenity green space	<p>Most commonly but not exclusively found in housing areas. Includes informal recreation green spaces. Sites above 0.4ha have been included in line with recommendations set out in the Mayor of London's Guide to the Preparation of Open Space Strategies.</p> <p>These spaces are also referred to in the London public open space hierarchy as 'small local parks' and 'pocket parks'.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • informal activities close to home or work • children's play • enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas
Provision for children	Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children (below the age of 12). While it is recognised that a wide variety of opportunities for children exist (including play schemes and open spaces not specifically designed for this purpose), as per PPG17, this typology considers only those spaces specifically designed as equipped play facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • children's play
Provision for young people	<p>Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving young people (aged 12 and above). While it is recognised that a wide variety of opportunities for young people exist (including youth clubs and open spaces not specifically designed for this purpose), as per PPG17, this typology considers only those spaces specifically designed for use by young people, e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teenage shelters • skateboard parks • BMX tracks • Multi Use Games Areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • activities or meeting places for young people

ANNEX A - CATEGORIES OF OPEN SPACE

Type	Definition	Primary Purpose
Outdoor sports facilities	Natural or artificial surfaces either publicly or privately owned used for sport and recreation. Includes school playing fields. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• outdoor sports pitches• tennis courts and bowls greens• golf courses• athletics tracks• playing fields (including school playing fields)• water sports.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• facilities for formal sports participation.
Allotments	Opportunities for those people who wish to do so to grow their own produce as part of the long term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion. May also include urban farms. This typology does not include private gardens.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• growing vegetables, fruit and flowers.
Cemeteries & churchyards	Cemeteries and churchyards including disused churchyards and other burial grounds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• burial of the dead• quiet contemplation.
Green corridors	Includes towpaths along canals and riverbanks, cycle ways, rights of way and disused railway lines. These linear routes/spaces are also frequently referred to as green chains.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• walking, cycling or horse riding• leisure purposes or travel• opportunities for wildlife migration.

ANNEX B – DISTRIBUTION OF OPEN SPACES IN BEXLEY



ANNEX C - AREAS OF IMPORTANCE FOR NATURE CONSERVATION

Areas of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation are those sites which contain the best examples of London's habitats, rare species, rare assemblages of species, important populations of species or which are of particular significance within large areas of otherwise built-up London. They are of the highest priority for protection. Sites falling into this category include Lesnes Abbey Woods, the River Thames, Erith Marshes (Crossness), Foots Cray Meadows and the River Cray, Crayford Marshes and M118 Joydens Wood and Chalk Wood (Including Gattons Plantation).

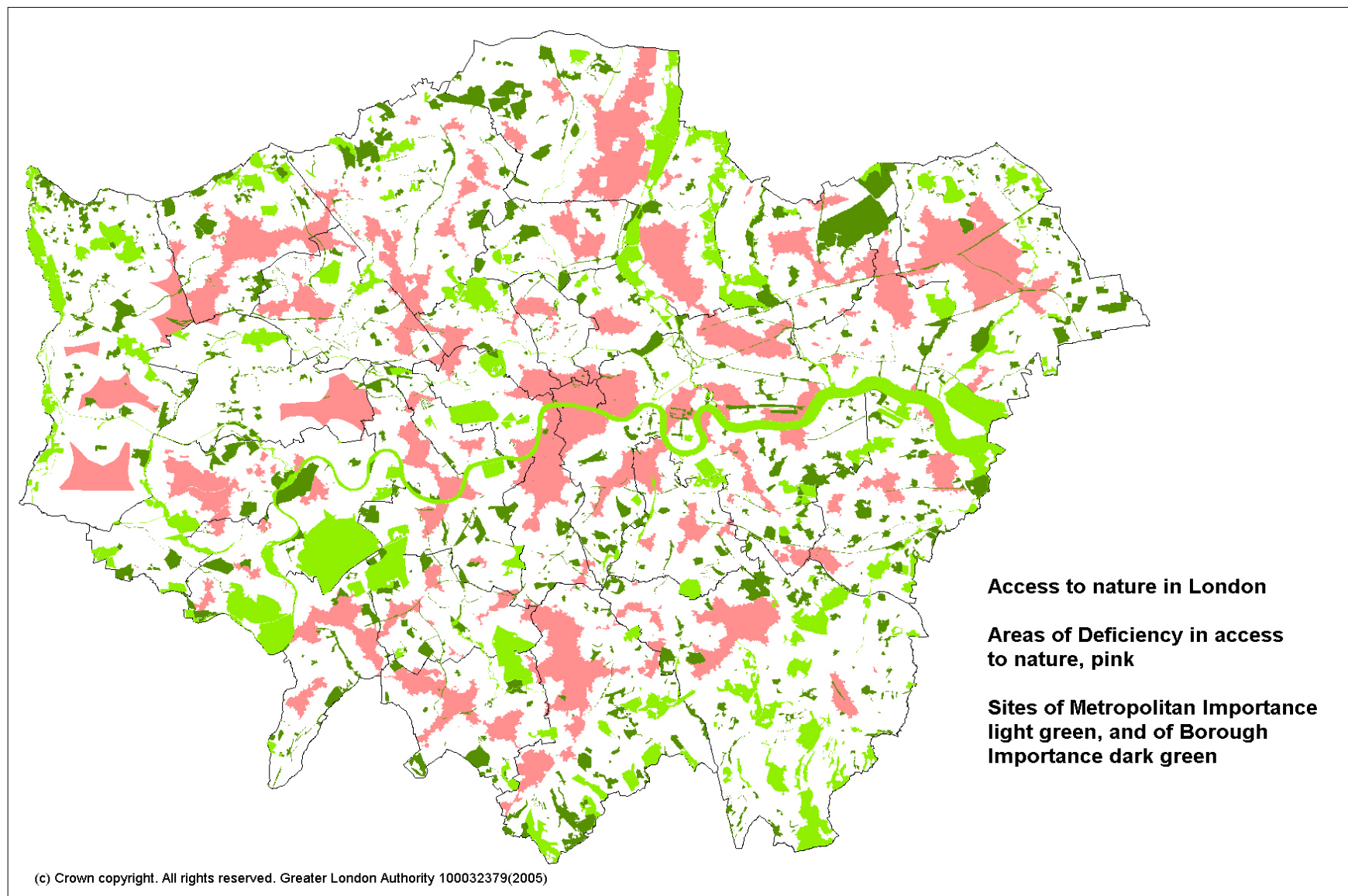
Sites of Borough and Local Importance for Nature Conservation

Sites of Borough Importance for Nature Conservation are those that are important from a borough perspective.

A Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation is one that is, or may be, of particular value to nearby residents or schools. These sites may already be used by schools for nature study or run by management committees composed mainly of local people.

The table below summarises sites that have been identified as being of Borough and Local Importance by the London Ecology Unit.

Sites of Borough Importance for Nature Conservation	Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation
Crossness	Rectory Lane Pond
Franks Park	East Wickham open space
Erith Quarry	Barnehurst Golf Course
Hollyhill open space	St Mary's Cemetery (Old Bexley)
Sidcup Golf Course and Lamorbey Lake	The Hollies nature area
Danson Park	Sidcup Place
Bexley Woods	Crossway Park and Tump 52
Rochester Way Golf Course	Streamway and Chapman's Land
Queen Mary's Hospital Grounds	Belmont Primary School nature garden
Home Wood and Bunkers Hill Ponds	Waterhead Estate Rough
Dryden Road open land and Woodlands Farm	Edendale Rough
Blackfen Woods	St. Paulinus Churchyard, Crayford
Southmere Park	Hoblands Wood
Rutland Shaw	Land between A2 and Rochester Drive.
Bursted Wood open space	
Martens Grove	
Hall Place (north) to Shenstone Park	
The Warren	
The River Shuttle and Wyncham Stream	
Mount Mascall Farm	
Caveys Spring	
Churchfield Wood	
The Old Orchard (The Gun Club)	
Slade Green Triangle	
Slade Green Recreation Ground	
Crayford landfill area	



Source: Greater London Authority: Access to Nature report

London Borough of Bexley Open Space Strategy Technical Paper

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London Borough of Bexley Open Space Strategy Technical Paper Appendices

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