

# **Cambridge Parks - Managing the City's Asset 2010 to 2014**



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*'The measure of any great civilisation is in its cities, and a measure of a city's greatness is to be found in the quality of its public spaces, its parks and its squares'*

(John Ruskin, 1819-1900; eminent Victorian who helped establish the School of Art for working-class men which eventually grew into Anglia Ruskin University)

## Foreword

The Executive Councillor for Arts & Recreation

*To be completed at final draft stage.*

# **1 Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This Strategy demonstrates the value and role of green space, in contributing to the City Council's Medium Term Objectives and the principles of the Cultural Framework.
- 1.2 It is an approach to managing the Council's green space assets for the period 2010 to 2014.
- 1.3 'Green space assets' include those Parks, Amenity Green Spaces, Children's Play Areas, Allotments, Outdoor Sports, Closed Churchyards<sup>1</sup> and Natural Green Space, managed by the City Council.
- 1.4 The strategy considers key national, regional as well as local influences and gives clarity on the complexities of managing a green space asset. By understanding these key requirements, the Council can prioritise service needs, improvements and investments.
- 1.5 The strategy also considers how high quality green space can create economic, social and environmental value.
- 1.6 A full audit of the green space asset is available as a technical document to this strategy. The audit helps to shape and set policies based on the understanding of relationships between quality, quantity, accessibility and value.
- 1.6.1 The strategy provides the basis for the consideration and development of an investment plan based on the following criteria: -
  - High Quality and High Value;
  - High Quality and Low Value;
  - Low Quality and High Value;
  - Low Quality and Low Value.
- 1.7 In Section 6, the strategy provides a detailed analysis of usage. This clarifies, how people use green space, the things that are important to ensure the assets are used, and it guides policy on how to set service delivery priority to improve satisfaction, and ensure services are most effective. The strategy also clearly outlines how the Council will engage with and encourage people to be actively involved with their neighbourhood green space
- 1.8 Current management arrangements are detailed in section 7,
- 1.9 A review of available resources has identified the need for; these to better targeted; to ensure costs are understood to help improve efficiency; and to consider how to improve the skills of staff to deliver improvements to the asset.
- 1.10 The Strategy has identified the following outcomes for the green space asset -
  - safety, access, facilities and usage;
  - community ownership;
  - biodiversity and sustainable practices;
  - management and maintenance;
  - creating strategic links relating to green space;
  - provision for children and teenagers;
  - health;

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<sup>1</sup> A "closed churchyard" is generally taken to mean a churchyard which has been closed for burials by an Order in Council under the Burial Acts

- access to and maintaining heritage;
  - co-ordination of management across the Council;
  - use of resources.
- 1.11 An action plan at the end of this strategy shows the links between the Cultural Framework and the priorities of this strategy. The setting of outcomes, priorities and their monitoring will be in partnership with stakeholders.
- 1.12 The action plan will help to: -
- Ensure long term planning of capital investment;
  - Encourage local decision-making and accountability;
  - Enhance cross service strategic working in partnership with other organisations and;
  - Better use of and management of the green spaces.
- 1.13 This strategy will be incorporated into services plans for forthcoming years and progress reviewed on an annual basis with a strategic review in 2014.

## 2. Introduction and Purpose

This section demonstrates the need to understand the value and role of green space; the contributions the asset can make to the Medium Term Objectives and those of the Cultural Framework of the City Council. It will also set guiding principles for the strategy to consider and address.

- 2.1 Previous studies<sup>2</sup> have provided evidence for the value of green spaces across a range of measures. These include: improving physical and mental health, supporting biodiversity, flood water absorption, improving air quality, mitigating the urban heat island effect, increasing property prices, facilitating business staff retention, supporting local identity and many other objectives that local and national governments are trying to achieve. This strategy will demonstrate the links between the quality of a green space and its value to the local community.
- 2.2 This strategy relates to those green spaces managed by Cambridge City Council. For the purpose of this strategy green space includes Parks, Amenity Green Spaces, Children's Play Areas, Allotments, Outdoor Sports, Closed Churchyards and Natural Green Space. This Strategy does not include land that is in private management<sup>3</sup>.
- 2.3 The strategy provides a high level approach to managing the Council's green space assets for the period 2010 to 2014.

### 2.4 Guiding Principles

This strategy has the following guiding principles, which will benefit and help the Council maintain its green space asset and too: -

- Support service improvement by delivering current and future asset requirements;
- Support and facilitate wider objectives e.g.; sustainability; inclusion and health;
- Improve stakeholder/ user satisfaction;
- Manage costs effectively and efficiently;
- Deliver new capital projects effectively and efficiently, and;
- Deliver continuous improvement through performance management.

### 2.5 The importance of green spaces in our City

*Parks are often the most highly regarded services provided by a local authority. Almost every town and city has a park, or network of public green spaces, and this accounts for around 20% of the developed land area in the UK. They are also a significant feature of our urban heritage and, where the standards of management are high, are regarded as an essential component of successful cities around the world.*

The Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management, January 2006

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<sup>2</sup> The Value of Public Space – CABI Space

<sup>3</sup> An Open Space and Recreation Strategy covering all green spaces in Cambridge will be undertaken in accordance with Planning Policy Guidance 17 and as part of the evidence base for the Local Development Framework.

- 2.6 By adopting this document and its approach, the Council recognises the significant contribution that its green spaces make to the well being of communities and the important contribution they make to the City's environment and urban infrastructure.
- 2.7 Cambridge has a wealth of parks and open spaces that total nearly 315 hectares. 88 of these sites are managed directly by the Council. Over 9.2 million<sup>4</sup> visits are made to the Council's green spaces annually (aggregated score) and the most recent Place Survey<sup>5</sup> gave a 84% satisfaction score, making it one of the Council's most popular services, also providing recognition that green spaces are a valued asset.
- 2.8 This strategy outlines how the Council will manage the intrinsic role that green spaces play in providing Cambridge residents and visitors with opportunities for enjoyment, recreation, health and well being, community cohesion, sustainable activity and transport and enhancing the quality of life.
- 2.9 **Strategic Approach to Asset Management**  
The creation, protection and improvement of high quality open spaces for Cambridge, are detailed in our vision for green spaces.  
*'Cambridge parks and open spaces will protect and provide attractive and diverse environments that enhance the quality of life for new and existing communities, workers and visitors and will provide opportunities for people to participate in activities in pursuit of a more healthy lifestyle, to socialise or relax and enjoy green spaces in safety.'*<sup>6</sup>
- 2.10 The strategy seeks to deliver this vision by identifying a set of outcomes from the overarching vision and from the guiding principles set out in paragraph 1.3. The emerging priorities are detailed in section 8 page 38 and are intended to be drivers that will in turn influence decision making and use of resources. The emerging priorities for this strategy are: -
- Improve access, usage and safety of green spaces;
  - Improve community ownership of the parks and their surroundings;
  - Promote biodiversity and apply sustainable practices and management;
  - Improve management and maintenance;
  - Improve strategic links relating to open spaces and growth of the City;
  - Improve provision for children and teenagers;
  - Improve health;
  - Promote improved understanding of the heritage of Cambridge's parks;
  - Ensure co-ordination of the management of parks and open spaces across the Council;
  - Maximise resources, and secure external funding to where appropriate to support improvements.

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<sup>4</sup> Source - Parks Survey 2007 - What local people think of the city's parks and open spaces

<sup>5</sup>Cambridge City Council - Place Survey 2008/09

<sup>6</sup> Parks for Cambridge People 2003 - 2008

## 2.11 **How the strategy was formulated**

The Council has completed an assessment of the green spaces it manages. This assessment was undertaken following best practice guidelines from the Mayor of London<sup>7</sup> and CABI Space<sup>89</sup>. The audit is available as a technical document to this strategy.

2.12 The strategy includes assessments of quality, quantity, accessibility and value<sup>10</sup> and full details can be found in the accompanying technical document.

2.13 This completed assessment will inform the audit to be completed for the Council's new Open Space and Recreation Strategy (to be undertaken by the Environment and Planning Policy and Projects section in early 2010).

2.14 This strategy is consistent with national, regional and local policy guidance, which in turn helps to define the value and role of green space within Cambridge and sets out a framework for the City's future approach to the management and development of its assets.

2.15 The green spaces asset can play an important role in contributing to the Medium Term Objectives, which are to: -

- Promote Cambridge as a sustainable city, in particular by reducing carbon dioxide emissions and the amount of waste going into landfill in the City and sub-region;
- Ensure that residents and other service users have an entirely positive experience of dealing with the Council;
- Maintain a healthy, safe and enjoyable city for all, with thriving and viable neighbourhoods;
- Lead the growth of Cambridge to achieve attractive, sustainable new neighbourhoods, including affordable housing, close to a good range of facilities, and supported by transport networks so that people can opt not to use the car.

## 2.16 **Cambridge Parks and the Council's Cultural Framework**

In addition to the guiding principles at paragraph 1.3, the following eight principles underpin the four objectives of the Council's Cultural Framework.

### **a) Existing and future investment is targeted on addressing local need**

i. Involve local people in cultural and community planning, particularly in relation to the growth of the City and with reference, and in response, to the findings of the 2007 Citizens' and BME surveys

*Cambridge Parks (CP) will include a range of recommendations which seek to sustain existing levels of involvement by encouraging 'ownership' through Friends Groups and where possible will seek to develop additional initiatives to engage with local people. A particular focus of future initiatives will be to engage with BME groups and non-users of green spaces.*

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<sup>7</sup> Mayor of London – Good Practice Guidance on Parks Strategies

<sup>8</sup> CABI Space is the government's advisor on architecture, urban design and public space

<sup>9</sup> CABI Space – Open Space Strategies – A good practice guide

<sup>10</sup> Making the invisible visible: the real value of park assets – CABI Space 2009

- ii. Undertake systematic review of revenue resources and potential sources of investment to ensure services are provided in the most appropriate and cost effective manner.

*CP re-enforces the need to continue with the Performance Measurement Framework to ensure that the maintenance of green spaces in Cambridge meets the needs of users whilst ensuring value for money.*

**b) Inequalities of provision and access are addressed**

- iii. Ensure the cultural offer in the City provides for the whole community, including local neighbourhoods.

*CP examines ways in which to attract people back to local green spaces and engage with all residents to identify aspirations and opportunities for involvement.*

- iv. To contribute tangible benefits and improvements in terms of community health and well being, which further develop the city's sense of community and 'place' and which reflect the Local Area Agreement priorities.

*CP will examine ways of providing improved opportunities for safe and well-managed physical activity as an important means of increasing activity, preventing obesity and addressing health inequalities.*

**c) Sub regional and cross boundary issues are considered and addressed**

- v. Ensure that the city's cultural offer provides a sustainable approach to the growth agenda and considers how partnerships for cultural activity can assist in addressing cross boundary issues

*Green space has been identified as a vital component of the shaping of community identity and local character in the growth areas. Cambridge's parks are a highly valued part of the character of this internationally important historic city. Maintenance and, where appropriate, renewal or enhancement of their character will be key factors in successfully managing growth impacts on the historic environment.*

**d) Partnership working is fostered to achieve shared outcomes**

- vi. Ensure the Council's cultural activity is responsive to the Council's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.

*Green spaces are essential to creating spaces, which both respond to and help mitigate the effects of climate change. They provide a haven for wildlife, and a corridor to support migration. They help reduce flooding and reduce carbon emissions.*

- vii. Support the City's mixed economy to provide opportunities for community participation in cultural activity where the City Council is not the only or the most appropriate provider.

*Green infrastructure plays an important role in economic prosperity and stability and adds real value to Cambridge's economy. There is strong evidence that green infrastructure contributes to gross value added through improvements to the City's image, helping to attract, create and safeguard new jobs and businesses.*



viii. Maximise opportunities for partnership working, with specific focus on Every Child Matters and Improving Health outcomes

*CP outlines the contribution that green spaces and play in particular can contribute to the Enjoy and Achieve Outcome of 'Every Child Matters' and the targets for increases in participation in sport and physical activity set out in Be Active, Be Healthy.<sup>11</sup>*

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<sup>11</sup> 'Be Active, Be Healthy; A Plan for getting the Nation Moving' Department of Health (2009)

### **3 Context and Setting**

This section details key national, regional as well as local influences and gives clarity on the complexities of managing a green space asset. This will help the Council understand priority, within the context of the broader guiding principles at paragraph 2.3

- 3.1 A number of national, regional and local policy documents are deemed to be of particular relevance to this strategy. They provide an understanding of key requirements, clarity of purpose, guidance and good practice. A further more detailed assessment is made in the accompanying technical document.

#### **3.2 National Policy Background**

- 3.2.1 The Government's approach to parks and open spaces has evolved significantly in recent years, moving on from the Urban White Paper in 2000 through to the establishment of the Urban Green Spaces Task Force and their report in 2006, and culminating in support for the broader context of 'Greener Planning, Greener UK'<sup>12</sup>. Living Places – Cleaner, Safer, Greener (2006) recognises that good parks and green spaces bring many benefits that make places more liveable and sustainable and enrich the quality of peoples' lives and communities.

- 3.2.2 Planning Policy Guidance (PPG)17 – Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation (2002) requires local authorities to assess green spaces against criteria of quality, quantity and accessibility, and to develop locally-based and evidenced standards of provision. Planning Policy Guidance (PPG)15 - Planning and the Historic Environment and its forthcoming replacement Planning Policy Statement (PPS15) are also of importance in dealing with the historic context of the city.

#### **3.3 The Play Strategy**

The Government's Play Strategy<sup>13</sup> sets out new policies for play provision. Free play, particularly outdoors, is fundamental to children's learning, healthy growth and development. Children must have access to opportunities for risk taking, and planning for play should strike the balance between risk and benefit. Children have a legitimate claim both to places designed specifically for play, and to share in the use of general public space for their own enjoyment. The strategy calls for a much more imaginative and flexible approach to the creation of play spaces.

The Government's vision for play is:-

- In every residential area there are a variety of supervised and unsupervised places for play, free of charge;
- Local neighbourhoods are, and feel like, safe, interesting places to play;
- Routes to children's play space are safe and accessible for all children and young people;

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<sup>12</sup> Greener Planning Greener UK; Plant for Life/ Horticultural Trades Association 2009

<sup>13</sup> The Play Strategy. DCFS and DCMS 2008.

- Parks and open spaces are attractive and welcoming to children and young people, and are well maintained and well used;
- Children and young people have a clear stake in public space and their play is accepted by their neighbours;
- Children and young people play in a way that respects other people and property;
- Children and young people and their families take an active role in the development of local play spaces; and
- Play spaces are attractive, welcoming, engaging and accessible for all local children and young people, including disabled children, and children from minority groups in the community.

### 3.4 Accessible Natural Greenspace in Towns and Cities

Natural England has developed a standard for natural green space (ANGSt), which it defines as “land, water and geological features which have been naturally colonised by plants and animals and which are accessible on foot to large numbers of residents”. The standard provides a set of benchmarks for ensuring access to places of wildlife interest. These standards recommend that people living in towns and cities should have:-

- An accessible natural green space less than 300 metres (5 minutes walk) from home;
- Statutory Local Nature Reserves at a minimum level of one hectare per thousand population;
- At least one accessible 20 hectare site within two kilometres of home;
- One accessible 100 hectare site within five kilometres of home;
- One accessible 500 hectare site within ten kilometres of home.

### 3.5 Local Policy Background

The Strategy must consider how to deliver its vision within the context of Medium Term Objectives, the Sustainable Community Strategy and strategic corporate priorities in the following areas:-

- Growth, with reference to the Local Development Framework and the Cambridge Local Plan (2006);
- Climate Change & reducing the City’s carbon footprint;
- Community Safety;
- Culture (including Sports Services and Events);
- Children & Young People’s Services;
- Conservation and Biodiversity;
- Community Inclusion and partnerships;
- Historic Environment;
- Arboricultural Strategy;
- Sustainable Urban Drainage;
- Moorings Policy;
- Community engagement & partnerships;
- Performance Framework for Grounds Maintenance;
- Open Space and Recreation Section 106 Investment programme;
- Cycling & Walking.

### 3.6 Growth of the City

The Council is able to provide and support the provision of facilities that meet the needs of new and growing communities through the Cambridge Local Plan 2006 and the documents of the Local Development Framework. The Cambridge Local Plan 2006, the Local Development Framework and supporting policy documents set out how growth in the city will be managed.

#### 3.6.1 The Cambridge Local Plan 2006:

- Interprets national and regional planning policies and relates them to Cambridge;
- Provides a framework of policies and proposals against which planning applications can be assessed;
- Will enable infrastructure providers to plan for the future; and
- Brings planning issues before the public for debate.

#### 3.6.2 The Local Plan contains a spatial strategy, which seeks the enhancement and improvement of Cambridge's landscape structure, including the network of central parks and commons, the river valley and green corridors that penetrate the City, and the landscape setting of the City edge.

#### 3.6.3 In dealing with the growth of the city, the Local Plan also requires open space and recreation provision through new residential development in accordance with the Council's Open Space and Recreation Standards as detailed in table 1.

Type of Open Space	Definition	Standard
Outdoor Sports Facilities	Playing pitches, courts and greens	1.2 hectares per 1,000 people
Indoor Sports Provision	Formal provision such as sports halls and swimming pools	1 sports hall for 13,000 people 1 swimming pool for 50,000 people
Provision for children and teenagers	Equipped children's play areas and outdoor youth provision	0.3 hectares per 1000 people
Informal Open Space	Informal provision including recreation grounds, parks and natural green spaces	1.8 hectares per 1,000 people
Allotments*	Allotments	0.4 hectares per 1,000 people

\* Provision for allotments In line with these standards is only required in the urban extensions.

*Table 1 The City Council's Open Space Standards<sup>14</sup>*

#### 3.6.4 The Local Plan also protects many open spaces across the City and details that development will not be permitted which would be harmful to the character of, or lead to the loss of, open space of environmental and/or recreational importance unless the open space uses can be satisfactorily replaced elsewhere and the site is not important for environmental reasons.

<sup>14</sup> Cambridge City Council – Local Plan 2006

### 3.7 **Cambridgeshire Horizons Sub-region Green Infrastructure Strategy**<sup>15</sup>

Cambridgeshire Horizons launched this strategy in June 2006, as a collaborative venture between the local authorities, government agencies and nongovernmental organisations within the sub-region. The strategy assessed the current provision of green infrastructure at the sub-regional scale and made recommendations for the provision of new and enhanced green infrastructure, over the next 20 years, taking account of the planned population growth.

#### 3.7.1 The overall vision for the Green Infrastructure Strategy can be summarised as follows:

- To create a comprehensive and sustainable network of green corridors and sites that:
- Enhance the diversity of landscape character
- Connect and enriches biodiversity habitats and
- Extend access and recreation opportunities' for the benefit of the environment as well as current and future communities in the Cambridge Sub-Region.

### 3.8 **Climate Change & reducing the City's carbon footprint;**

The vision for the Cambridge Climate Change Strategy & Action Plan is taken directly from the Cambridge Sustainable Community Strategy developed by the Cambridge Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), namely:

#### 3.8.1 Cambridge should be a sustainable and accessible City that has:

- A positive approach to tackling climate change – so that local people and organisations can make an active contribution to reducing its causes and mitigating its impacts.
- Sustainable communities that are thriving, environmentally sensitive and affordable places in which to live – where the growth of the City does not jeopardize the interests of current or future generations.
- Communities that are strong, healthy, active, safe and inclusive – where the well-being of people is improved and inequalities reduced, so that people feel a sense of belonging and *can fully participate in community life and share in the City's success*".

### 3.9 **Community Safety**

Cambridge Community Safety Partnership produces the Community Safety Plan 2008-2011 plan, which details how partners will continue to work together to effectively tackle crime, disorder, and anti-social behaviour across Cambridge.

#### 3.9.1 The Partnership identified five key priorities to tackle in-between 2008 – 2011,

- Reduce levels of crime and anti-social behaviour;
- increase people's sense of community safety and
- effectively tackle alcohol and
- drug misuse across Cambridge City.

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<sup>15</sup> The 2006 strategy is currently being reviewed and expanded in its scope to cover the whole County. The revised strategy is expected in 2010.

### 3.10 The Big Plan 2

The Big Plan 2 is Cambridgeshire's second Children and Young People's Plan. The plan sets the strategic priorities for children and young people's services and outlines how organisations, working in partnership, plan to address these priorities.

#### 3.10.1 The priorities are: -

- To help children and young people feel safe and happy in their communities;
- To narrow the gap in outcomes for children and young people;
- To improve outcomes for children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities and complex needs;
- To meet the needs of children and young people in areas of growth or demographic change.

### 3.11 Nature Conservation Strategy “Enhancing Biodiversity”

The Strategy makes a commitment to open spaces, conservation and biodiversity and is about:-

- Safeguarding and maintaining the qualities and character of Cambridge's urban areas and open spaces;
- Having a network of accessible green spaces, rich in biodiversity;
- Protecting and enhancing biodiversity, wildlife and habitats;
- Reducing flood risk, both on development sites and downstream (via sustainable drainage schemes);
- Opportunities for everyone who visits or lives or works in Cambridge to make the most of the city's open spaces - to rest/relax, socialise, enjoy safe and attractive walking and cycling routes and play sport;
- Improvements to the city's existing open spaces and the creation of new open spaces and sports & recreation provision on the Cambridge fringes, with green corridors that link the city and the open countryside.

### 3.12 Historic Environment Strategy and designations

The Historic Environment Strategy Supplementary Planning Document is currently being prepared by the Historic Environment Team. This SPD will guide strategic decisions by the Council and stakeholders, and form the basis of the Council's programme of Conservation Area appraisals and designations. Work on the SPD is highlighting the significance to Cambridge's special character of its parks and open spaces, most notably the river corridor. Council-owned spaces, from Byron's Pool downstream through Coe Fen and Sheep's Green to Jesus Green and Stourbridge Common form part of a continuous sequence of spaces, including Grantchester Meadows and the Backs, which is one of the glories of Cambridge.

#### 3.12.1 The existing 11 Conservation Areas within Cambridge cover over 700ha<sup>16</sup>. Parks and open spaces within the conservation areas contribute greatly to their special architectural or historic interest. The Historic Core Conservation Area Appraisal analyses over 70 streets and open spaces, including Christ's Pieces, Coe Fen / Sheep's Green, Jesus Green and Parker's Piece. These sections are cross-referenced to the Conservation Plans. Histon Road

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<sup>16</sup> Details, with links to maps and appraisals, at <http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/planning-and-building-control/historic-environment-and-trees/conservation-areas/our-conservation-areas/>

Cemetery and Mill Road Cemetery are grade II designated Historic Parks and Gardens. Cherry Hinton Hall and its Lodge are grade II listed buildings.

### **3.13 Cambridge Arboricultural Strategy 2000-2007 (2004 Review)**

This strategy is due to be updated. The 2004 – 2007 strategy aimed to protect important trees throughout the City and increase the numbers of trees on Council land. In the past 8 years over 4000 trees have been planted, representing a net gain in 2000 trees.

- 3.13.1 A Protocol for the consultation and determination of tree work operations to trees on City Council owned land has been produced and relates to trees works scheduled by arboricultural officers. The Council has a crucial role to play in maximising the benefits trees give the city, both through exercising its statutory powers and by encouraging and supporting tree management and planting.

### **3.14 Citizens' survey feedback**

The Citizens Survey conducted for the City Council in 2007 showed that since the previous parks strategy was approved in 2004, the perceived importance, of the Council's green spaces had remained static at 95%; usage had decreased slightly by 3% to 62% and satisfaction had risen significantly from 61% to 80%. It is possible that the increased availability of section 106 funding to improve and enhance green spaces is a factor in rising levels of satisfaction.

- 3.14.1 The Council also commissioned a booster survey in 2007 to compare the views of black and minority ethnic (BME) residents with the main survey. This highlighted that BME respondents place a similar degree of importance on the provision of green spaces, but were 20% less likely to be satisfied with them and 10% less likely to use them. More generally, the BME respondents were more likely than those in the main survey to know nothing about the Council and over half the BME respondents said the Council was poor at keeping residents informed about the decisions it makes. Only 1 in 8 reported use of the Council website and none had received information by personal contact with elected members or through Council or public meetings.

### **3.15 Local Area Agreement**

The Local Area Agreement (LAA) includes a number of National Indicators (NIs) that the management of green spaces can contribute to delivering:-

- NI 197 - Improved local biodiversity;
- NI 56 - Obesity among primary school children in year 6;
- NI 110 - Young People's participation in positive activities;
- NI 8 - Adult participation in sport.

- 3.15.1 The proposed contribution to these is drawn out in the strategy and can be included in more detailed reports for the LAA at a later stage.

### **3.16 Implications for the Council and this strategy**

The analysis of information gathered of national, regional and local policies, has identified the need for the Council to ensure this strategy:-

- raises the profile, understanding and value of green spaces in contributing to other strategic objectives;

- reflects the diversity of green spaces, improving the quality, safety and access to a range of parks and open spaces in Cambridge;
- recognises the contribution the Council's green space asset makes to infrastructure and heritage of the City;
- recognises that green spaces and trees bring many benefits that make the City more liveable, sustainable and enrich the quality of peoples' lives , health, well being and communities;
- protects, conserves and enhances the environment of the Council's green spaces;
- protects and enhance the biodiversity of the green space asset;
- recognises the potential of green spaces and trees to moderate climate change impacts;
- recognises the importance of green infrastructure in growth sites, and ensuring they are well designed and of good quality.



## 4. Understanding supply

4.1 This section helps to shape and set policies based on the guiding principles relating to the quality, quantity, accessibility and value of the asset. It provides the basis for consideration of an investment plan based on the following priorities: -

4.1.1 Those assets classified as being: -

- High Quality and High Value;
- High Quality and Low Value;
- Low Quality and High Value;
- Low Quality and Low Value.

4.1.2 An analysis of the Council's green space: -

- Identifies all open space managed by Active Communities;
- Categorises open space by function and size;
- Details an assessment of quality, value and accessibility of greenspace;
- Produces datasets and key information.

## 4.2 Typology of Open Space

The typology for this strategy largely follows that set out in PPG17<sup>17</sup> and the Companion Guide. The typology used for this study is shown Table 2.

Table 2: Typology of Open Spaces

Type of Open Space	Description	Purpose
<b>Parks</b>	Areas of land managed and maintained as a public park or garden.	Accessible, high quality opportunities for informal recreation and community events.
<b>Amenity Green Space</b>	Landscaped areas providing visual amenity or separating different buildings or land uses for environmental, visual or safety reasons. Areas of grass within housing areas that are used for a variety of informal or social activities such as informal play.	Opportunities for informal activities close to home or work or enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas.
<b>Children's Play</b>	Areas providing safe and accessible opportunities for children's play, usually linked to housing areas.	Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children and young people, such as equipped play areas, ball courts, skateboard areas and teenage shelters.
<b>Outdoor Sports</b>	Used primarily for designated sports i.e. playing fields, tennis courts, bowling greens.	Participation in outdoor sports, such as pitch sports, tennis, bowls, athletics.
<b>Natural/semi-natural Spaces</b>	Areas of undeveloped or previously developed land with residual natural habitats or which have been planted or colonised by vegetation and wildlife, including woodland and wetland areas.	Wildlife conservation, biodiversity and environmental education and awareness.
<b>Allotments</b>	Areas of land in or just outside a town that a person rents for growing vegetables, fruits or flowers. Allotments can be temporary or statutory.	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.
<b>Closed Churchyards and Cemeteries</b>	Cemeteries, disused churchyards and other burial grounds.	Quiet contemplation and burial of the dead, often linked to the promotion of wildlife conservation and biodiversity.

<sup>17</sup> Planning Policy Guidance (PPG17) – Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation

This strategy is solely concerned with green space assets managed and usually owned by the City Council. The assessment undertaken seeks to evaluate the contribution made in meeting need.

#### **4.3 Assessing the current green space asset**

A total of 88 spaces were visited and individually assessed for quality, accessibility and value using assessment sheets with individual criteria reflecting the essential characteristics of each different type of space. Map 1 on page 18 shows the distribution of green space owned by the Council.

- 4.3.1 A total of 83 play sites were visited and assessed using Play England's Quality Assessment Tool<sup>18</sup>. This tool classifies play spaces according to their function and the age of children likely to use them. Play spaces are assessed on the basis of three key criteria, Location, Play Value and Care and Maintenance.
- 4.3.2 A further 22 allotment sites that are managed by Cambridge City Council either directly or through Allotment Associations were assessed for quality, employing an assessment sheet with individual criteria reflecting the essential characteristics of allotments.
- 4.3.3 The assessment of the quality of open spaces is based on a scoring system for quality criteria for each type of open space<sup>19</sup>. These criteria represent what people expect to find in a quality open space, whilst recognising the diversity and distinctive character of individual spaces. The aim is to be able to identify those open spaces, which need enhancement and relative priorities, set within the criteria set out at 4.1.1.
- 4.3.4 The Sport England Pitch Quality Assessment was used to assess the quality of playing pitches. The ratings range from an excellent pitch to a poor pitch.
- 4.3.5 The full audit of green space is available in the accompanying technical document.

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<sup>18</sup> Tools for Evaluating play provision: The local play indicators  
[http://www.playengland.org/Page.asp?originx\\_12461m\\_50386004856125m96v\\_2009101534o](http://www.playengland.org/Page.asp?originx_12461m_50386004856125m96v_2009101534o)

<sup>19</sup> Greenspace Quality – A guide to assessment, planning and strategic development (2008) – Greenspace Scotland





## 4.4 Accessibility

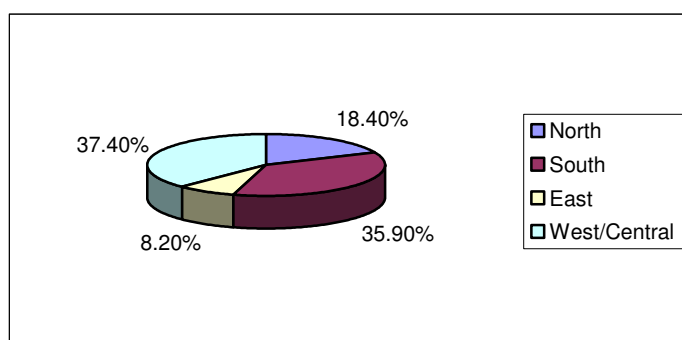
This strategy considers accessibility needs in the context of a hierarchy of spaces. A three-level hierarchy in relation to green space is considered based on the three key characteristics of “size”, “effective catchment”<sup>20</sup> and “essential characteristics”.

- a) **Citywide significance** - spaces that attract the highest number of users, from throughout Cambridge and probably wider afield, and therefore have a large effective catchment and high distance threshold. A high proportion of users are likely to travel to them by car. The size of these spaces is likely to be over 5 hectares although smaller spaces whose character makes them particularly attractive may be included within this level of the hierarchy. The effective catchment is 1.2 kilometres<sup>21</sup>. Essential characteristics could include formal bedding, some outdoor sports provision and a catering outlet.
- b) **Middle order significance** - spaces that will tend to attract a significant proportion of their users from neighbourhood in of Cambridge. Spaces at this level of the hierarchy are likely to be over 0.3 hectares in size and will have an effective catchment of 400 metres. Essential characteristics could include paths for dog walking, circular recreational walks and play provision.
- c) **Neighbourhood significance** - smaller spaces of 0.3 hectares or below which will tend to attract almost all of their users from neighbouring streets. Most users will walk to them. Spaces at this level in the hierarchy will have an effective catchment of about 200m.

## 4.5 Parks

Cambridge has 12 urban parks with a total area of 61.6 hectares (see graph 1), almost three quarters of the total area of urban parks is situated in the south and west/ central areas (73.3%). These areas contain the two largest parks, Cherry Hinton Hall in the South area at 14.1 hectares and Jesus Green in West/ Central area at 11.7 hectares.

Graph 1: Parks Quantity



	Area Ha
North	11.36
South	22.11
East	5.08
West/Central	23.06
Total	61.61

- 4.5.1 The parks in Cambridge have been scored for quality and value. There was wide variation in scores for both quality and value; quality scores ranged from 44% to 83% and value scores ranged from 41% to 89%.

<sup>20</sup> The distance thresholds do not give an accurate indication of the “catchment” of a particular open space, but do provide an “effective catchment” i.e. the distance that is travelled by around 75% of users.

<sup>21</sup> The determination of catchments has followed the guidance contained in Biodiversity by Design: A Guide for Sustainable Communities (TCPA. 2004)

- 4.5.2 The median score was 67.3% for quality and 63.0% for value. Sites were assessed as being of high or low quality and value; Sites scoring highly were those achieving the median score or above; low scoring sites had scores below the median score. 6 sites scored highly for quality and 7 sites scored highly for value. (see Table 3)

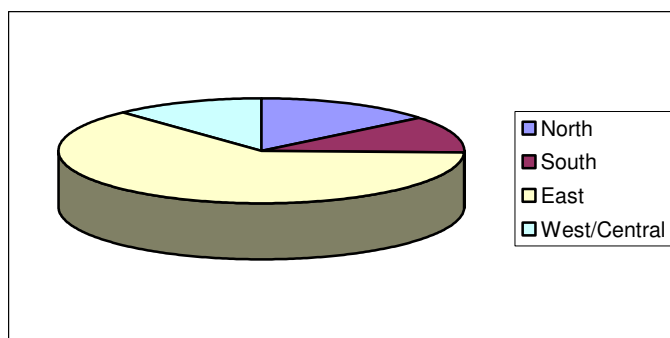
*Table 3: Parks Quality*

Quality	Value	Number of sites
High	High	4
High	Low	2
Low	High	3
Low	Low	3

#### 4.6 Amenity Green Space

The total area of Amenity Green Space in Cambridge is 87.6 hectares (see Table 2 below). This is very unevenly distributed with almost two-thirds in the East area (62.5%) and less than 12% in the South and West/Central areas. (11.4% and 11.9% respectively). Provision in the North area is only slightly higher than this at 14.2%.

*Graph 2: Amenity Green space Quantity*



	Area Ha
North	12.47
South	10.02
East	54.72
West/Central	10.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>87.61</b>

- 4.6.1 The 42 Amenity Greenspace sites were assessed for quality and value. There was considerable variation in both the quality and value scores with quality scores ranging from 33% to 78% and value scores from 33% to 89%. The median score for quality was 55% and for value 44%. (see table 4)

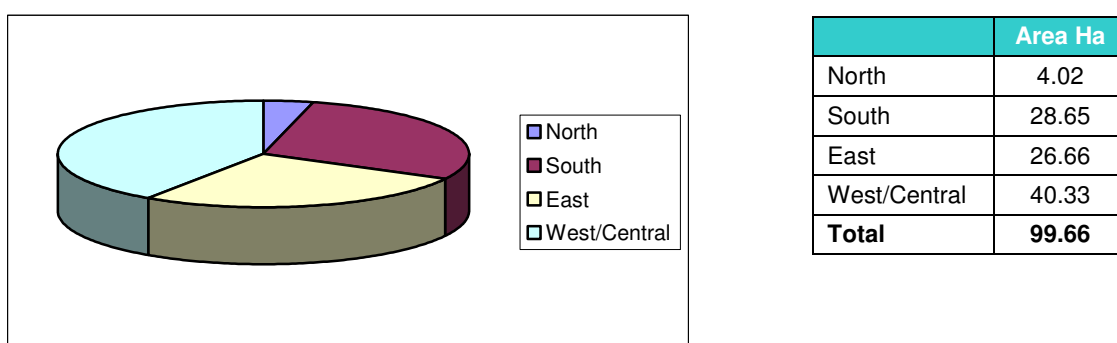
*Table 4: Amenity Greenspace Quality*

Quality	Value	Number of sites
High	High	17
High	Low	5
Low	High	6
Low	Low	14

## 4.7 Natural Greenspaces and Green Corridors

Cambridge contains 15 Natural Greenspace sites and 2 Green Corridors with a total area of 99.7 hectares (see graph 3 below). This is unevenly spread across the different areas with two thirds of provision in the West/ Central area (40.5%) and just over one quarter in the East and South areas (26.8% and 28.7% respectively). The North area is much less well provided for with only 4% of total provision. The three largest sites total 60.6 hectares or 61% of total provision. These are Stourbridge Common in East area, Coe Fen in South area and Sheeps Green in West / Central. Each of these sites is around 20 hectares.

*Graph 3: Natural Greenspaces and Green Corridors Quantity*



- 4.7.1 The 15 Natural Greenspace sites and 2 Green Corridors were assessed for quality and value. Quality scores ranged from 28% to 78 % and value scores from 33% to 89%. The median score for quality was 64% and for value 74%.

*Table 5: Natural Greenspaces and Green Corridors Quality*

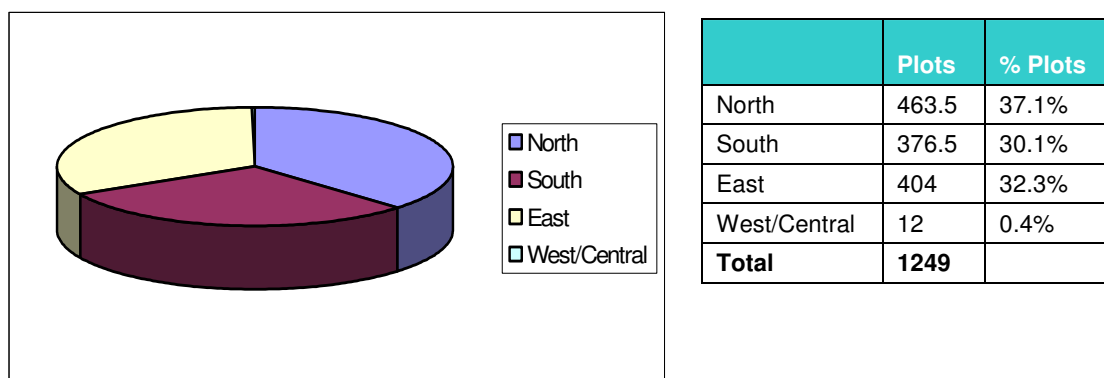
Quality	Value	Number of sites
High	High	6
High	Low	3
Low	High	3
Low	Low	5

## 4.8 Allotments

There are 22 Allotment sites in Cambridge owned by the Council and run either by the Council or leased to Allotment Societies who then let plots to individual tenants.

- 4.8.1 The total area of allotments managed by the City Council is 37.12 hectares which provides 1249 plots (see graph 4).

Graph 4 Allotments Quantity

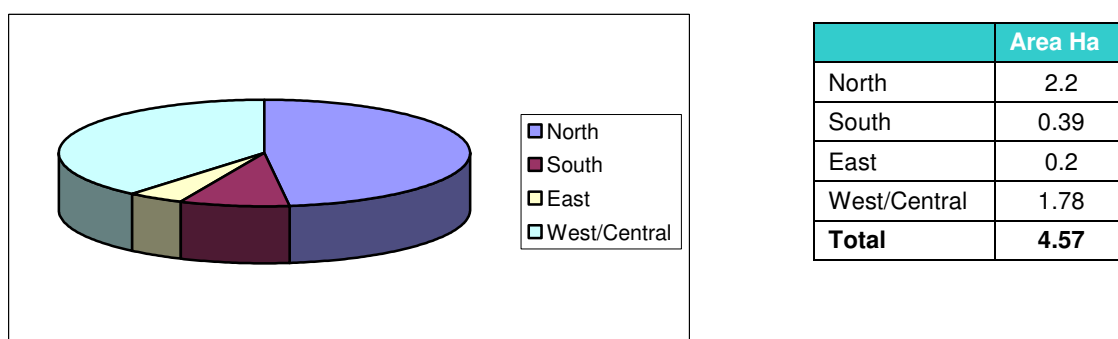


- 4.8.2 Allotment provision is fairly evenly spread across the North, South and East areas with approximately one third of all provision in each of these areas. There is only one site in the West/central area, which has only 5 plots.
- 4.8.3 Allotments were scored for quality and the resulting scores ranged from 45% to 75%. The median score was 63.3%. 13 sites achieved scores on the median or above it – these were high quality sites. 9 sites scored below this and were low quality sites.

#### 4.9 Closed Churchyards and Cemeteries

There are 16 closed churchyards and cemeteries in Cambridge with a total area of 4.6 hectares (see Table 10 below). 14 of these are churchyards and there are two cemeteries. Most of the churchyards are small with half being less than 0.2 hectares. The largest site by far is the Cemetery at Histon Road at 1.4 hectares, which is in the North area. In addition the North area has 2 churchyards and contains almost half the total area of cemeteries and churchyards (48%) 9 churchyards are in the West/ Central area which has 39% of the total area of cemeteries and churchyards. Provision in the South and East areas is much less with one churchyard in the South (Trumpington) (4.4% of total area) and two in the East.(8.5% of total area).

Graph 5: Cemeteries and Churchyards Quantity



- 4.9.1 16 cemeteries and churchyards were scored for quality and value. There was a wide variation in the quality and value scores from 35% to 83% for quality and from 44% to 78% for value. The median scores were 65% for quality and 59% for value.

Table 6: Closed Churchyards and Cemeteries Quality

Quality	Value	Number of sites
High	High	8
High	Low	0
Low	High	2
Low	Low	6

#### 4.10 Children's Play

The typology of play spaces is:

- **Type A: 'Door-step' spaces and facilities for play and informal recreation** - A small space, within sight of home, where children, especially young children can play within view of known adults.

Walking Distance 100m.

- **Type B: 'Local' spaces and facilities for play and informal recreation** - A larger space which can be reached safely by children beginning to travel independently and with friends, without accompanying adults and for adults with young children to walk to with ease.

Walking distance 400m

- **Type C: 'Neighbourhood' spaces and facilities for play and informal recreation** - A larger space or facility for informal recreation which children and young people, used to travelling longer distances independently, can get to safely and spend time in play and informal recreation with their peers.

Walking distance 1000m

4.10.1 The audit focused mainly on equipped play areas for younger children and provision for older children. The scope of the audit was confined to recording equipped children's play space catering for the needs of children up to approximately 12 years of age; and provision for teenagers including facilities such as skateboard parks, basketball courts and 'open access' Multi Use Games Areas (MUGA's).

4.10.2 There are currently 83 sites with children's play equipment in Cambridge. Some sites contain an equipped play area and youth provision; others contain an equipped play area only or youth provision only. The number of sites located in each area is shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Play area provision within each area

Area	No. of play areas	No of children aged birth to 15 (2006 Estimates)	Children 15 or under per Play Area	Proportion of total children aged birth to 15	Proportion of all play areas
East	30	5,450	182	29.3%	37.0%
North	30	6,000	200	32.2%	37.0%
South	14	4,210	301	22.6%	17.3%
West/Central	7	2,960	423	15.9%	8.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>18,620</b>	<b>230</b>		

4.10.3 The quantity of provision is often expressed in terms of provision per 1000 population and on this basis, provision is highest in the North area with 0.64 hectares per 1000 population and the East area with 0.48 hectares per 1000 population. This contrasts with the lower levels of provision the the South area (0.20 hectares per 1000 population) and the West/Central area (0.26 hectares



per 1000 population). Overall provision in Cambridge is 0.42 hectares per 1000 population. This is higher than the Open Space Standard of 0.3 hectares per 1,000 people.

4.10.4 In term of the different types of spaces table 8 provides details of the distribution across the four areas.

*Table 8: Types of Play Space in the areas*

Area	Type A	Type B	Type C	Total
East	13	10	7	30
North	16	9	5	30
South	4	6	4	14
West/Central	1	3	3	7
Total	34	38	19	81

#### 4.10.5 Quality of Children's Play Areas

Quality was assessed using the Quality Assessment Tool currently being implemented by Play England, The assessment focuses on three major aspects to children's outdoor play: the location of play areas, the play value and care and maintenance. It also assesses the three different types of play spaces and facilities.

4.10.6 Table 9 below shows the rankings in terms of location, play value, care and maintenance and overall for each area. Those spaces that scored above the median are ranked as high and those below are ranked as low.

*Table 9: Ranking of quality scores in each area*

Area	Ranking	Location	Play Value	Care & Maintenance
East	High	18	16	13
	Low	12	14	17
North	High	16	13	13
	Low	15	18	18
South	High	13	11	9
	Low	1	3	5
West/Central	High	6	4	6
	Low	1	3	1
Total	High	53	44	41
	Low	29	38	41

## 4.11 Provision for Teenagers

### 4.11.1 Skateboard Facilities

There are 6 skateboard facilities. Skateboard facilities come in a variety of forms and sizes. They range from a single ramp to larger structures

4.11.2 Skateboarding facilities are provided on green spaces so that all young people are within a reasonable distance of a facility (15minute walk). In addition to Jesus Green and Donkey Common, facilities at Coleridge and Kings Hedges Recreation Grounds were approved to compliment the existing

ramps at Chesterton, St Albans and Cherry Hinton Recreation Grounds and Coldhams Lane Play Area.

#### 4.12 **Future Actions for Council**

Analysis of supply has identified the need for the Council to:-

1. Considers ways to improve the quality, value and range of green spaces in Cambridge;
2. Uses quality and value data as drivers to develop policy for future investment and priority;
3. Contributes towards an updated open space and recreation strategy for the City Council to include standards green space;
4. Uses a systematic approach to identifying assets in need of investment.

## 5 Understanding use

This section will explain how people use green space, the things that are important to ensure the assets are used, and guide green space managers to set service delivery priority to improve satisfaction, and ensure services are most effective.

- 5.1 A number of consultation exercises have been undertaken which provide a clear overview of local needs and demand for different types of open spaces in Council ownership/management. This provides a good evidence base for understanding the needs of local people. Response rates to all the consultation exercises cited have been high confirming that the findings provide a robust basis for developing this strategy. This section:

- Considers existing survey information
- Reviews existing consultation information and identifies existing consultative mechanisms.

### 5.2 Patterns of use in Cambridge parks

This analysis examines patterns of use reported in three surveys of Cambridge park users in 2002, 2004 and 2007. In each of these three surveys (two by post, one by phone with a limited sample size), users of parks were asked questions to explore aspects of the way they use parks. The answers are not necessarily comparable in pure statistical terms because of different methodologies, and slightly different wordings, but this analysis nevertheless paints a picture of patterns of use and changes in patterns of use over the past five years.

### 5.3 The nearest Park/the Park most visited

In 2004<sup>22</sup>, residents were asked about their nearest park; in 2007<sup>23</sup>, about the park they most visited. The 2002<sup>24</sup> results show around a quarter (28%) having a park within a short walk of under 200m, and a fifth (20%) having to travel twice that far, so that in all around half of the people surveyed had a park within a ten-minute journey time. In 2007, two thirds of people said they travel for 10 minutes or less to get to their preferred park, which may indicate two things – an increased level of provision (unlikely, and certainly not on a scale to change this result so much) or a shortened journey time by virtue of travelling more by car or by cycle to get to the park.

There is also increased use of cycling to consider, and the combination of a cycle trip with a park visit; even a “just passing through” visit, is not unusual. Parks offer less threatening cycle routes than use of main roads and cyclists will often choose a route through a park. Levels of cycling in the city are high and may well be rising and this could impact on park visit levels.

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<sup>22</sup> Parks and Open Spaces – “Have they improved” RBA May 2004

<sup>23</sup> Parks Survey 2007 – What local people think of the City’s parks and open spaces Phil Back Associates 2007

<sup>24</sup> Parks and Open Spaces – Your Views Count” RBA May & November 2002

#### **5.4 Take up**

In 2002, three in five people (61%) used local parks, and this was again the case in 2004 (62%). A different question in 2007 asked about use of all parks – not just the one local to them - and returned a result of 87%, suggesting that a large proportion of people use parks that are not their local one.

#### **5.5 Time of visit**

Parks are used at all times, weekday and weekend, morning and evening. The most popular times throughout the three surveys have been weekend afternoons, and weekday afternoons; usage in the evenings has always been the lowest, and weekend evening use is now very low – and apparently much lower than it was in 2002 and 2004. (The question is asked differently so direct comparison is not possible). Residents asked about this have cited issues such as lighting and safety fears for not using parks in the evenings; on some sites in suburban areas (Fison Road and Coleridge Recreation Grounds for instance), antisocial behaviour (or the perception of anti social behaviour) has been a major deterrent. This is seen to have worsened in recent years.

#### **5.6 Frequency of visit**

Frequency of visiting parks seems to be reducing, a result which is consistent with not walking to the local park but making a special trip in the car. In 2002, a third of people (34%) visited three or more times a week; in 2007, that figure had fallen to below 25%. In contrast, the proportions visiting two or three times a month rose from 14% in 2002 to 22% in 2007, suggesting that people still visit parks but do so less often than they used to.

#### **5.7 Time spent on parks and open spaces**

In 2002, three quarters (73%) of people spent less than an hour on a typical visit. In 2004, this figure fell to around 58%, indicating that people were tending to spend longer on a park visit (this was a small sample). In 2007, the proportion spending less than an hour was 64%, but the pattern was different from 2002, with fewer people spending less than half an hour and more people spending up to an hour on a visit. This is consistent with the more organised park trip and the increased use of the larger park sites that would tend to justify a longer visit and also the provision of more things to do during that visit.

- 5.7.1 Based on the 2002 results, it is calculated that people were spending on average 52 minutes on a park visit. In 2004 this rose to 61 minutes, and in 2007 it remained at 61 minutes. Looking beneath the surface of these figures, the time spent on parks and open spaces in 2002 was most influenced by a large number of fairly short visits of less than 30 minutes duration, whilst by 2007 the pattern had shifted towards a longer stay of up to an hour. It remains the case throughout the studies that relatively few people prolong their stay beyond an hour, and the reasons for this are usually connected to unattractive or nonexistent toilet facilities and the absence of catering or adequate seating.

#### **5.8 Geographical patterns**

No geographical analysis was undertaken in 2002 or 2004, although some work was done on geographical key priorities as part of the Section 106<sup>25</sup> analysis.

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<sup>25</sup> Review of Open Space and Recreation Section 106 Schedule – RBA September 2006

- 5.8.1 The 2007 study looked at area breakdowns and found that: -
- Southern area residents visit parks less often;
  - Northern area residents make shorter visits;
  - Southern and northern area residents were tending to make longer journeys (perhaps indicating that local parks are less satisfactory in these areas);
  - Southern area residents were more likely to visit on weekday afternoons;
  - Northern area residents very rarely visit parks on weekend evenings.
- 5.8.2 The data suggests a change of patterns of use, away from the casual visit to the local park and towards a more planned visit to a larger site with more on offer. This is not a complete change, but rather an observed tendency, which results in slightly longer journey times, more traffic (car and cycle) related to parks, and slightly longer time spent in parks and open spaces – although even the primary parks in the city do not yet support a long stay. The larger sites are thus gaining visitors at the expense of local parks.
- 5.8.3 This may indicate a preference for larger, more varied sites, or may indicate boredom with what the local sites have to offer. Certainly, several local parks are in a relatively poor state and in need of upgrading, or present social and behavioural problems that discourage visitors. Changing this perception is a process which is now under way and which may change results again when the next survey is undertaken.
- 5.8.4 In 2002 and 2004, data was analysed to produce a priorities list that was used to contribute the Section 106 scoring framework. At that time the key priorities were:
- Safety
  - Sports facilities
  - Toilets
  - Cycle security
  - Lighting
- And less important priorities were:
- Play spaces for children
  - Teenage facilities
  - Lighting and seating were localised issues in the east and north respectively.
- 5.8.5 Analysis in 2007 highlighted concerns and priorities on:-
- Cleanliness;
  - Dog mess;
  - Safety;
  - Bin provision;
  - All of which are seen as high importance but current service performance in these areas is highlighted as moderate.
- 5.8.6 There are localised less prominent concerns around: -
- Accessibility;
  - Lighting;
  - Pathways;
  - And localised less prominent concerns over;
  - Play space (east, north and south only);

- Sports space (east north and south only).

5.8.7 The response rate to the 2007 survey also provided evidence of an significant desire to engage with the service which suggests that better 'engagement' is an emerging priority for both park users and residents.

## 5.9 **Future actions for the Council**

Analysis of Use has identified the need for the Council to: -

5. consider improvements in maintenance of middle order and neighbourhood green space to encourage use;
6. explore further the views of BME residents who wish to use green spaces; also consider a range of methods of engagement and communication that could be offered;
7. engage with local people, Friends groups and stakeholders to encourage feedback, identify aspirations and opportunities for involvement;

## 6. Current Service Delivery

This section details how the green space asset is currently managed, it considers engagement and how to encouraging people to be actively involved in their neighbourhood green space.

### 6.1 Cambridge City Council manages green spaces through a number of departments in the following way:-

- **Community Services** (via Active Communities) are responsible for coordinating strategic direction and development of the service; also the co-ordination of overall performance through an agreed performance management framework (detailed below) with City Services. Other sections such as Community Development and Arts & Entertainments provide and contribute to programmes of activities on open spaces.
- **Environment and Planning** provide a number of associated specialist service areas such as Planning Policy and Development Control, Arboriculture, Conservation and Landscape Design. These services liaise closely with Active Communities across a range of functions.
- **City Services** provide grounds maintenance operations with budgets devolved from Community Services and other departments. This work is generally carried out through the Streetscene Section and is jointly monitored and evaluated with departments using the performance management framework.

### 6.2 The following assets are managed across departments within the Council:-

- Closed Churchyards are managed by Active Communities under a statutory duty to maintain the grounds 'in good and decent order' after closure. Technical Services manage any internments after closure.
- Natural Green Space (Nature Reserves) and Trees are assets strategically managed by Active Communities, with specialist advice and day to day management by the Conservation and Design team in the Planning Department.

### 6.3 Active Communities and Street Scene work within a Performance Management Framework, which was approved in May 2008 and is driven by the following four requirements:-

- The need to ensure that green spaces are provided and maintained to standards which residents are satisfied with and that meet expectations;
- That resources allocated to green spaces can be shown to
  - Be efficient and
  - Provide value for money
- The need to have a partnership approach to delivering standards, satisfaction and improvement that covers citywide and local perspectives;
- The need to have a joined up approach to an asset management, improvement and investment programme of green spaces.

### 6.4 Friends and Stakeholder Groups

The Council's Cultural Framework recognises the importance and value of the voluntary and community sector and its contribution to creating, enhancing

and managing local green space. The Council seeks to improve the ways in which it actively provides information, consults, enable local decision-making, contributes to investment and improvement and encourage community ownership through Friends and residents' groups.

#### **6.5 Improve Your Neighbourhood**

The Council offers individuals and groups the opportunity to identify priorities and projects for improvements. These are collated, assessed and considered for democratic approval alongside the Council's wider asset management plans.

#### **6.5 Events**

The Council actively supports the use of parks and open space, encouraging people to think about how they might use their space. An Events Framework is being developed which will identify how parks can offer platforms for a variety of cultural activity in a way that is sustainable and minimises negative impact on the sites and local residents.

#### **6.6 Future actions for the Council**

Analysis of current service delivery has identified the need for the Council to: -

8. develop the approach to monitoring, evaluation and management of grounds maintenance that involves and responds to the needs of local people;
9. provide opportunities for local people to be involved in the management of the neighbourhood green space;
10. utilise the emerging events framework to balance the increased use of green space for events against realistic capacity and impact;
11. develop partnerships based on emerging priorities from this strategy.



## 7. Resources

7.1 It has been estimated that the nation spends almost £700 million on urban green space each year. A report entitled *Enhancing Urban Green Space*<sup>26</sup> identifies three main risks to value for money from this expenditure.

7.1.1 These are as follows: -

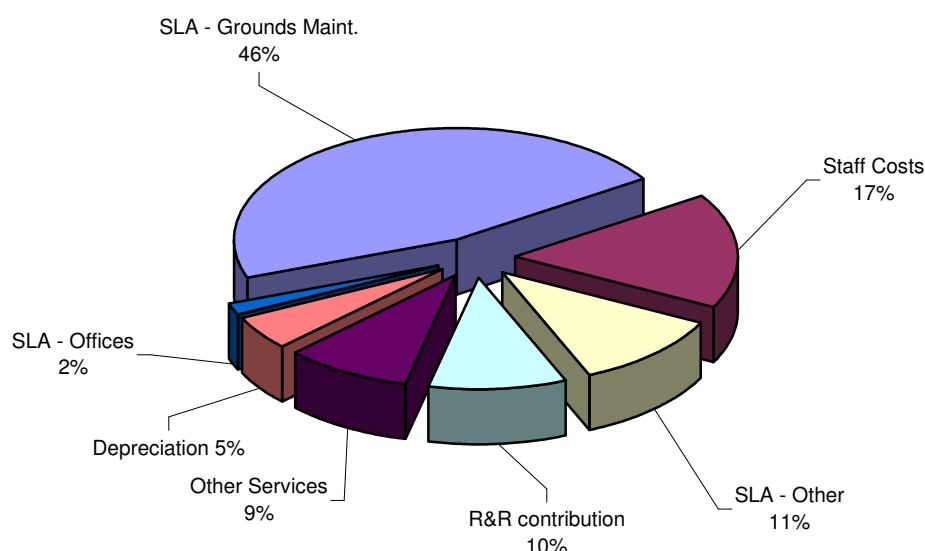
- Resources need to be targeted better;
  - Without a strategic approach there is a danger that resources will be targeted badly
- More modern and innovative procurement approaches are needed;
  - The limited information on unit costs suggests some local authorities may spend five times as much as others maintaining their green space and there is scope for improved efficiency.
- Capacity and skills need strengthening;

7.2 Cambridge City Council allocates both Revenue and Capital contributions to the management of green spaces.

7.3 The Revenue budget allocated to the Active Communities service<sup>27</sup> for 2009/10 is as follows:

Service Area	Expenditure	Income	Net Budget
Green Spaces	2,018,370	313,330	1,705,040

Green Spaces - Expenditure Budget 2009/10



7.4 Whilst the Active Communities service outcomes are broadly split into the three areas above, there is a high element of cross-cutting work undertaken in

<sup>26</sup> National Audit Office (2006) *Enhancing urban green space*. The Stationery Office: London.

<sup>27</sup> Cambridge City Council Budget Book 2009/10

a small, yet multi-disciplined team. Skills are shared to ensure cost effective delivery of the service portfolio.

In addition to the core tasks of management of green space, the revenue budget for green spaces includes:

- management of Allotments;
- management of Closed Churchyards;
- maintenance of City Traffic Islands;
- management of Refreshment Kiosks;
- management of Riverbanks, including residential moorings;
- management of Play areas;
- management of grazing;
- management of external event provision;
- management of green space related buildings;
- management of a portfolio of let properties
- input into planning and growth work as required

7.5 The single largest cost for the Green Space team is that of Grounds Maintenance where some £835,000 is expended annually to include *inter alia* grass cutting, shrub bed maintenance, litter collection, play area inspections and pavilion cleaning.

7.6 Capital schemes are funded from the following sources:

- Repairs & renewals funds to maintain the current asset base;
- Section 106 funds to enhance the capital portfolio;
- Grant aid and lottery funds, where appropriate and successful;
- The City Council's central reserves.

7.7 At 30 September 2009, the Active Communities teams were working on 20 capital projects totaling some £2.1m<sup>28</sup>. The services are currently working on the development of schemes of an equivalent value for delivery over the next 3 years.

## 7.8 Future actions for Council

Analysis of Resources has identified the need for the Council to: -

12. link investment to assets of greatest priority and need and considers opportunities for external investment where the need for improvement has been identified;
13. benchmark and further understand unit costs;
14. consider the training and skills needed for the asset.

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<sup>28</sup> Cambridge City Council Medium Term Strategy 2009/10 to 2013/14

## **8. Emerging priorities**

This section sets out the priorities that have emerged from the assessment of the quality, value and use of green spaces. These priorities are set in the context of the cultural framework objectives.

### **8.1 Improve safety, access, facilities and usage**

Consultation and research has highlighted a perception amongst residents that some open spaces, particularly smaller spaces, do not feel safe and this has been a deterrent to people using these sites. Residents responding to consultation exercises have cited lack of lighting and anti social behaviour as key reasons for not using green spaces. Consultation of earlier drafts of this strategy has resulted in requests for byelaws to be considered.

- 8.1.1 Analysis of supply has identified the need for a systematic approach to identifying asset in need of investment. Data is now available to help develop policy on investment and priority and these should consider improvements to quality, value and accessibility of green spaces.

### **8.2 Improve community ownership of the parks and their surroundings**

The Council should develop site management plans to help ensure the effective use of resources and activities. This will help to ensure that expectations of local people and the aspirations of the strategy can be achieved.

- 8.2.1 Analysis of use has highlighted the need for the Council to work more closely with Friends and other community groups to maintain a regular dialogue with users. Groups can be asked to assist in a variety of ways, for example in setting standards and monitoring performance. Surveys, questionnaires, focus groups and e-focus groups can also be used to measure user satisfaction and establish what is most important to the user and the required standards of service. Results of the Citizens Survey by MRUK highlighted the need to better communicate with BME groups.

### **8.3 Promote biodiversity and apply sustainable practices and management**

This strategy details the contribution that green spaces that make to help manage the effects of climate change, contribute to sustainable development and improve the local environment.

- 8.3.1 The network of green spaces have an important role in contributing to the sustainability of communities, for example in managing flood risk and urban drainage, and providing habitat for wildlife.
- 8.3.2 Tree maintenance and new tree planting need to both maintain and enhance the character of the open spaces, and anticipate the potential impacts of climate change. Managed tree maintenance and planting on the parks will to deliver the Arboriculture Strategy, and could set exemplars for other landowners.

#### 8.4 **Improve management and maintenance**

The quality of people's experience of public spaces has a major impact on their quality of life, affecting their sense of well being and defining how they feel about the places where they live. It is important that the Council plans and manages service delivery to meet the needs and expectations of users.

##### 8.4.1 The improvements that people want to see in green spaces are generally related to:

- Good design and management;
- Focused on meeting peoples needs, overcoming barriers to use;
- Inclusion and engagement;
- Providing quality and valued green space;
- And varied experience for the whole range of different groups in the community;
- Investments linked to priority and need.

#### 8.5 **Improve strategic links relating to green space and the growth of the City;**

The recent publication *The green information gap: mapping the nation's green spaces* by CABI Space has highlighted there is a major gap in the national information about England's urban green spaces: nobody knows how many there are, where they are, who owns them or what they are like, this makes it difficult to co-ordinate provision, respond to changing social needs or plan for a changing climate. This strategy is a tool to help the Council to respond to this need.

##### 8.5.1 Analysis of National, Regional and Local influences has given clarity on the complexities of managing green space assets. This strategy has identified priorities and demonstrated how important green infrastructure is to existing and new communities.

##### 8.5.2 There are many opportunities available to the Council to develop partnerships to deliver priorities of this strategy and those of others.

#### 8.6 **Improve provision for children and teenagers**

Having more high quality and safe places to play is a priority for both children and parents in Cambridge. The strategy has detailed there is a deficiency in challenging activities for older young children and teenagers. This strategy can help achieve the outcomes of the Council's adopted Charter for Play, the Governments Play Strategy and the County Councils The Big Plan 2.

##### 8.6.1 Analysis of play sites has highlighted priorities relating to quality and value of the play areas delivered by the City Council.

#### 8.7 **Improving Health**

The City's parks and open spaces have an important contribution to both formal and informal sports provision. Recent research published in *The Lancet*<sup>29</sup> identifies that living in a green area can lengthen life, improve health

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<sup>29</sup> Effect of exposure to natural environment on health inequalities: an observational population study; Mitchell & Popham (2008) [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(08\)61689-X/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(08)61689-X/fulltext)

and well-being and that exercise in green spaces could have greater psychological and physiological benefits than exercise elsewhere.

- 8.7.1 The strategy has identified a need to ensure that green space provide opportunities for local people to building social networks, relax and have quiet time, have access to nature and have access to grow healthy food in a local allotment.
- 8.7.2 'Be Active, Be Healthy - a plan for getting the nation moving'<sup>30</sup> was launched by the Government in February 2009 and establishes a new framework for the delivery of physical activity aligned with sport for the period leading up to the London 2012 Olympic Games and beyond.. The Council will use the Local Improving Health Plan<sup>31</sup> to guide partnership approaches to increase opportunity for improvement to health and well being by the use of green spaces.
- 8.8 Improve access to, and maintain the heritage of Cambridge parks**  
Concerns have been expressed about making unnecessary changes to parks. Maintenance of their historic character requires special care, in terms of physical maintenance, new interventions and managed renewal, e.g. of tree planting. There is concern that intervention would affect the fabric and essence of green spaces with a resulting loss of character and identity.
- 8.8.1 This approach contrasts with the views of those living outside the central area where many open spaces lack features of interest and are less valued by local people. There is therefore a tension between the need to conserve the historic open spaces in the city centre and the need to improve and enhance spaces in the residential suburban neighbourhoods.
- 8.8.2 The analysis of supply has highlighted the need to understand what is significant about the green space, its features, and how proposals for improvement can build on and enhance that significance.
- 8.9 Ensure co-ordination of the management of green spaces across the Council;**  
It is important to ensure that relevant partnerships are strengthened in order to achieve the priorities of this strategy. There may be opportunities to identify new partnerships through involving partners in this strategy, e.g. strategic service delivery partnerships, county sports partnerships, health partnerships, education, police and businesses, community organisations
- 8.10 Maximise resources, and secure external funding**  
It is vital to the success of this strategy that resources are appropriately allocated. A clear understanding of unit cost and asset cost need is required to support the delivery of the current asset and those of forecast future assets as a consequence of growth of the City. New skills will be needed for landscape features on growth sites such as sustainable drainage and nature areas. Further improvements to existing assets as a consequence of growth, must continue to be funded from existing combinations of repairs and renewals, S106 contributions, grant funding and central reserves.

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<sup>30</sup> 'Be Active, Be Healthy: A Plan for getting the Nation Moving'; Department of Health (2009)

<sup>31</sup> Cambridge City Improving Health Plan; Improving Health Partnership (2008)

## 8.11 Actions for the Council

Analysis of the emerging priorities has identified the additional need for the Council to: -

15. consider proactive ways to 'design out' crime and tackle anti social behaviour;
16. consider and consult on the introduction and updating of bye laws where this is appropriate;
17. develop conservation, habitat and management plans for green spaces with Friends Groups and stakeholders;
18. review methods of working to understand their environmental impact;
19. continue to develop and adapt the Performance Management Framework;
20. develop the Parks and Open Space Programme Group;
21. develop an assessment process and toolkit to identify requirements for play that offers systematic engagement with children and young people;
22. increase opportunity for improvement to health and well being by the use of green spaces;
23. develop more integrated internal working relationships to address environmental work;
24. develop techniques to ascertain the extent to which cost effectiveness and best value are achieved.

## 9. Actions linked to Priorities

The following table details how the actions 1 to 24 from the strategy are outcomes of emerging priorities

Actions	Emerging Priority
1. Consider ways to improve the quality, value and range green space in Cambridge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve safety, access, facilities and usage</li> <li>• Improve management and maintenance</li> <li>• Provision for children and teenagers</li> </ul>
2. Use quality and value data as drivers to develop policy for future strategic investment and priority.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve safety, access, facilities and usage</li> <li>• Improve management and maintenance</li> <li>• Improve strategic links to green space and the growth of the city</li> <li>• Provision for children and teenagers</li> <li>• Maximise resources, and secure external funding where possible</li> </ul>
3. Contribute towards an updated Open Space and Recreation Strategy for the City Council to include standards for green space.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve strategic links to green space and the growth of the city</li> <li>• Improve management and maintenance</li> <li>• Provision for children and teenagers</li> </ul>
4. Use a systematic approach to identifying assets for investment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve safety, access, facilities and usage</li> <li>• Promote biodiversity and apply sustainable practices and management</li> <li>• Improve management and maintenance</li> <li>• Improve strategic links to green space and the growth of the city</li> <li>• Provision for children and teenagers</li> <li>• Maximise resources, and secure external funding where possible</li> </ul>
5. Consider improvements in maintenance of middle order and neighbourhood green space to encourage use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve safety, access, facilities and usage</li> <li>• Improve community ownership of the parks and their surroundings</li> <li>• Promote biodiversity and apply sustainable practices and management</li> <li>• Improve management and maintenance</li> <li>• Provision for children and teenagers</li> </ul>
6. Explore further the views of BME residents who wish to use green spaces; also consider a range of methods of engagement and communication that could be offered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve safety, access, facilities and usage</li> <li>• Improve community ownership of the parks and their surroundings</li> </ul>
7. Engage with local people, Friends groups and stakeholders to encourage feedback, identify aspirations and opportunities for involvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve safety, access, facilities and usage</li> <li>• Improve community ownership of the parks and their surroundings</li> <li>• Improve management and maintenance</li> <li>• Provision for children and teenagers</li> </ul>
8. Develop the approach to monitoring, evaluation and management of grounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve community ownership of the parks and their surroundings</li> </ul>

Actions	Emerging Priority
maintenance that involves and responds to the needs of local people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Improve management and maintenance</b></li> </ul>
9. Provide opportunities for local people to be involved in the management of the neighbourhood green space.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Improve community ownership of the parks and their surroundings</b></li> <li>• <b>Promote biodiversity and apply sustainable practices and management</b></li> <li>• <b>Improve management and maintenance</b></li> <li>• <b>Provision for children and teenagers</b></li> </ul>
10. Utilise the emerging events framework to balance the increased use of green space for events against realistic capacity and impact.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Improve safety, access, facilities and usage</b></li> <li>• <b>Promote biodiversity and apply sustainable practices and management</b></li> <li>• <b>Provision for children and teenagers</b></li> </ul>
11. Develop partnerships based on emerging outcomes and priorities from this strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Promote biodiversity and apply sustainable practices and management</b></li> <li>• <b>Improve strategic links to green space and the growth of the city</b></li> <li>• <b>Improving health</b></li> <li>• <b>Ensure co-ordination of the management of green spaces across the Council</b></li> </ul>
12. Link investment to assets of greatest priority and need.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Maximise resources and secure external funding</b></li> <li>• <b>Improve strategic links to green space and the growth of the city</b></li> <li>• <b>Improve provision for children and teenagers</b></li> <li>• <b>Improve access to, and maintaining the heritage of Cambridge parks</b></li> <li>• <b>Maximise resources, and secure external funding where possible</b></li> </ul>
13. Benchmark and further understand unit costs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Improve management and maintenance</b></li> <li>• <b>Ensure co-ordination of the management of green spaces across the Council</b></li> <li>• <b>Maximise resources, and secure external funding where possible</b></li> </ul>
14. Considers the training and skills needed for the asset.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Improve management and maintenance</b></li> <li>• <b>Ensure co-ordination of the management of green spaces across the Council</b></li> <li>• <b>Maximise resources, and secure external funding where possible</b></li> </ul>
15. Consider proactive ways to 'design out' crime and tackle antisocial behaviour.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Improve safety, access, facilities and usage</b></li> <li>• <b>Improve management and maintenance</b></li> </ul>
16. Considers and consult on the introduction and updating of byelaws where this is appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Improve safety, access, facilities and usage</b></li> <li>• <b>Improve management and maintenance</b></li> </ul>
17. Develop conservation, habitat and management plans for green spaces Friends Groups and stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Improve community ownership of the parks and their surroundings</b></li> <li>• <b>Promote biodiversity and apply sustainable practices and management</b></li> <li>• <b>Improve management and maintenance</b></li> <li>• <b>Improve access to, and maintain the</b></li> </ul>



Actions	Emerging Priority
	<b>heritage of Cambridge Parks</b>
18. Review methods of working to understand their environmental impact.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Promote biodiversity and apply sustainable practices and management</b></li> <li>• <b>Improve access to, and maintaining the heritage of Cambridge parks</b></li> <li>• <b>Maximise resources, and secure external funding where possible</b></li> </ul>
19. Continue to develop and adapt the Performance Management Framework.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Improve safety, access, facilities and usage</b></li> <li>• <b>Improve community ownership of the parks and their surroundings</b></li> <li>• <b>Improve management and maintenance</b></li> </ul>
20. Develop the Parks and Open Space Programme Group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Improve management and maintenance</b></li> <li>• <b>Improve strategic links relating to green space and the growth of the City</b></li> <li>• <b>Improve access to, and maintaining the heritage of Cambridge parks</b></li> <li>• <b>Ensure co-ordination of the management of green spaces across the Council</b></li> </ul>
21. Develop an assessment process and toolkit to identify requirements for play that offers systematic engagement with children and young people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Improve community ownership of the parks and their surroundings</b></li> <li>• <b>Improve provision for children and teenagers</b></li> </ul>
22. Increase opportunity for improvement to health and well being by the use green space.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Improving Health</b></li> </ul>
23. Develop more integrated internal working relationships to address environmental work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Promote biodiversity and apply sustainable practices and management</b></li> <li>• <b>Ensure co-ordination of the management of green spaces across the Council;</b></li> <li>• <b>Improve access to, and maintaining the heritage of Cambridge parks</b></li> <li>• <b>Ensure co-ordination of the management of green spaces across the Council</b></li> </ul>
24. Develop techniques to ascertain the extent to which cost effectiveness and best value are achieved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Improve management and maintenance</b></li> <li>• <b>Ensure co-ordination of the management of green spaces across the Council</b></li> <li>• <b>Maximise resources, and secure external funding where possible</b></li> </ul>

## 10 Cambridge Parks – Managing the City’s Asset, Action Plan 2010-2014

CO 1: Existing and future investment is targeted on addressing local need			
<b>Principle 1 – Involve local people in cultural and community planning</b> <b>Outcomes - Improve community ownership of the parks and their surroundings; Provision for children and teenagers.</b>			
Actions	Completion date	Outcome & Targets	Risk factors; Lead
6. Explore further the views of BME residents who wish to use green space; also consider a range of methods of engagement and communication that could be offered.			
7. Engage with local people, Friends groups and stakeholders to encourage feedback, identify aspirations and opportunities for involvement.			
8. Develop the approach to the monitoring, evaluation and management of grounds maintenance that involves and responds to the needs of local people.			
9. Provide opportunities for local people to be involved in the management of the neighbourhood green space.			
21. Develop an assessment process and toolkit to identify requirements for play that offers systematic engagement with children and young people.			

CO 1: Existing and future investment is targeted on addressing local need			
<b>Principle 2 – Undertake a systematic review of revenue resources and potential sources of investment</b> <b>Outcome – Maximise resources and secure external funding where possible</b>			
Actions	Completion date	Outcome & Targets	Risk factors; Lead
2. Use quality and value data as drivers to develop policy for future strategic investment.			
12. Link investment to assets of greatest priority and need.			
13. Benchmark and further understand unit costs.			
24. Develop techniques to ascertain the extent to which cost effectiveness and best value are achieved.			

CO 2: Inequalities of provision and access are addressed			
<b>Principle 3 – Ensure the cultural offer in the City provides for the whole community including local neighbourhoods</b> <b>Outcomes – Ensure co-ordination of the management of green spaces across the Council; Improve management and maintenance</b>			
Actions	Completion date	Outcome & Targets	Risk factors; Lead
1. Consider ways to improve the quality, value and range of green spaces in Cambridge.			
4. Use a systematic approach to identifying areas for investment.			
5. Consider improvements in maintenance of middle order and neighbourhood green spaces to encourage use.			
14. Consider the training and skills needed for the asset			
19. Continue to develop and adapt the Performance Management Framework.			

CO 2: Inequalities of provision and access are addressed			
<b>Principle 4 – Contribute tangible benefits and improvements in terms of community health and well being</b> <b>Outcome – Improving health</b>			
Actions	Completion date	Outcome & Targets	Risk factors; Lead
22. increase opportunity for improvements to health and well being by use of parks and open spaces.			

CO 3: Sub regional and cross boundary issues are considered and addressed			
<b>Principle 5 – ensure the city's green space offer provides a sustainable approach on the growth agenda and considers how partnerships for cultural activity can assist in addressing cross boundary issues</b> <b>Outcome – Improve strategic links relating too green space and the growth of the City</b>			
Actions	Completion date	Outcome & Targets	Risk factors; Lead
3. Contribute towards an updated Open Space and recreation Strategy for the Council to include standards for green space.			
11. Develop partnerships based on emerging outcomes and priorities from this strategy.			
20. Develop the Parks and Open Space Programme Group.			

CO 4: Partnership working is fostered to achieve shared outcomes			
Principle 6 - Ensure the Councils cultural activity is responsive to the Council's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan Outcome – Promote biodiversity and apply sustainable practices and management			
Actions	Completion date	Outcome & Targets	Risk factors; Lead
18. Review methods of working to understand their environmental impact.			
23. Develop more integrated internal working relationships to address environmental work.			

CO 4: Partnership working is fostered to achieve shared outcomes			
Principle 7 – Support the City's mixed economy to provide opportunities for community participation and cultural activity Outcome – Improve access to the heritage of Cambridge Parks			
Actions	Completion date	Outcome & Targets	Risk factors; Lead
17. Develop conservation, habitat and management plans for green spaces in conjunction with Friends groups and stakeholders.			

CO 4: Partnership working is fostered to achieve shared outcomes			
Principle 8 – Maximise opportunities for partnership working Outcome - Improve safety, access, facilities and usage			
Actions	Completion date	Outcome & Targets	Risk factors; Lead
10. Utilise the emerging events framework to balance the increased use of parks and open spaces for events against realistic capacity and impact			
15. Consider proactive ways to 'design out' crime and tackle antisocial behaviour.			
16. Consider and consult on the introduction and updating of byelaws where this is appropriate.			