ethos
Environmental Planning

Cheshire West and Chester Parks and Greenspaces Strategy

Cheshire West and Chester

TIER 1
(DRAFT V1 SEPTEMBER 2020)

Cheshire West and Chester Parks and Greenspaces Strategy

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Glossary of Terms

Term		Meaning
ANGSt		Accessible Natural Green Space Standard
BAME		Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
BNG		Biodiversity Net Gain
CABE		Commission Architecture and the Built Environment
CIL		Community Infrastructure Levy
CP		Country Park
CWAC		Cheshire West and Chester
FIT		Fields In Trust (originally known as the 'National Playing Fields Association')
GI		Green Infrastructure
GIS		Geographic Information Systems
IMD		Index of Multiple Deprivation
JSNA		Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
LEPs		Local Enterprise Partnerships
LSOA		Lower-layer Super Output Area
MUGA		Multi Use Games Area
MSOA		Middle-layer Super Output Area
NPPF		National Planning Policy Framework
PPS		Playing Pitch Strategy
RDA		Regional Development Agencies
SuDs		Sustainable Drainage System

1.0   INTRODUCTION – AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICY

1.1   Overview

This Parks and Greenspaces Strategy has been drafted by Ethos Environmental Planning in collaboration with Chester West and Chester (CWAC) Borough Council. The strategy has been split into two "tiers" of documents:

Tier 1 - this is a borough-wide strategy that provides an overarching document for the strategic provision of parks and greenspace.

Tier 2 – four locality frameworks supplying detailed analysis of parks and greenspaces at a locality level.

1.2   Scope of strategy, aims and objectives

This strategy focusses on priority parks and greenspaces owned by Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council. It will inform the shape and direction of the priorities and development of parks and greenspace from 2020 till 2030.

The parks and greenspaces strategy will complement relevant national strategies whilst at the same time incorporating the needs and aspirations of local people.

The scope of the strategy includes priority accessible natural green spaces, amenity green space and parks and recreations grounds of owned by Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council. These priority sites were agreed with the project team at Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council. Third party land will also be considered when looking at the existing levels of provision.

Despite only looking in detail at the priority sites, the strategy will look at how partnerships can enhance parks and greenspaces overall.

Aims

The aims of the strategy are:

- To support the provision of high-quality parks and greenspaces to meet the needs and aspirations of the people of Cheshire West and Chester.
- To ensure that the strategy supports the aims of national and local policies and should include opportunities for collaboration between other emerging CWAC policies.
- To ensure that provision is planned and managed with the active involvement and engagement of the community.
- To ensure that parks and greenspaces are provided where needed and that they are accessible for all.

Objectives

- To identify and provide evidence for the needs and deficiencies of parks and greenspaces enabling an informed approach for the future.

- To address the gap between income and expenditure throughout the borough and determine how income should be utilised.
- To identify a mechanism for meeting local need including park management options and funding opportunities.
- To provide four Locality Improvements Frameworks to guide the Council on parks and greenspaces over the next 10 years.

2.0   HOW THE STRATEGY WAS DEVELOPED

The strategy provides a framework for developing parks and greenspaces owned by Cheshire West and Chester Council. It places local facilities and services within a local and national strategic context.

The strategy process involves 6 main stages:

1. Audit and Mapping

47 priority Cheshire West and Chester Council owned sites were audited and mapped. Site visits and quality assessments were undertaken and mapped on GIS using the previous open space study data.

2. Consultation

Initial engagement was undertaken with strategic stakeholders to understand the current issues related to parks and greenspaces along with opportunities for improvements.

3. Providing Strategic Context

This involved a review of the relevant local and national policies to highlight:

- How this parks and greenspaces strategy sits within the local and national strategic framework.
- How this strategy can contribute to the wider council initiatives and priorities.

4. Analysing the supply of and need for parks and greenspaces

This involved:

- Analysis of the consultation findings.
- Review of the local standards developed in the Open Space study for parks and greenspaces.
- Agreeing prioritisation criteria to guide the development of the locality frameworks.
- Applying prioritisation criteria to the priority CWAC sites to identify where sites require improvements.

5. Income Opportunities

The strategy identifies where there are income opportunities within the wider remit of the Council and considers specific site opportunities for improving income generation which can be used for improving parks and greenspaces.

6. Partnerships and Park Management Models

Based on discussions with Council officers this section looks at the current and potential roles and responsibilities for managing and developing parks and greenspaces in Cheshire West and Chester.

3.0   STRATEGIC CONTEXT

3.1   National Context

3.1.1   The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (February 2019)

The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how they should be applied. The NPPF must be adhered to in the preparation of local and neighbourhood plans and is a material consideration to planning decisions. The NPPF contains the following references relating to parks and greenspaces:

- ***Para 7*** *– the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*

- ***Para 96*** *– access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities. Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision are needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate.*

- ***Para 97*** *– existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:*

    a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or

    b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or

    c) the development is for alternative sports and recreation provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.

- ***Para 98*** *– planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users.*

- ***Para 149*** *– plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes, and the risk of overheating from rising temperatures. Policies should support appropriate measures to ensure the future resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change impacts, such as providing space for physical protection measures, or making provision for the possible future relocation of vulnerable development and infrastructure.*

- ***Para 170*** *– planning policies and decision should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment.*

3.1.2   A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment (January 2018)

This 25 Year Environment Plan sets out government action to help the natural world regain and retain good health. It aims to deliver cleaner air and water in our cities and rural landscapes, protect threatened species and provide richer wildlife habitats. It calls for an approach to agriculture, forestry, land use and fishing that puts the environment first.

The 25-year goals are:

1. Clean air
2. Clean and plentiful water
3. Thriving plants and wildlife
4. A reduced risk of harm from environmental hazards such as flooding and drought.
5. Using resources from nature more sustainably and efficiently
6. Enhanced beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment

In addition, pressures on the environment will be managed by:

7. Mitigating and adapting to climate change
8. Minimising waste
9. Managing exposure to chemicals
10. Enhancing biodiversity

Actions/policies are identified around six key areas: using and managing land sustainably, recovering nature and enhancing the beauty of landscapes, connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing, increasing resource efficiency and reducing pollution and waste, securing clean, production and biologically diverse seas and oceans and protecting and improving the global environment.

The plan sites alongside two other important government strategies. The Industrial Strategy sets out how productivity will be boosted across the UK through five foundations – ideas, people infrastructure, business, environment and places. Clean Growth is one of the four Grand Challenges laid out in the strategy that will put the UK at the forefront of industries of the future, ensuring that it takes advantages of transformational global trends. The Clean Growth Strategy sets out the UK's reaffirmed ambition to promote the ambitious economic and environmental policies to mitigate climate change and deliver clean, green growth.

Natural capital[1] is the cornerstone of the 25 Year Environment Plan for England.

3.1.3   Natural Environment White Paper (Natural Choice: Securing the Value of Nature June 2011)

The white paper[2] recognises that a healthy natural environment is the foundation of sustained economic growth, prospering communities and personal wellbeing. It sets out how

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[1] Natural capital refers to the Stock of natural resources, such as water, air, soil and biodiversity, from which people can or do benefit.
[2] http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm80/8082/8082.pdf

the value of nature can be mainstreamed across our society by facilitating local action; strengthening the connections between people and nature; creating a green economy and showing leadership in the European Union and internationally.

It responds to the 2010 independent review of England's wildlife sites and ecological network chaired by Professor Sir John Lawton, which identified the need for more, better and bigger joined spaces for nature.

The vision is to be the first Government to ever return the environment in a better condition that it inherited it, over the course of a generation.

3.1.4   Sport England – 10 Active Design Principles (2015)

The 10 Active Design Principles were published by Sport England and supported by Public Health England. The principles were designed to encourage, promote and support activity through the design and layout of the built environment. By doing this it aims to promote active, healthy and stronger communities.

The 10 active design principles are:

- Activity for all
- Walkable communities
- Connected walking and cycling routes
- Co-location of community facilities
- Network of multi-functional open space
- High quality streets and spaces
- Active buildings
- Management, maintenance, monitoring and evaluation
- Activity promotion & local champions

3.1.5   Sporting Future – A New Strategy for an Active Nation (December 2015)

This cross-government strategy seeks to address flat-lining levels of sport participation and high levels of inactivity in this country. Through this strategy, the government is redefining what success in sport means, with a new focus on five key outcomes: physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, individual development, social and community development and economic development. In future, funding decisions will be made on the basis of the outcomes that sport and physical activity can deliver.

It is the government's ambition that all relevant departments work closer together to create a more physically active nation, where children and young people enjoy the best sporting opportunities available and people of all ages and backgrounds can enjoy the many benefits that sport and physical activity bring, at every stage in their lives.

The government is reaffirming its commitment to Olympic and Paralympic success but also extending that ambition to non-Olympic sports where it will support success through grassroots investment in those sports, and by sharing UK Sport's knowledge and expertise.

The strategy outlines what is expected of the sector to deliver this vision, and how the government will support it in getting there.

3.1.6 Sport England Strategy – "Towards an Active Nation" (2016 - 2021)

Following the Government publication of "Sporting Future – A New Strategy for an Active Nation", Sport England published this strategy in response to the vision that everyone in England, regardless of age, background or ability, feels able to take part in sport or activity. Key features of this strategy include:

- Dedicated funding to get children and young people active from the age of five, including a new fund for family-based activities and offering training to at least two teachers in every secondary school in England to help them better meet the needs of all children, irrespective of their level of sporting ability.
- Working with the sport sector to put customers at the heart of everything they do and using the principles of behaviour change to inform their work.
- Piloting new ways of working locally by investing in up to 10 places in England – a mix of urban and rural areas.
- Investing up to £30million in a new volunteering strategy, enabling more people to get the benefits of volunteering and attracting a new, more diverse range of volunteers.
- Helping sport keep pace with the digital expectation of customers.
- Working closely with governing bodies of sport and others who support people who already play regularly, to help them become more efficient, sustainable and diversify their sources of funding.

3.1.7 Revaluing Parks and Green Spaces (Fields in Trust (FIT) 2019)

The Revaluing Parks and Green Spaces paper makes an economic evaluation of parks and green spaces in the UK as well as valuing improvements in health and wellbeing associated with their frequent use. This is the first research study on parks and greenspaces to use welfare weighting methodology allowing for more informed evidence-based policy decisions.

It is the view of Fields in Trust that few public services have such a wide-ranging, positive impact on local communities as parks and green spaces. Unfortunately, such spaces tend to be valued within local budgets according to their maintenance costs rather than their true dividend to local communities which vastly exceeds such sums because of their multiple benefits. Parks and green spaces can:

- Contribute to a preventative health agenda
- Reduce future exchequer expenditure
- Reduce health inequalities
- Increase social cohesion and equality

Although people who visit their park less often than once a month still value the existence of parks and green spaces, frequent park users state significantly higher Willingness to Pay value for parks and green spaces. Further analysis of the data also revealed significant difference in values depending upon a variety of factors including geographical location, size, income and

ethnicity. When welfare weighting for income is applied the average Willingness to Pay increases significantly for Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic (BAME) and lower socio-economic groups.

Whilst there are different drivers for using parks and green spaces across different user groups, the research survey showed clear social motivations for using these spaces across all settings. The report suggests that parks and green spaces are vital democratic spaces where people come together and interact therefore playing an important role in promoting social cohesion and integration.

The report found that parks and green spaces are valued highly by communities and provide a large amount of quantifiable benefit to their local population. The data provided by the report on Total Economic Value (use and non-use) of parks and green spaces is demonstrable for the entire local population thus enabling local authorities for the first time to make a robust, evidence-led business case for the economic and wellbeing value of parks and green space to local communities. This research will enable a strategic approach to the provision of parks and green spaces by identifying areas where investment will have the most significant impact on individuals. It presents a new and compelling argument that, in a different economic climate, the provision of parks and green spaces should be prioritised in areas with lower socio-economic groups and a higher representation of BAME communities given the disproportionately high level of benefits that these groups derive from parks and green spaces.

3.1.8 Fields in Trust: Guidance for Outdoor Sport & Play; Beyond the Six Acre Standard (October 2015)

The Fields in Trust guidance looks at provision, accessibility and quality. The guidance provides practitioners with recommended benchmark guidelines for formal outdoor sport, equipped/designated play areas and informal open spaces for quantity, accessibility and quality of open spaces.

These guidelines are as follows:

Open Space Typology	Quantity (ha/1,000)	Walking Guidelines	Quality
Playing pitches	1.20	1,200m	• Parks to be of a Green Flag standard.
All outdoor sport	1.60	1,200m	
Equipped/designated play areas	0.25	LAPs – 100m LEAPs – 400m NEAPs – 1,000m	• Appropriately landscaped. • Provision of footpaths • Positive management
Other outdoor provision	0.30	700m	• Designed so as to be free of fear of harm or crime.

The guidance also provides advice for practitioners on how to apply the guidance when informing planning policies, planning decisions or individual proposals.

3.1.9 Green Flag Award: Raising the Standard: The Green Flag Award Guidance Manual (2016)

The guidance manual was designed for the applicants and judges of the Green Flag Award but it is a useful tool for parks and green spaces management and development. The aims of the award are:

- To ensure that everybody has access to quality green and other spaces, irrespective of where they live.
- To ensure that these spaces are appropriately managed and meet the needs of the communities that they serve.
- To establish standards of good management, and to promote and share best practice amongst the green space sector.
- To recognise and rewards the hard work of managers, staff and volunteers.

Further details on the green flag quality guidance can be found in section 9.

3.1.10 The State of UK Parks (2016)

This is the second report produced by the Heritage Lottery Fund to update the previous 2014 report. The original 2014 report was the first piece of commissioned research that included three national surveys; local authority parks and green spaces managers, friends and user groups and the general public. The report highlights that there is a growing deficit between the rising use of parks and the declining resources that are available to manage them leading to a prediction that the quality of parks is expected to decline. New surveys were undertaken and found that while parks are highly valued by the public and usage is increasing, park maintenance budgets and staffing levels are being cut.

The research undertaken shows that although some local authorities and organisations are responding to the challenges, there is a need for more collaborative action to deliver new funding and managing parks. The key objectives set are:

- Continuing local authority leadership.
- Promoting active partnerships.
- Supporting communities to play a more active role.
- Developing new models of management and funding.
- Compiling, coordinating and updating data.

The report suggests that park trusts have performed better than local authorities since 2013 in terms of funding, staffing and quality. However, the reports findings are limited as the number of trusts are small in comparison with the number of local authorities that manage their parks.

3.1.11 Making Parks Count – The Case for Parks – The Park Alliance (2020)

In 2020 The Parks Alliance published "Making Parks Count" which set out the business case for parks setting out why they matter and why they are a 'smart investment'. Parks in England deliver of £6.6bn of health, climate change and environmental benefits each year. For every

£1 spent on parks in England it is estimated that £7 is generated in additional value for health, wellbeing and the environment, therefore clearly demonstrating that parks are a smart investment. Due to these benefits never being understood, over the year parks have suffered from years of underfunding and therefore there are large inequalities in access to quality green spaces across the country. This report presents the case on how to turn it around.

Parks are the most visited green space in the country, providing a range of natural benefits including improving health and wellbeing, enjoying meeting with friends and family (especially important after the COVID-19 pandemic) and avoiding pollution and reducing temperatures. Figure 1 below illustrates why parks matter.

Figure 1   "Why parks matter" – Making Parks Count – The Case for Parks – The Park Alliance (2000)

Despite evidence that benefits of parks are still not widely understood, they are often taken for granted. Parks are often measured on their costs and not their benefits which can lead to disinvestment and failure to capitalise on the wider benefits and opportunities. Changing the way parks are perceived is critical to unlocking their potential. Parks should be seen as natural capital – key natural assets and essential infrastructure that supports a place's economic, social and environmental priorities. By estimating the value of parks using a Natural Capital approach it enables decision makers to understand their contribution to places and people. It also helps bring decision makers together, creating better partnerships, opportunities for

investment and more efficient use of public resources. To make parks count and maximise opportunities the report highlights four areas that local places must do.

Figure 2   *"How to make parks count" -– Making Parks Count – The Case for Parks – The Park Alliance (2000)*

3.1.12 Rethinking Parks: New business models for parks – Nesta (2013)

This report by Nesta highlights the need for new business models to run parks, given the cuts in government funding. Many of the UK's public parks face an uncertain future with a 60% reduction in public subsidy putting their management and maintenance at risk. Even though public subsidy will still contribute to the management and maintenance of parks new approaches are needed. The report shows some successful case studies of new models of management, funding and organisation which often involves communities, social and private enterprises. Examples include long-term management by 'friends of' groups and enabling charities to provide day to day management in lieu of rent for use of facilities.

3.1.13 Other Government Initiatives

These are other initiatives and groups which are funded by the government.

New Parks Action Group was originally launched in 2015 and has recently been relaunched in 2017 to ensure that England's park and green spaces meet the needs of current and future

communities. The group consists of experts in leisure, horticulture, heritage and tourism and they will be working to address issues faced by parks and green spaces. The government provided £500,000 of funding towards this work.

The Northern Forest Initiative is a joint project between the Woodland Trust and the Community Forest Trusts. It aims to increase tree cover across the northern area of the country comprising of 50 million trees. Cities where this initiative focusses on include Liverpool, Manchester, Chester, Leeds, Sheffield and Hull. The initiative will include work with key stakeholders such as the Mersey Forest, City of Trees and the White Rose Forest. As well as increasing woodland cover it will help to tackle climate change, encourage nature-rich landscapes and reduce the risk of flooding. There will also be benefits and opportunities for the residents of this northern region including the creation of new jobs, improved air quality and health and wellbeing.

3.2   Local Context

3.2.1   The Council Plan (2020-24) – Play your part to thrive

Cheshire West and Chester's Corporate Plan 2016-2020 sets out the council's vision and priorities. The Plan has six priorities where the council, business and residents will play their part to thrive, these are;

- Tackle the climate emergency
- Grow our local economy and deliver good jobs with fair wages for our residents
- Support children and young people to make the best start in life and achieve their full potential.
- Enable more adults to live longer, healthier and happier lives.
- Make our neighbourhood even better places to call home.
- An efficient and empowering Council

The parks and greenspace strategy links to themes and the priorities are noted below:

Priority	Parks and Greenspaces Link
Tackle the climate emergency	Parks and greenspaces can support the planting of trees to capture and absorb carbon dioxide emissions. Along with making it more attractive, it will encourage people to engage with the outdoors. They can also contribute to connecting cycling and walking routes allowing people to have more access to green transport.

Priority	Parks and Greenspaces Link
Grow our local economy and deliver good jobs with fair wages for our residents	High quality green infrastructure and parks and greenspace is important in retaining and attracting people into the area and therefore a supporting factor in maintaining the local economy.

Priority	Parks and Greenspaces Link
Support children and young people to make the best start in life and achieve their full potential.	Having enough provision, access and good quality parks and green spaces will encourage children and young people to "be active", therefore tackling to issue of childhood obesity and improving health and wellbeing.

Priority	Parks and Greenspaces Link
Enable more adults to live longer, healthier and happier lives.	Parks and greenspaces can help to provide neighbourhoods to support older generations giving them a space which supports help and independence. They can also help other generations to tackle lifestyles issues by providing accessible free spaces allowing people to become more active.

Priority	Parks and Greenspaces Link
Make our neighbourhood even better places to call home.	Provision of green infrastructure including parks and greenspaces is a key element of good residential design and high-quality spaces is important for maintaining the value of land and housing. This is key in contributing the value of the local housing market. Parks and greenspaces also provide habitats for important and diverse biodiversity making neighbourhoods more attractive places to live.

3.2.2 Cheshire West Place Plan (2019-2024)

This plan sets out the vision for improving health and wellbeing for everyone in Cheshire West and replaces the Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2015 -2020).

Vision: To reduce inequalities, increase years of healthy life and promote improved mental and physical health and wellbeing for everyone in Cheshire West".

The Plan sets out the following priorities:

- Prevention - and early detection
- Reducing inequalities
- Promoting wellbeing and self-care
- Making it easier to navigate health, social care and community based services
- Anticipating the future needs of our population - providing housing, schools and services to meet changing demand
- Integrating our health and care services
- Keeping people safe

Key areas for action are: Best start; Education and Learning; A healthy place to live; Healthy homes; Healthy lifestyles and preventing ill-health; Preventing social isolation and loneliness; A healthy place to work; Creating and age-friendly place; Health and care services; and The health and care workforce.

The Plan recognises the importance of the built and natural environment including neighbourhood design, accessible spaces, housing, the food environment, green spaces, transport, air quality and natural environments in affecting health and wellbeing.

It highlights inequalities, such as disadvantaged communities being more likely to lack good quality open and accessible spaces, easy walking and cycling routes and well located services, as well as being more likely to experience environmental burdens such as pollution and crime.

It highlights the importance of tackling climate change and carbon emissions in relation to health and wellbeing, particularly in regard to air quality. Some of the relevant actions set out within the plan, predominantly under 'A healthy place to live', are as follows:

- Jointly plan and develop environmental and other planning decisions, ensuring that they take account of all aspects of wellbeing
- Support infrastructure developments that support healthy lifestyle choices for all our residents, including the borough's gypsy and traveller communities
- Embed active design principles within all new developments
- Work together in partnership across Cheshire West to promote shared - and committed responsibility towards sustainability
- Implement the 10 climate change pledges agreed by the Cheshire and Warrington sub-Regional Leaders Board
- Encourage sustainable travel amongst our residents, visitors and key employers, including the Council and the NHS
- Ensure that safe natural environments and green spaces are accessible, functional and provide maximum benefit to the local community in terms of both recreation and biodiversity
- Monitor air quality and work across the area to reduce carbon emissions
- Promote free or low cost wellbeing opportunities in the borough, for example Brio Leisure, including the Cheshire Change Hub, the annual Cheshire West Walking Festival, Mersey Forest, arts, leisure and cultural events
- Use the assets available in our community, mobilising individuals, associations and organisations to come together to realise and develop their strengths

3.2.3   Health and Improvement Strategy 2018 – 2022

This strategy was produced on behalf of the Health and Wellbeing Board and sets out how it will support residents to live and enjoy a healthy lifestyle over the four years 2018 – 2022. It focusses on healthy eating and being active, smoking, alcohol and drugs misuse and sexual health. By helping and supporting healthier lifestyles now, it should prevent avoidable ill-health problems in the future.

Under the eating healthy and being active principle, it stresses the importance of green spaces for being active. Priorities under the strategy include promoting environments that support people moving such as parks, green spaces, forests and waterways. This is indicated as a key issue with local data captured in 2017 showing that 24% of adults are inactive.

3.2.4   Green Infrastructure Framework for North East Wales, Cheshire & Wirral (2011)

This framework looks at Green Infrastructure across North East Wales, Cheshire and Wirral. It is a partnership between local authorities and environment agencies and facilitated by the Mersey Dee Alliance. It sets out a vision of how a healthy natural environment can help sustain economic growth and self-supporting communities. There are six aims which work towards achieving this vision;

1. Create a setting for urban and rural prosperity.

2. Support and enhance the visitor experience and economy.

3. Build healthier communities.

4. Maintain and enhance quality of place.

5. Ensure urban and rural areas are resilient to effects of climate change.

6. Protect and enhance biodiversity and natural networks, providing opportunity for people to experience the natural environment.

3.2.5   The Sustainable Community Strategy (2010 - 2026)

This strategy was published in 2010 and sets out a vision for the future social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the area as follows:

By 2026 West Cheshire will be even more prosperous and attractive; a really great place to live, work, learn and visit. The borough will play a full role in the region and beyond, fulfilling our changing responsibilities and enabling our residents to benefit from the opportunities in the twenty first century.

Under this vision the strategy sets out three commitments:

1. Living well together – together promoting community spirit and supporting communities in the environment where they live.

2. Right services, right place, right time – responding to the varied needs of our communities including providing accessible services.

3. Seizing opportunities – working together to share the vision and resources to grasp new and existing opportunities.

In regard to green spaces, the strategy encourages people to adopt healthy lifestyles and promotes access to green spaces. It is also identifying the benefits of the natural environment and green spaces as benefiting physical and mental wellbeing.

3.2.6   Neighbourhood Plans

The Localism Act 2011 introduced new rights for local communities to shape new development by preparing neighbourhood plans. They set out the vision, policies and proposals for the future development of an area. It is used by the Council as part of the statutory development plan and is used in making decisions on planning applications. In total there are 20 neighbourhood plans currently in place with 15 currently in progress.

3.2.7   Rights of Way Improvement Plan (2011-2016)

This strategy identifies how well the greenspaces and countryside access network is performing in Cheshire West and Chester and where improvements can be made.

The analysis showed that access is poor for horse riders and cyclists. There are also deficiencies within the network for walkers with poorly routed paths and limited access to attractive features and landscapes. The epidemic of foot and path disease saw a decrease in visitors to the countryside back in 2001 but numbers have reached levels where they used to be. Greenspaces in the borough have attracted many visitors to come back to the countryside with some of the most popular promoted trails including Castle Park and Grosvenor Park.

The strategy also highlights how people mainly use rights of way for leisure rather than as a non-motorised travel network. To help mitigate against climate change, non-motorised travel along rights of way needs to be increased through information provision and infrastructure.

There is a strong connection between health and access to the rights of way network. Greenspaces provide numerous opportunities for physical activity with lots of research indicating the health benefits of moderate exercise. Research suggests that people in England are more sedentary than they used to be with their health suffering as a consequence. Therefore, it is even more important to improve rights of way allowing people to feel safe and comfortable to walk and cycle.

3.2.8   Tree Strategy

This strategy sets out how the council manages its trees and woodland, to continue to provide benefits to communities and manage the risk to the Council. Managing trees must consider factors including increasing levels of litigation, changing climate, pressure on budgets and changing demands from communities. The strategy recognises that trees and woodlands provide a range of benefits for people, wildlife and the economy. In terms of people, trees and woodlands help to improve our physical and mental wellbeing through providing places of quiet and in contact with nature. Trees also help to adapt to projected climate change and flood alleviation. The council aims to manage trees and woodlands safety especially within public areas along with maximising the use of trees and woodlands to tackle issues as previously mentioned.

3.2.9   Open Spaces Study (2016)

The study was undertaken by Ethos Environmental Planning in 2016 to update the previous 2011 study. The document is a supplementary document as part of the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan. It forms a robust evidence bases to support the emerging planning policies up to 2030.

Local standards were developed for parks and greenspaces in relation to quantity, quality and access. These standards were as follows:

Typology	Quantity standards (ha/1000 population)	Access standard
Amenity Green Space	0.60 for analysing existing provision of sites >0.15ha 1.0 for new provision (in combination with natural green space)	480 metres or 10 minutes' walk time
Parks and Recreation Grounds	0.5	720 metres or 15 minutes' walk time
Natural Green Space	1.0 to include natural and amenity green space for new provision. ANGSt and Woodland Trust for analysing existing provision	ANGSt and Woodland Trust for analysing existing provision

3.2.10 Play Strategy

The play strategy was undertaken by Leisure and the Environment in associated with Ethos Environmental planning in 2015 with a review undertaken in 2017. The strategy reviewed policy and produced overall strategic actions for the borough and subsequently created a set of local improvement frameworks detailing a framework to be used by partners/stakeholders with an interest in in play and youth facilities. Recommendations within the frameworks include prioritising sites for improvements, identifying sites with potential for alternative open space use, and areas where new provision would reduce gaps in accessing facilities. Some of these suggestions include adding play/youth facilities into parks and green spaces, therefore improving provision within parks and green spaces.

The play strategy is currently being reviewed and a new strategy will be produced later in 2020.

3.2.11 Playing Pitch Strategy (2018)

An update to the 2015 PPS was completed in February 2018. The strategy offers a supply and demand assessment of playing pitch and other outdoor sports facilities following Sport England's Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance.

Whilst the PPS is focused on formal pitch provision such as football, cricket, hockey and rugby, these spaces are often found to be located within parks and green spaces. This therefore provides some audit information on the wider aspects of parks and green spaces.

4.0   CHESHIRE WEST AND CHESTER – PARKS AND GREENSPACES THE CURRENT PICTURE
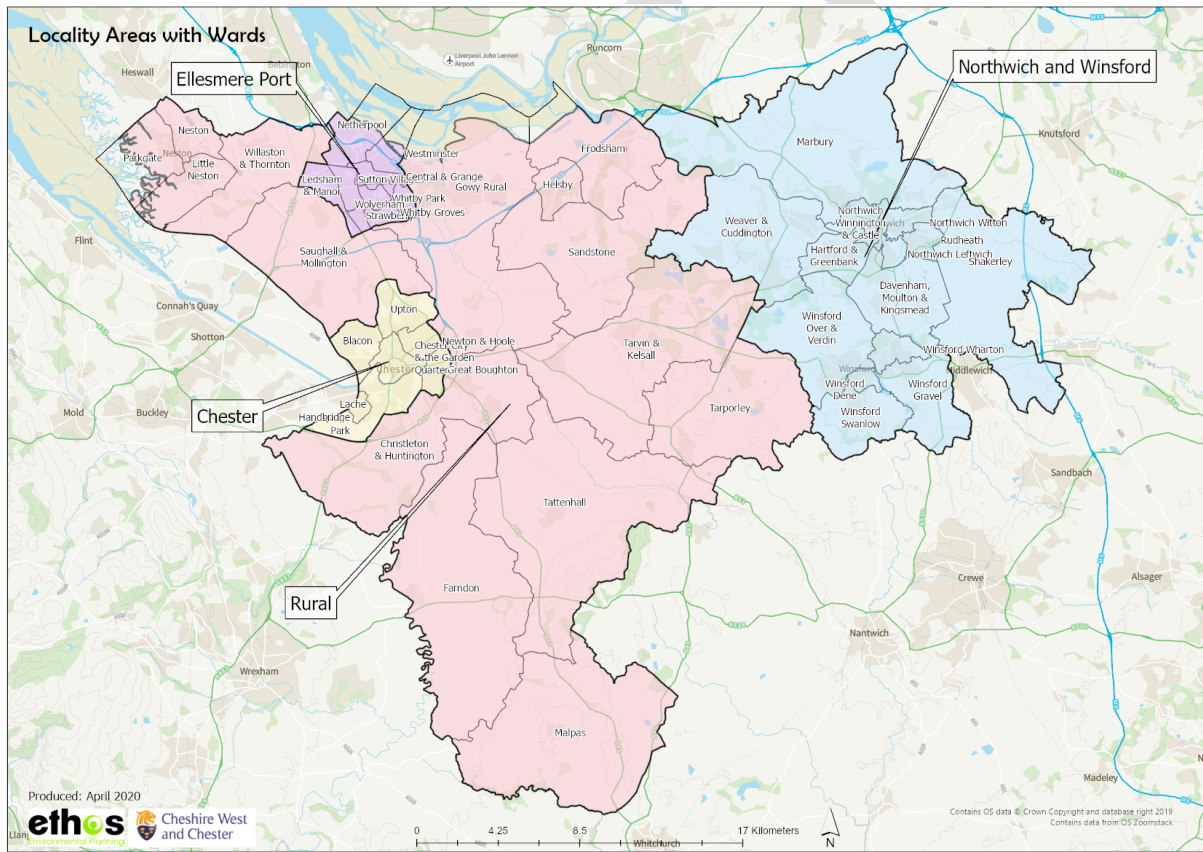
4.1   Overview of Cheshire West and Chester

Cheshire West and Chester is a large demographic borough covering approximately 350 square miles and is the fourth largest unitary authority in the North West. The borough comprises the historic city of Chester, market towns of Ellesmere Port, Frodsham, Helsby,

Malpas, Neston, Northwich and Winsford and many rural villages. Around 340,500 live in Cheshire West with a third living in rural areas.

The north of the borough is dominated by Chester, Ellesmere Port and Northwich whereas as the southern part of the borough is largely rural with sparsely populated settlements. Overall, the quality of life in Cheshire West is good with low levels of deprivation, high incomes and good health but there are pockets of deprivation where residents have poor health quality, living conditions and economic prospects.

Cheshire West and Chester provide services within the Local Area framework. These are broken down in four locality areas (shown in figure 3); Chester, Ellesmere Port, Northwich and Winsford and Rural and these form the geographical area for the tier 2 locality parks and greenspaces improvement frameworks.
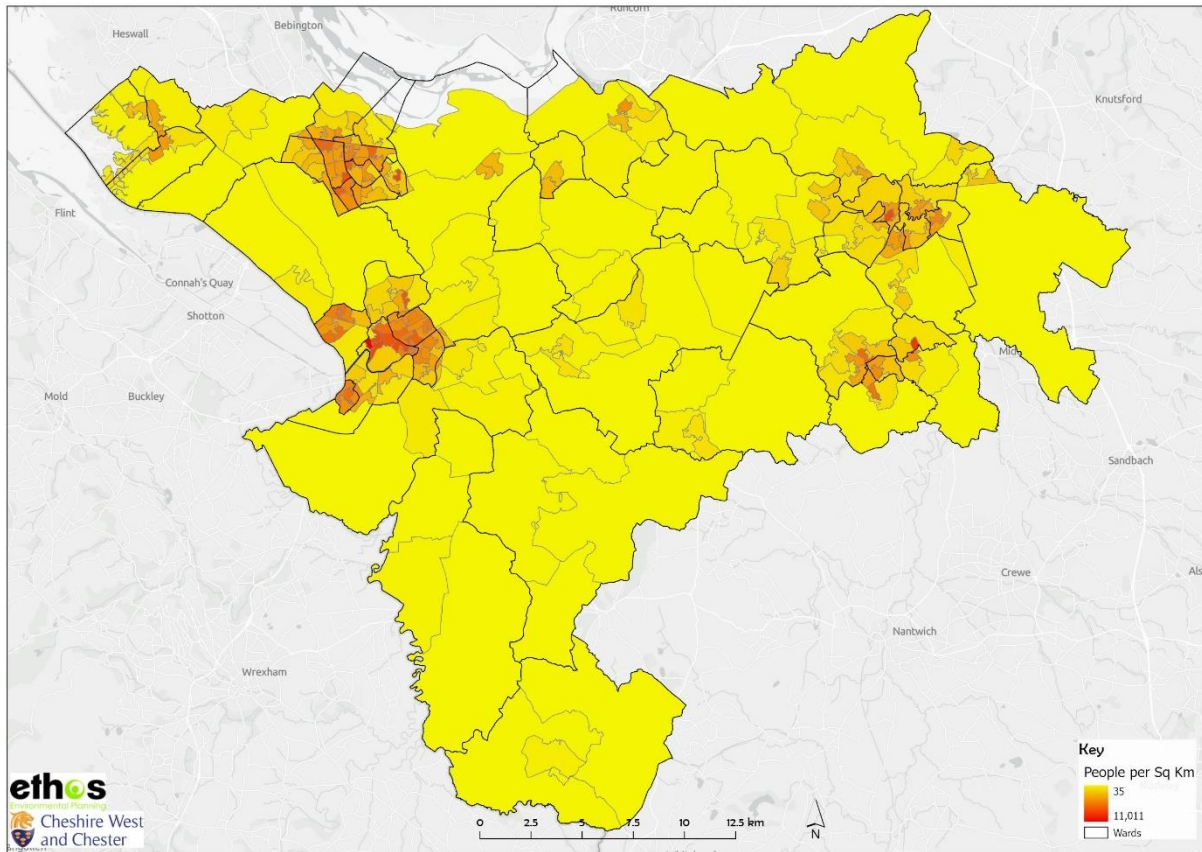
Figure 3   Locality Areas

4.2   Density

The map below shows the density of the Cheshire West and Chester Borough by people per square km.

*Figure 4   Density of CWAC borough*

As can be seen, most densely populated areas are focussed around the locality areas of Chester, Ellesmere Port, Northwich and Winsford. There are some slightly more densely populated areas outside of the main localities including Neston in the far north east corner and Frodsham in the north of the borough.

4.3 Gardens

The below map shows the percentage of addresses with private outdoor open space.

Figure 5   Access to private outdoor open space
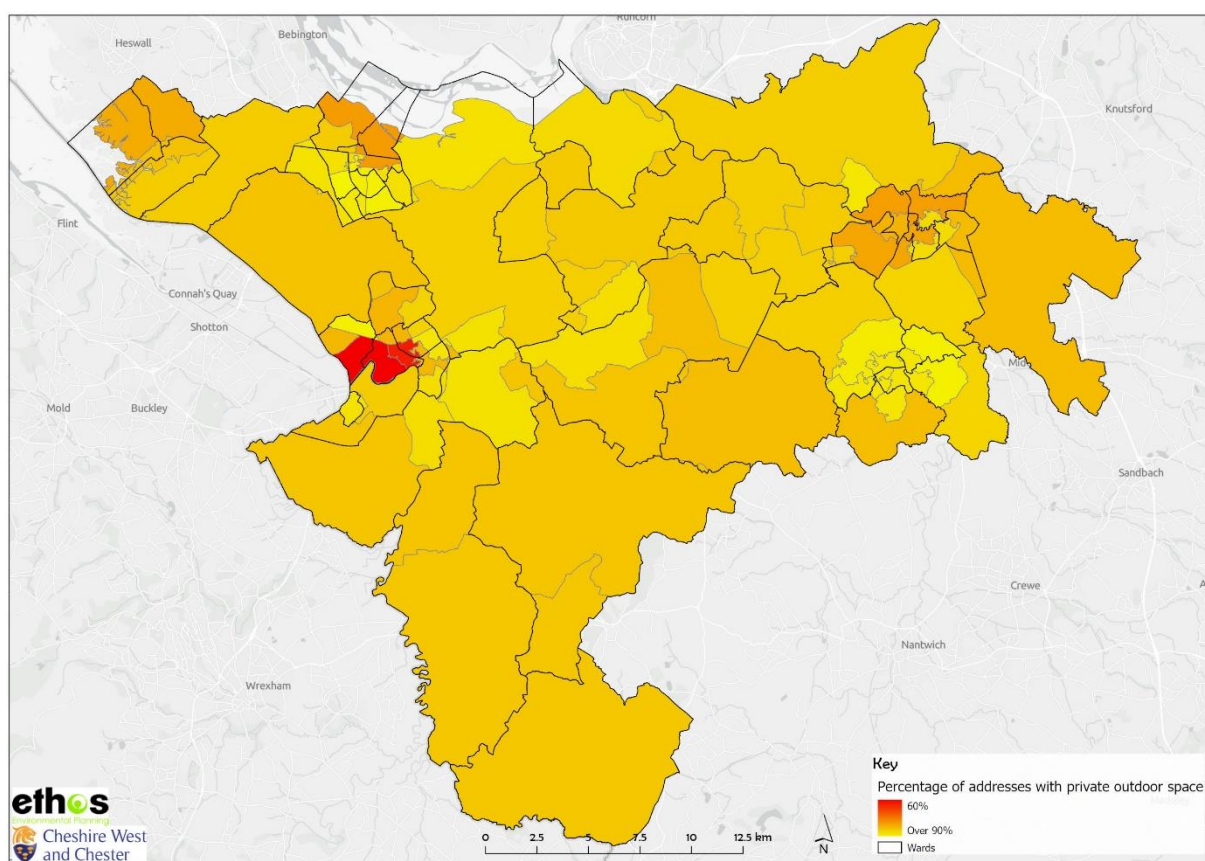
The majority of the borough has a high percentage of private outdoor space. Chester has the lowest percentage of address's with private outdoor space, with some areas of the city seeing only 60% of addresses with gardens. Northwich also has a relatively lower percentage of access to private outdoor space compared to the other localities of Winsford and Ellesmere Port. The rural wards of the borough generally have a good percentage of address's (between 80%-90%) with private outdoor space.

4.4   Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)

The Indices of Deprivation 2019 provide a set of relative measure of deprivation for small areas (Lower-layer Super Output Areas) across England, based on seven different domains of deprivation which are appropriately weighted:

- Income (22.5%)
- Employment (22.5%)
- Health Deprivation and Disability (13.5%)
- Education, Skills Training (13.5%)
- Crime (9.3%)
- Barriers to Housing and Services (9.3%)
- Living Environment (9.3%)

Each of these domains is based on a basket of indicators. As far as is possible, each indicator is based on data from the most recent time point available; in practice most indicators in the Indices of Deprivation 2019 relate to the tax year 2015/16.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation combines information from the seven domains to produce an overall relative measure of deprivation.

Figure 6 below shows the IMD rank for each LSOA within the borough, where 1 is the most deprived and 10 is least deprived. As can be seen, levels of deprivation vary across the borough but with each of the four major towns (Chester, Ellesmere Port, Northwich and Winsford) areas having higher levels of deprivation that the rural wards. The ward next to Ellesmere Port also has a high level of deprivation compared to the other rural wards.

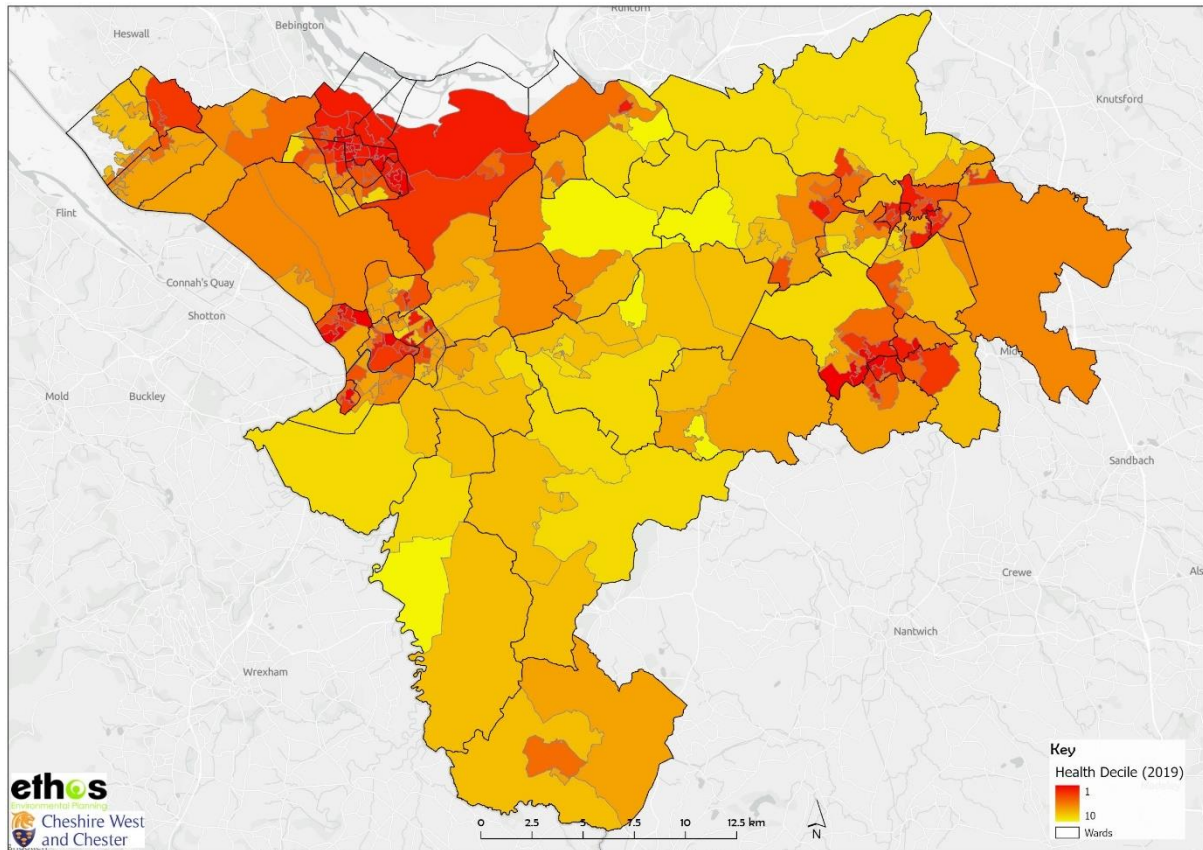*Figure 6   Index of Multiple Deprivation*
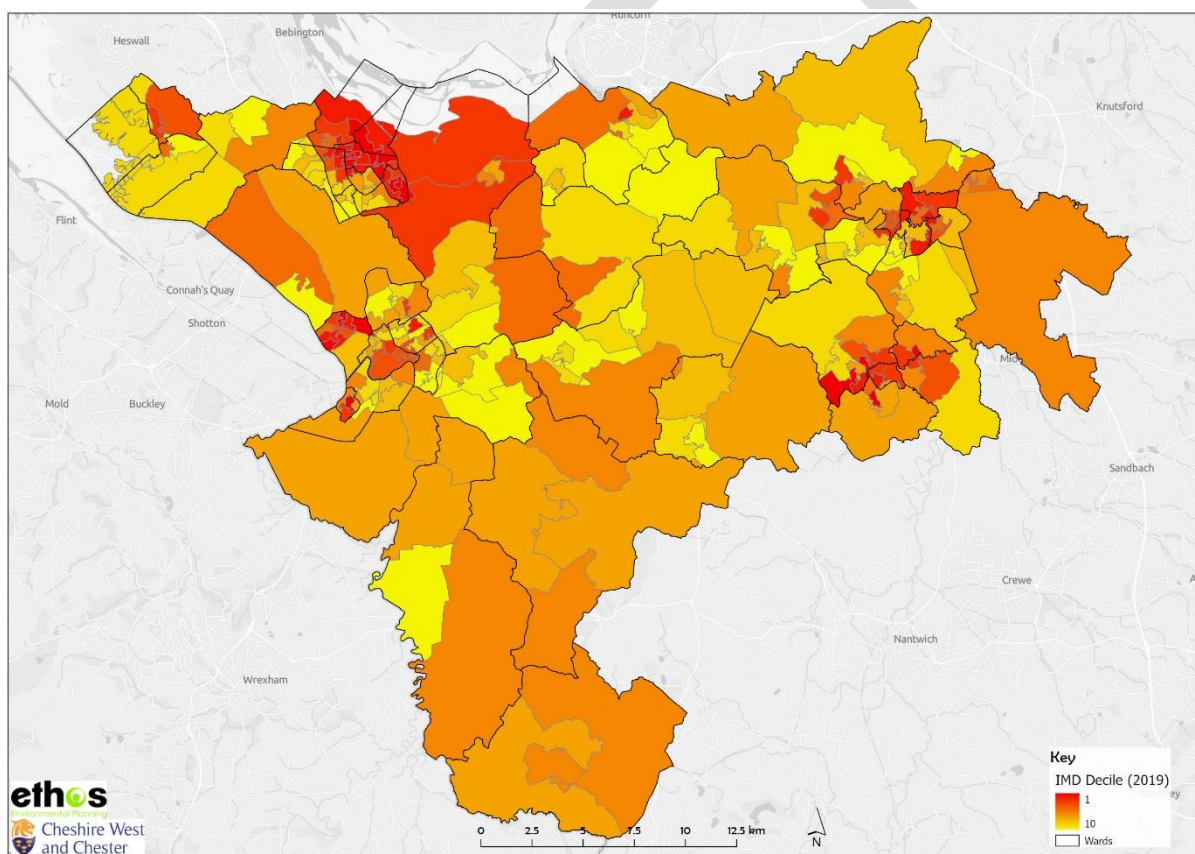
4.5   Health

Figure 7 shows the unhealthiest parts of the borough based on adult health data with 1 being the unhealthiest and 10 being the healthiest.

Figure 7   Health of the borough

As can be seen, each of the four main towns has some parts that have an unhealthy proportion of the population. There a more prominent proportion with the Ellesmere Port locality. Overall, the rural area of borough has a relatively healthy population apart from in the north west of rural part of the borough which sees an overall higher proportion of an unhealthy population.

5.0   REVIEW OF STAKEHOLDER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This section outlines the stakeholder and community engagement that has been undertaken to help inform the needs and aspirations for parks and green spaces across the District. Information has been gathered from the following sources:

- Initial engagement undertaken in July 2020
- Community and stakeholder consultation undertaken as part of the 2017 Open Spaces Study

5.1   Initial Engagement (July 2020)

An online survey was undertaken in July 2020 to understand views of various stakeholders across the Cheshire West and Chester District. It was circulated to employees of Cheshire West and Chester Council, ward members, town/parish councils, service provides and community organisations. A total of 86 responses were received with the breakdown of consultees as shown below.

Figure 8   Type of Stakeholder Respondents
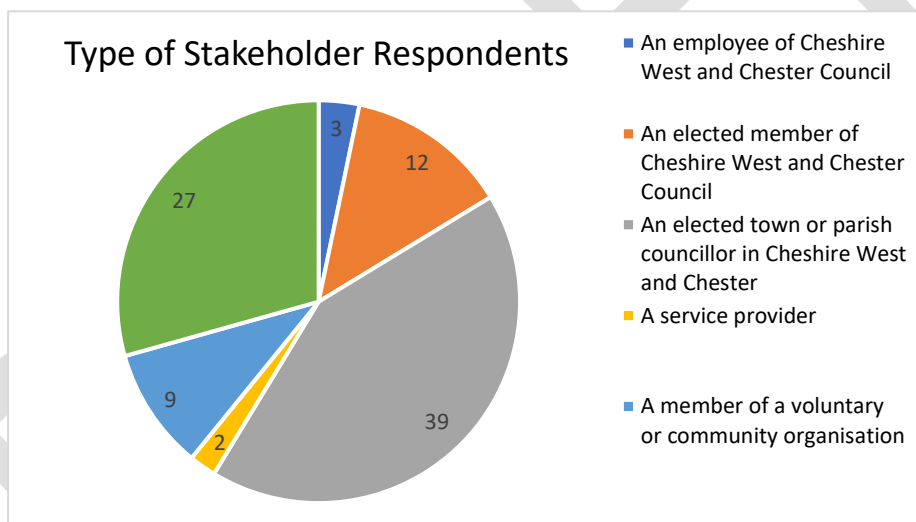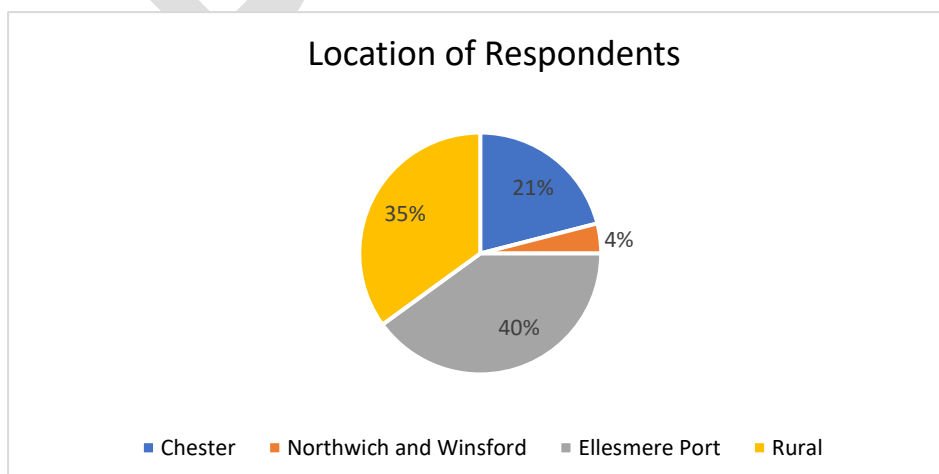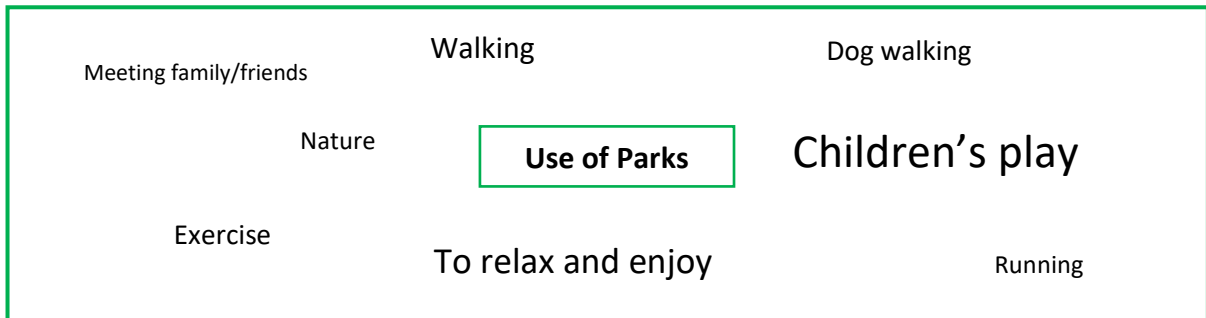

Figure 9   Location of Respondents

Stakeholders were also asked to confirm if they lived in the Cheshire West and Chester District, and by which locality.

5.1.1   Current Provision of Parks

Stakeholders were asked a series of questions in relation to the current provision of parks across the Cheshire West and Chester District. 67% of respondents use their local park with 32% of respondents who don't use their local park. Respondents were then asked why they use their local park and if they don't why not. Results are displayed below (the larger the text the more frequently mentioned):

Meeting family/friends
Walking
Dog walking

Nature
Use of Parks
Children's play

Exercise
To relax and enjoy
Running

Use villages for walking instead
Use other green spaces
Would rather use garden

Reasons for not using parks
No parks in local area

Don't like parks

Following this, respondents were asked why they prefer other parks to their local one.

Accepting of dog walkers
More facilities
Better access

To experience different types of nature/wildlife
Preference for using other parks
Bigger park

No local park in area
Like to visit different parks

5.1.2   Uses of Parks

Consultees were asked why they used parks. The graph below illustrates the types of uses of parks, please note that consultees could select multiple uses of parks. The top use of parks was walking with 73% of consultees selecting this as a use, this was followed by wildlife (42%), socialising (34%) and quiet reflection (32%).

Figure 11   Use of Parks by respondents
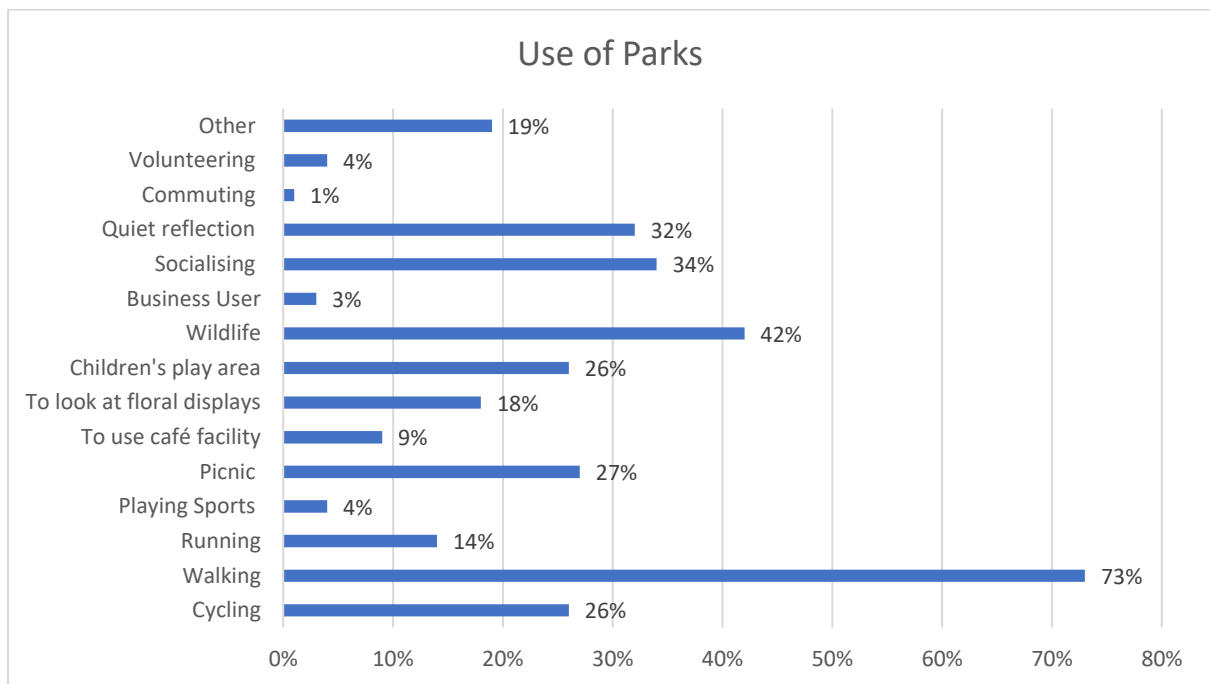
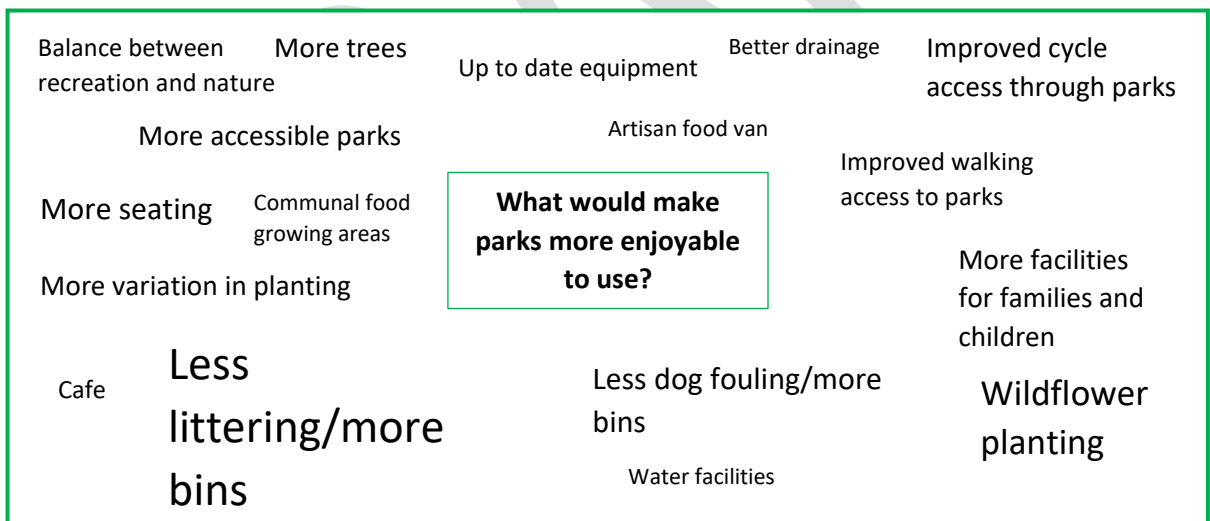Consultees were then asked what would make parks more enjoyable to use.

Balance between recreation and nature   More trees   Up to date equipment   Better drainage   Improved cycle access through parks

More accessible parks   Artisan food van   Improved walking access to parks

More seating   Communal food growing areas   **What would make parks more enjoyable to use?**   More facilities for families and children

More variation in planting

Cafe   Less littering/more bins   Less dog fouling/more bins   Wildflower planting

Water facilities

5.1.3   Fees and Charges

Consultees were then asked a series of questions about fees and charges. The questions focussed on different types of activities and uses within the parks following a review of fees and charges benchmarked against neighbouring local authorities.

Recreational Fees and Charges

Clubs including football, bowling, croquet, fishing, cricket and allotments use parks and greenspaces with the facilities associated with them. Consultees were asked if fees should be reviewed in line with the benchmarking review (currently 33% less than neighbouring

authorities) to secure the development of parks and greenspaces. 89% of consultees agreed with this approach, and 10% disagreed. A summary of comments about this approach were as follows (a full list of responses is available at appendix 1):

- Consider indices of deprivation across the locality.
- A charge for specific use would help e.g. maintaining equipment.
- Agree that an increase is required but potentially maintain a 25% difference against neighbouring authorities to encourage an advantage.
- Consider if facilities are currently being subsidised by areas with few facilities.
- Income should go into a pot specifically allocated for parks and green spaces.
- Annual reviews based on usage of specific facilities.
- Charge increases should be gradual.
- Charging more without having a valid increased budget for specific use of extra income on the facility is not appropriate.
- Reasonable charges must be made in order to provide good quality open spaces.
- Users should not be priced out of using facilities.
- Balance to be maintained between maintained between charges and investment/improvement to green spaces.

Concessions

Within parks and greenspaces, there is an opportunity to expand food and drink concessions within council owned sites to create an income to invest in parks and greenspaces. Consultees were asked for their comments and view on this approach, and these are summarised below:

- Independent and quality concessions should be prioritised.
- Food concessions would be need to have healthy options.
- Would require adequate bins for litters and litter collections to be upscaled to prevent increased littering.
- Pricing would need to be reasonable and inclusive for all to be able to use.
- Concessions are not appropriate everywhere, therefore location/setting must be considered.
- Could improve a park/greenspace and make it more attractive for visitors.
- Income from concessions should be used specifically for development/improvements where the concessions are located.
- Fast food outlets could create anti-social behaviour.
- Concerns over increased littering.
- Encourage concessions to be environmentally friendly and low waste.
- By adding concessions, you would also need to add toilet facilities alongside.
- Should be approach cautiously, some parks may suffer aesthetically and environmentally as a result.

Events

In some parks, events are allowed to operate where a charge is made to enter, these include fun days, carnivals, music concerts, firework displays and triathlons. There is an opportunity to increase the amount of events across the parks to allow further investment. Consultees were asked for their views on this approach, comments are summarised below:

- Good to attract different audiences.
- Must ensure that large parks aren't taken over by events especially in the summer.
- Balance between charging for events and allowing free access for local residents.
- Fireworks displays should be managed better to be more environmentally friendly, less dangerous and anti-social.
- By holding events it could put pressure on parks in terms of damage to soil and disturbing wildlife.
- Events are not appropriate in all parks, therefore location/setting must be considered.
- Could increase the amount of litter within parks.
- Must take into account noise of events on the local residents.
- Traffic management planning should be considered to avoid local disruption as a result of events.
- Good to bring investment into the parks.
- Events should be consulted on with residents and the council before given the go ahead.
- The more events the better.
- Consideration from organisers that the events do not damage the parks.

Businesses

In some parks, individual businesses who charge for their services are allowed to operate in parks for free. These include fitness trainers, dog walking businesses and art classes. There is an opportunity to introduce a charging system when a park is used for businesses purposes to generate additional revenue to invest and improve parks. Consultees were asked for their views on this approach, comments are summarised below:

- A problem that doesn't exist.
- Businesses should be charged, and its unfair for them to access it without picking up any overheads.
- This would be stifling small businesses.
- Businesses running on council land should expect to be charged for the usage.
- Difficult to enforce.
- A modest charge makes sense and may make users more responsible for using the area.
- Dependent on size of business, size of participation & costs. Must be sensitivity to ensure that community ventures of not discouraged due to high costs.
- Individual businesses should not be charged.

- If businesses users are not using the areas to the detriment of others, charging would be inappropriate.
- Some businesses users have a bigger impact on green spaces than other depending on the activity, therefore charging would have to be appropriate if costs were going towards maintenance of the park.
- Ensure charging is proportionate depending on the business.

5.2   Open Space Study Consultation (2016)

As part of the CWAC open space study, a community and stakeholder needs assessment was completed. This included consultation with residents through a household survey, town and parish councils, local group and organisations, local sports/recreation clubs and key stakeholders. A summary of this consultation is detailed below:

Quantity

- The household survey identified that 72% of respondents thought that there were enough parks, also 61% thought there were enough country park, local countryside and woodlands.
- The community organisations consultation highlighted that there was a lack of provision with the Blacon ward of Chester.

Quality

- The quality of council owned parks is varied but 8 parks do have Green Flag status.
- Some parks are maintained to a high standard, but others are falling into disrepair due to the council not being able to afford expensive repairs.
- Generally country parks are in good condition, but we are aware that budgets are restricting the resources that can be put into them to keep the previous levels of maintenance.
- A number of groups stated that they are happy with the management of parks and recreation grounds, many identified diminishing budgets and subsequent poor maintenance/condition of parks and play areas, dog fouling, litter and vandalism. The importance of volunteer groups in helping to care for/manage parks is also apparent.
- Suggestions for improvement in the quality of parks and recreation grounds from community organisations included more wildlife friendly management as well as more diverse use of sites including planting edible plants.
- The management of country parks are generally positive, although litter, dog fouling and reductions in maintenance have been identified as issues.
- For Countryside sites a common issue is the need to maintain and improve access to and within the sites - footpaths, cycle paths etc. Many of the countryside sites such as Marbury Country Park and the wider Northwich woodland, Little Budworth CP, and the Wirral Way have active volunteer groups who help with practical maintenance tasks.
- There is potential for greater use of the Council's open spaces and some barriers to use include some of the parks and green spaces not being of the quality the public

may wish for; anti-social behaviour and not feeling safe in some areas; poor location of facilities e.g. play areas that are a bit remote; and a lack of publicity, promotion and awareness of what is available. Providing more events and activities within parks and open spaces would introduce more people to the wider potential of the Council's open spaces.

- The household survey found that 65% of respondents thought that parks were good or very good in quality.

Access

- Access to country parks was an issue highlight by the community organisations consultation.
- The household survey identified that 53% of users would expect local recreation grounds to be within a 10-minute travel time, of which 17% would not wish to travel more than 5 minutes.
- In terms of mode of transport, walking was the preferred mode of transport to parks and recreation grounds with driving being the preferred mode of transport for country parks, local countryside and woodlands.

Funding/Management

- Most of the Council owned parks are located in the Chester and Ellesmere Port areas with 7 main community urban parks. There are 19 main Council managed country parks, woodlands and nature reserves.
- Town and parish councils tend to be the primary managers of parks in the eastern part of the borough. Other managers of public open spaces include some housing associations and charitable trust.
- Many parks have "Friends of" groups but these are active to varying degrees. Some of the more active groups with high levels of volunteering are at Marbury Country Park, Anderton Nature Park and Caldy Nature Park. There is however a lack of younger members within these groups.
- Resources for the management and maintenance of the Council parks and country parks has been severely reduced over recent years, and this is having an impact upon the capacity to maintain all of the facilities to the standard the public would wish to see.
- Some sites have partnerships with the community, local organisation, CWAC and town/parish councils to improve key sites, but many sites rely on S106 or external funding to be received.
- In some Country Parks, Friends of Groups are assisting with the maintenance and improvements, but without adequate support and guidance it is doubtful that they can take on the same roles and responsibilities due to insurance costs etc.

- The new park at the Countess of Chester is a good example where significant funding was secured through a partnership between CWAC, health sector and the third sector.
- As well as casual public use there are various events and programmes delivered making use of the Councils green spaces - such as theatre performances at Grosvenor

Park and the programme of health walks. There is potential for greater use of open spaces for these kinds of activity.

- CWAC has good external contacts and partners managing parks and greenspaces these include; housing associations such as Plus Dane, Sanctuary and Weaver Vale; Groundwork; Mersey forest; and Keep Britain Tidy (Green Flag). A number of parks and countryside sites have active "Friend of" groups, Marbury Country Park and Anderton Nature Park being good examples.

- Maintenance budgets have been reduced over recent years meaning there is a need to prioritise the most important Council green space sites while less well used sites may receive less attention. A Green Space Strategy would help in this prioritisation process.

- In relation to developments and improvements for parks and green spaces this will only be possible in relation to securing new funding e.g. from S106, CIL and/or grant aid from external sources. There is no Council green space capital fund to support improvements. There may be potential to secure funding from Public Health sources given the increasing amount of evidence of the value of green spaces in promoting improved health and wellbeing.

- Where there are opportunities for new provision arising through S106/CIL it is essential to ensure that long-term management and maintenance arrangements are made so that such sites and facilities are sustainable. This could include management by town and parish councils, community organisations, and trusts.

- The drive for improvements tends to be driven by local community groups; and locality and regeneration teams; rather than being driven by a strategic assessment of need.

6.0   LOCAL PROVISION EXAMINED – PARKS AND GREENSPACES

6.1   Types of parks and greenspaces

The Parks and Greenspace strategy mapped and audited provision into three typologies:

1. **Accessible Natural Green Space** – natural and semi-natural greenspaces covering a variety of spaces including meadows, woodland, copes, river valleys and lakes all of which share a trait of natural characteristics and biodiversity value, and are also partly or wholly accessible for informal recreation.

2. **Amenity Green Space** – open space to free and spontaneous use by the public, but neither laid out nor managed for a specific function. These areas are varied in size but are likely to have the following characteristics;
   - Unlikely to be physically demarcated by walls or fences.
   - Predominantly lain down to (mown) grass.
   - Unlikely to have identifiable entrance points.
   - May have shrub and tree planting, and occasionally formal planted flower beds.
   - They may have other recreational facilities and fixtures.

3. **Parks and Recreation Grounds** – open space surrounding play areas and sports facilities used for general recreation and includes those areas laid out as pitches which are accessible. They embrace a wide range of functions including:
   - Play spaces
   - Provision for formal pitches and fixed sports
   - Informal recreation and sport
   - Providing attractive walks and cycle routes
   - Offering landscape and amenity features
   - Areas of formal planting
   - Providing areas for 'events'
   - Providing habitats for wildlife
   - Dog walking

Site visits were undertaken at 47 of Cheshire West and Chester's priority owned parks and greenspaces. Sites were visited and a photographic record made of key features, along with a description of the park/greenspace and recommendation for improvements. An assessment of the quality of the site was undertaken based on the Green Flag field assessment categories (the quality audit form can be found at appendix 2). The 'Marketing and Communications' and 'Management' themes have not been included, and the 'Environmental Management' criterion has been changed to a single criterion. Each criterion is scored out of 10 (where 1 is very poor and 10 is excellent). The average score is then calculated and multiplied by 10 to produce the final score out of 100.

A score of 60 or above would indicate that the site is on track/likely to achieve the green flag award, although it should be recognised that there are other criteria that will also need to be met in order to meet the required standard.

The site scores are categorised as follows:

0-40 (D): poor quality

40-60 (C): average quality

60-80 (B): good quality

80+ (A): excellent quality

6.2   Overview of provision

This section provides an overview of the existing level of provision of parks and greenspaces across the borough.

Provision of parks and green spaces

There are a total of 1029 parks and greenspaces within the borough.

Figure 12 below provides an overview of the distribution of the parks and greenspaces across the borough. Sites have been identified by typology (parks and recreation grounds, accessible natural green spaces and amenity green spaces). The sites coloured in pink identify third party owned spaces.

The maps are intended to be used for indicative purposes and large-scale maps and a GIS database of sites have been provided as an electronic database to the council.

Figure 12   Distribution of parks and greenspaces across the borough
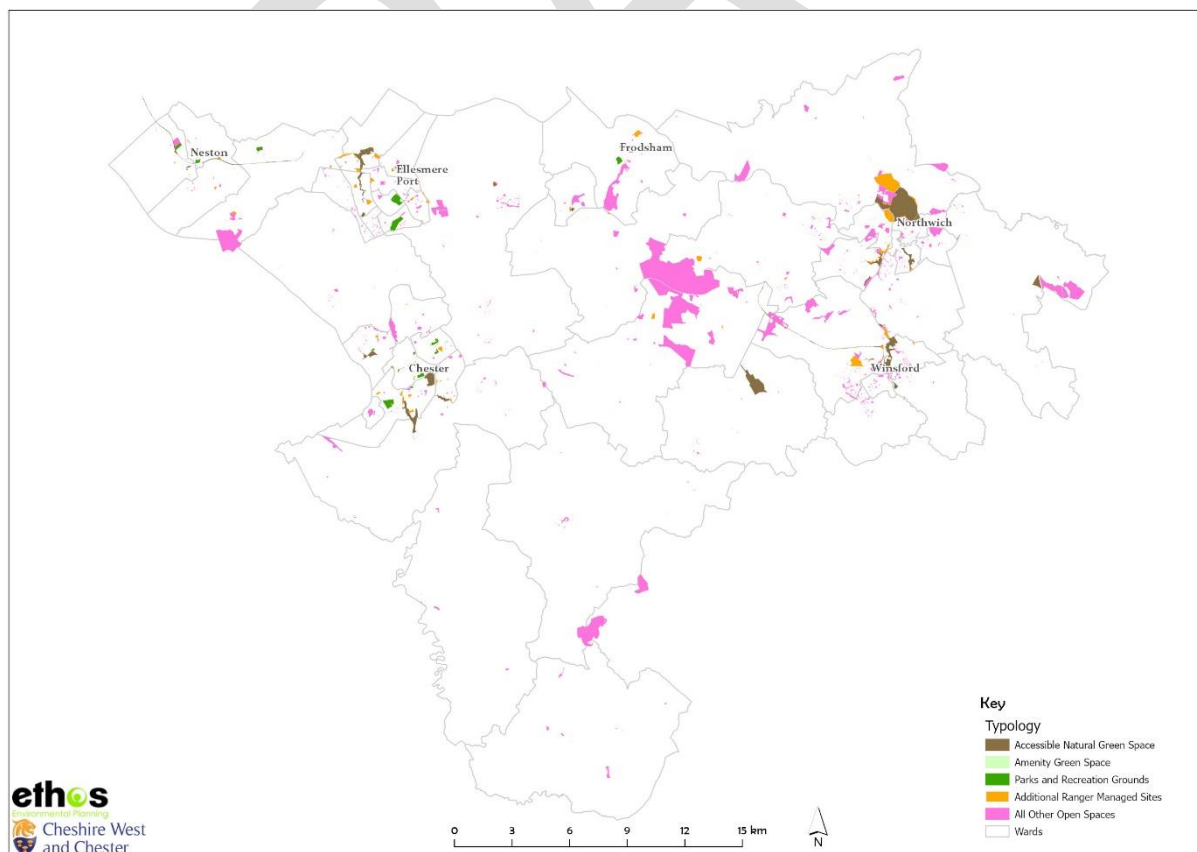
Quantity

The Open Space Study (2017) identified standards for parks and greenspaces. These are summarised in table 1.

Table 1   Quantity Standards for parks and greenspaces (Cheshire West and Chester Open Space Study 2017)

Typology	Quantity standards (ha/1000 population)
Amenity Green Space	0.60 for analysing existing provision of sites >0.15ha 1.0 for new provision (in combination with natural green space)
Parks and Recreation Grounds	0.5
Natural Green Space	1.0 to include natural and amenity green space for new provision. ANGSt and Woodland Trust for analysing existing provision

Existing quantity of parks and greenspaces

Table 2 shows the existing supply of parks and greenspaces across the borough, as can be seen there is a shortfall in amenity green space but sufficient supply of parks and recreation grounds. Please note that this is all accessible parks and greenspaces across the borough. The mapping from the 2015 open space audit was used to calculate existing supply. Some of the typologies were changed when analysing this provision this included, 10 changes from outdoor sport (pitch) to park and recreation ground, 1 change from amenity to park and one additional accessible natural was added.

Table 2   Existing supply of parks and greenspaces across the borough

Typology	Existing Provision (Ha)	Existing Provision (Ha/1000)	Required Provision (Ha)	Required Provision (Ha/1000)	Supply (ha)	Supply (ha/1000)
Amenity Green Space	182.10	0.54	202.80	**0.6**	-20.70	0.49
Parks and Recreation Grounds	256.66	0.76	169.00	**0.5**	87.66	0.71
Accessible Natural Green Space	2399.00	7.10	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Table 3 shows how the provision varies within individual wards. There are shortfalls in all typologies. Across parks and recreation grounds, there are some wards that have a large

supply such as Handbridge Park, Hartford and Greenbank and Winsford Over and Verdin. These will be analysed further within the locality frameworks.

Table 3   Existing supply of parks and greenspaces by ward against the CWAC standard (ha)

WARD	Amenity Green Space	Parks and Recreation Grounds	Accessible Natural Green Space
Blacon	-1.12	-0.77	-1.84
Central & Grange	-4.04	2.72	-5.53
Chester City & the Garden Quarter	-8.21	-1.93	-15.67
Christleton & Huntington	-4.24	-0.25	24.06
Davenham, Moulton & Kingsmead	-0.93	-1.35	13.39
Farndon	-2.58	5.02	-3.43
Frodsham	-2.16	10.47	83.19
Gowy Rural	10.64	-0.64	38.44
Great Boughton	-3.43	-0.83	-4.45
Handbridge Park	-0.66	16.19	41.14
Hartford & Greenbank	-1.06	22.86	28.77
Helsby	-2.82	-1.49	18.65
Lache	-3.06	-1.65	2.19
Ledsham & Manor	-2.88	-4.55	-3.71
Little Neston	-1.13	-1.11	-0.78
Malpas	-1.51	-0.79	22.48
Marbury	-5.10	-3.64	328.25
Neston	-2.53	2.43	-1.52
Netherpool	6.88	-2.65	29.59
Newton & Hoole	-6.44	7.02	-14.25
Northwich Leftwich	2.05	-2.25	11.58
Northwich Winnington & Castle	5.33	2.45	2.39
Northwich Witton	6.25	-1.11	63.51
Parkgate	4.12	-2.50	16.52
Rudheath	-1.92	3.23	14.32
Sandstone	0.30	-1.34	171.67
Saughall & Mollington	-1.14	0.19	-4.92
Shakerley	-0.82	-1.87	123.22
Strawberry	0.29	-2.65	-3.33
Sutton Villages	-3.68	-0.94	4.28
Tarporley	-1.88	-1.20	-3.75
Tarvin & Kelsall	-3.45	-1.37	767.00
Tattenhall	1.98	3.90	27.31
Upton	-3.13	5.10	16.11
Weaver & Cuddington	-3.17	-3.23	25.44

WARD	Amenity Green Space	Parks and Recreation Grounds	Accessible Natural Green Space
Westminster	-0.34	-1.62	1.06
Whitby Groves	-1.19	-1.74	19.83
Whitby Park	0.35	17.32	-5.10
Willaston & Thornton	-2.67	2.88	91.21
Winsford Dene	3.63	-2.30	-3.97
Winsford Gravel	0.04	-1.49	0.80
Winsford Over & Verdin	2.42	29.44	116.94
Winsford Swanlow	2.64	-2.25	-2.97
Winsford Wharton	4.42	-0.95	38.08
Wolverham	5.25	6.90	-5.20

Quality

Sites were assessed for their quality using the quality audit framework (see appendix 2) and graded were categorised as follows:

0-40 (D): poor quality

40-60 (C): average quality

60-80 (B): good quality

80+ (A): excellent quality

In total, there were 18 sites that scored A, 22 sites that scored B and 7 sites that scored C.

The guidance in terms of quality varies slightly between the different typologies.

Amenity Green Space

All amenity green space should be subject to landscape design, ensuring the following quality principles:

- Include level surfaces capable of supporting informal recreation such as a kickabout, space for dog walking or space to sit and relax;
- Include well kept grass areas with regular maintenance;
- Include a high quality and variety of planting such as trees and/or shrubs to create landscape structure and biodiversity value;
- Be designed to maximise the natural capital value/multifunctionality of a site, retaining and improving existing green assets wherever possible e.g. trees, hedgerows, wildflower areas;
- Include paths along main desire lines (lit where appropriate);
- Be designed to ensure easy maintenance;
- Be clean and litter free;
- Include litter and dog bins (where appropriate);

- Include seating (where appropriate); and
- Be designed with good levels of natural surveillance and sight lines/security and safety.

Accessible Natural Green Space

The shape and size of space provided should allow for meaningful and safe recreation. Provision might be expected to include (as appropriate) elements of woodland, wetland, heathland and meadow, and could also be made for informal public access through recreation corridors. For larger areas, where car borne visits might be anticipated, some parking provision will be required. The larger the area the more valuable sites will tend to be in terms of their potential for enhancing local conservation interest and biodiversity. Wherever possible these sites should be linked to help improve wildlife value as part of a network.

In areas where it may be impossible or inappropriate to provide additional natural green space consistent with the standard, other approaches should be pursued which could include (for example):

- Changing the management of marginal space on playing fields and parks to enhance biodiversity.
- Encouraging living green roofs as part of new development/ redevelopment.
- Encouraging the creation of mixed species hedgerows.
- Additional use of long grass management regimes.
- Improvements to watercourses and water bodies.
- Innovative use of new drainage schemes / Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS).
- Use of native trees and plants with biodiversity value in high quality soft landscaping of new developments.

Parks and Recreation Grounds

National guidance relevant to this typology is provided in the 'Green Flag' quality standard for parks which sets out benchmark criteria for quality open spaces (details on this can be found in Section 9). For outdoor sports space, Sport England have produced a wealth of useful documents outlining the quality standards for facilities such as playing pitches, changing rooms, MUGAS and tennis courts plus associated ancillary facilities. The Rugby Football Union have provided guidance on the quality and standard of provision of facilities for rugby, and the England and Wales Cricket Board have provided guidance for cricket facilities. It is recommended that the guidance provided in these documents is adopted by the council, and that all new and improved provision seeks to meet these guidelines.

A detailed summary of the quality audits is provided with the Locality Area Frameworks.

Access

Access standards set out in the Open Space Study (2017) for parks and greenspaces are summarised in table 4 below:

Table 4   Cheshire West and Chester Open Space Study – Access Standards for Parks and Green Spaces

Typology	Access standard
Amenity Green Space	480 metres or 10 minutes' walk time
Parks and Recreation Grounds	720 metres or 15 minutes' walk time
Accessible Natural Green Space	ANGSt and Woodland Trust for analysing existing provision

Analysis of access to parks and green spaces needs to be considered at local level and this analysis is included in the Locality Area Frameworks.

6.3 Prioritisation of parks and greenspaces – locality improvement frameworks

Locality Play Improvement Frameworks

The Framework documents (tier 2) provides a valuable evidence-based resource. The Frameworks list all Cheshire West and Chester priority parks and green spaces within the locality. In addition, they provide a strategic profile for the locality and a guide to making prioritising choices in relation to improvements.

A framework document has been used rather than a plan because it does not aim to produce a prescriptive parks and green space delivery plan but instead provides evidence for CWAC to use to reviewing, development and implementing their own delivery plans.

Prioritisation Framework

Sites have been prioritised through an objective assessment to determine where improvements are most needed.

Criteria used to prioritise the sites are:

- Demographics i.e. population density per square km
- Private Gardens i.e the % of households with access to private outdoor spaces (MSOA)
- Levels of deprivations
- Health i.e identifying the most unhealthy areas of the borough
- Proximity to education
- Proximity to bus stops
- Proximity to other parks and green spaces
- Biodiversity – proximity to ecological network
- Current quality of the sites and their potential for improvement

As a result of this process, the Framework scores the sites and categories them into high, medium or low priority for improvement.

7.0 INCOME OPPORTUNITIES

7.1 Introduction

This section will look at several opportunities for generating income; income generation from sites, income generational through development, income generation through taxation and income generation through ecosystem services.

CABE Spaces's 2006 report 'Paying for Parks'[3] sets out the eight most common income streams for UK parks which are:

1. Traditional local authority funding
2. Multi-agency public sector funding
3. Taxation initiatives
4. Planning and development opportunities
5. Bonds and commercial finance
6. Income-generation opportunities
7. Endowments
8. Voluntary sector involvement

Despite local authorities funding significant proportions of money for parks, there should be scope to diversify the income streams through private funding, support from the community and voluntary sector (discussed further in section 8), revenue income from sites, fundraising and sponsorship.

7.2 Income Generation from Sites

The following sections explores opportunities there are for generating income within parks and greenspaces. Within the tier 2 locality frameworks, there is more detailed analysis of existing site income and further opportunities for income generation within each park and greenspace are explored.

7.2.1 Recreational Fees and Charges

Sports Clubs use parks and greenspaces and the facilities associated with them regularly across the borough, these clubs include football, bowling, croquet, fishing and cricket. CWAC council currently charge these clubs to use the facilities to put towards the maintenance and running costs associated with recreational facilities. However, a recent review of recreational charges by CWAC council found that in fact the council subsidies a large proportion of the maintenance and running costs, and that costings aren't the same across the locality areas.

Table 5   Subsidisation of activities[4]

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[3] CABE (2006) 'Paying for Parks.' London: Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment.
[4] Taken from the CWAC Review of Recreational Charges 18/19

Activity	Annual cost of maintenance per pitch	No of pitches/greens	Annual total costs for maintenance 18/19	Annual revenue from players 17/18	Annual total subsided by CWAC
Football	£1,551.00	57	£88,407.00	£6,663.00	£81,744.00
Bowls	£6,586.60	18	£118,558.80	£5,696.00	£112,862.80
Croquet	£6,586.60	3	£19,759.80	£1,763.00	£17,996.80
Total			**£226,725.60**	**£14,122**	**£212,603.60**

The review of recreational charge report also carried out a benchmarking exercise with seven local authorities and found that CWAC charge 33% less for the use of facilities. This identifies that there is an opportunity to increase recreational fees to cover the cost of maintenance from recreational activities. This proposed increase was consulted with stakeholders in the initial engagement, and 89% agreed that it was necessary to review these fees to secure the future development of recreational facilities.

7.2.2 Events

Events in parks can provide another source of income for parks and greenspaces. Fees can be charged to event organisers as part of any licensing or permissions to hold events. Alternatively, parks managers can organise events which themselves can be a source of income generation.

Examples of events that could be held include fun days, carnivals, music concerts, firework displays and triathlons. A mixture of regular and seasonal events can enhance the popularity of parks. However, a large number of events could conflict with some attributes that parks provide such as providing a peaceful escape from everyday life and a habitat for wildlife. It is therefore important that events are programmed careful to reduce negative impacts upon parks.

As well as the examples of event above, the Nesta 'Rethinking Parks' report suggests the potential for more creative uses of parks such as;

- Specific temporary facilities or permanent facilities for children and young people (potentially seasonal) including adventure & natural play and performance spaces.
- Provision of meeting places, attractive office space, hubs for social enterprises.
- Establishing educational and training facilities.
- Private functions and corporate events that could be leased on an occasional basis.

Currently, there are 9 parks and greenspaces which have event space hire available, 7 which has music concert hire, 11 that can hold mini fairs and 4 that can hold fun fairs. Events are also currently free to hold on CWAC parks and greenspaces.

The initial engagement questioned stakeholders' views on increasing the amount of events within parks and greenspaces. The majority of consultees supported the increasing of events, subject to events being held in appropriate locations.

The following recommendations are made in relation to events in parks:

- a charging schedule for event licenses is developed with varying rates for event types, to distinguish between community events and commercial events;
- a separate procedure is developed for larger scale events such as funfairs where tenders are invited to hold events.

7.2.3 Concessions

Food and drink concessions stands are a familiar source of revenue for parks and greenspaces. Examples include ice cream vans, food outlets, gift shops, coffee stalls. Concessions can also aid security of a site, provide economic development within a local area and support local/small businesses. However, excessive amounts of concessions can make a park feel commercialised. It is important to ensure that concessions enhance the park visitor experience. There are already some concessions within CWAC parks and greenspaces, but there is scope to add more of which can be found within the locality frameworks.

Initial engagement questioned stakeholders' views on increasing the amount of concessions within parks and greenspaces. The majority of consultees supported the increase in concessions within parks and greenspaces subject to concessions being located appropriately and suitable types of concessions.

It is recommended that a review of existing concessions is undertaken including rates charged, tenure of existing agreements etc. A plan to renew and retender concessions should be developed to ensure that income from concessions delivers both a quality service and appropriate income generation. An agreement at corporate level would need to be secured to ringfence income from concessions back into parks and greenspaces.

7.2.4 Business Charging

There are many individual businesses that use parks and greenspaces as part of their business. Examples of these businesses include fitness trainers, dog walking businesses and art classes. Currently CWAC allow these businesses to operate these services for free.

Initial engagement questioned stakeholders' views on introducing charging businesses for using parks and green spaces. The large proportion of consultees supported the introduction on charging business's but there were concerns that this could harm businesses.

It is recommended a more detailed consultation is conducted around this proposal.

7.2.5 Car parking

12 of CWAC parks and greenspaces have car parks attached to them, however only 1 site charges for parking. It has been identified legally and through demand that 7 sites have potential to charge and earn an income through their on-site car parks. It was identified through the 2016 open space study consultation that the majority of households would drive to country parks and woodlands, therefore there is an opportunity to review these sites for parking. However, it must be noted that charges should be increased proportionality to ensure not to put people off visiting sites.

It is recommended that a feasibility report is prepared to be agreed corporately to establish a policy and procedure for charging for car parks in parks.

7.3   Income Generation through Development

Income generation through private developers comes in the form of planning obligations. Obligations can take the form of direct provision of infrastructure, land or buildings by a developer such as construction of play facility or school. They can also involve a financial contribution to the local authority for a specific purpose.

7.3.1   S106 Contributions

Section 106 is a legal agreement between a developer and the local planning authority which is used to mitigate the impact of the development on the local community and infrastructure. S106 contributions often require a financial contribution prior to the project starting. The charge is based on the specific needs of the local community. This contribution can either go towards building new infrastructure or rejuvenating existing infrastructure.

7.3.2   Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

The Community infrastructure levy (CIL) is a charge that local authorities in England can place on development in their area. The money generated through the levy contributes towards the funding of infrastructure to support growth. CIL is applied under chargeable zones which meeting the conditions for CIL. The intention behind CIL is that it will contribute towards the funding of infrastructure to support the cumulative impact of development across the county.

CIL came into effect in Cheshire West and Chester on 1st September 2017 and is charged on all CIL liable development granted planning permission on or after this date.

There is also scope for income from Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) who replaced Regional Development Agencies (RDA) in 2012. LEPs role are to deliver economic growth within local areas. There are opportunities for European Funding for investing and delivering green infrastructure through LEPs[5].

7.4   Income Generation through Taxation

Income generation through taxation is an option which is not discussed widely across the UK with the UK Government's position is to usually limit any increase in taxation. However, there is potential to explore opportunities for innovation in development and refining taxation and levy model to raise money for locally focussed public funding.

Business Improvement Districts have been used in the UK to raise additional funding for specific areas particularly in commercial and retail districts. This method involves promoting

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[5] BIS (2013) 'The Development and Delivery of European Structural and Investment Funds Strategies, supplementary guidance to Local Enterprise Partnerships.' London: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

local business and improving the management of streets and squares to improve the business environment.

These methods are more widely used in the US where they have introduced Neighbourhood Improvement Districts and Park Improvement Districts. Despite taxation increase being unpopular widely in the UK, it could be argued that these options align with the drive for localism and a move to agree funding priorities at a more local level. Different taxation options include:

- Greater use of municipal bonds and commercial financing
- Tax Increment Financing (TIF) – this captures the additional tax uplift from parks for a set period.
- Business Improvement Districts (BID)
- Neighbourhood Improvement Districts (NID)
- Park Improvement Districts (PID)

Case Study – Wimbledon Conservators, Wandsworth

Wimbledon and Putney Commons have been financed by a levy on the Boroughs of Wandsworth, Merton and Kingston in a proportion relevant to the number of band 'D' properties in each Borough that are within ¾ mile of the Commons or in the old Parish of Putney. The Boroughs pass on the levy by way of an addition to Council tax.

The Commons are administered by a board of eight Conservators, three of which are government appointed and five are elected by the levy payers.

7.5   Income Generation through ecosystem services

Income generation through ecosystem services are a new area for generating income. Ecosystem services capture the value of the environmental services and benefits that nature performs. This includes direct and easily priced services, for example, food and timber production, renewable energy and biomass. Indirect services include water treatment and flood risk management, improving air quality, carbon sequestration and enhancing biodiversity.

New developments often incur biodiversity loss within their design even good quality development. Biodiversity Net Gain is set to become a mandatory part of planning through the Environment Bill to compensate for loss of biodiversity through development.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is defined as 'a goal for a development project in which biodiversity losses are avoided, minimised, compensated and then exceeded by gains for biodiversity' (Business and Biodiversity Offset Programme (BBOP), 2018). Subsequently, BNG is the achievement of measurable gains for biodiversity through new development and occurs when a development leaves biodiversity in a better state than before development.

Once enacted, this is likely to require any development under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (except Permitted Development and Householder Applications) to evidence a 10% increase in biodiversity value and 30 years of habitat management for biodiversity. Further to

this, BNG is supported within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, (2019), which states that planning policies and decisions 'should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.'

To claim BNG and to generate long-term gains for nature, the 10 BNG Good Practice Principles for Development are followed. The principles provide the framework for high quality and meaningful BNG that should make a measurable and positive contribution to biodiversity.

It may be the case that local authorities can benefit from developers requiring to create offset habitats which could be an option within parks and green spaces.

Carbon sequestration through woodland creation has been identified as a cost-effective means of mitigating climate change. Due to the spatial insensitivity of carbon sequestration, it is encouraged that woodland is created. The Woodland Carbon Code is the voluntary standard for UK woodland creation, it is based on a 'outputs-based approach' as businesses pay for tonnes of carbon sequestered. The code allows credits to be both sold before and after planting to help raise revenue associated with both capital and maintenance costs, and also to meet upfront costs.

Case Study – Mayesbrook Park, Dagenham

Mayesbrook Park is a 45ha park which has been restored using green infrastructure to address flood-water management. The project has created a new multi-functional landscape which provides a public amenity along with helping the local community and wildlife within the park to cope better with the effects of climate change.

An ecosystem services assessment helped build the case for investment in an integrated urban river restoration revealing a long-term return to society of at least £7 for every £1 spent.

Picture taken from Restoring Europe's Rivers - https://restorerivers.eu/wiki/index.php?title=Case_study%3AMayesbrook_Climate_Change_Park_restoration_project

8.0 PARK MANAGEMENT

Across the UK, the majority of parks and greenspaces are owned and managed by local councils. There is increasing pressure on public subsidies and council budgets, therefore parks and greenspaces will need to find alternative ways of supplementing income with the management of parks a key part to explore. This section will explore the different models available with the advantages and disadvantages and example case studies.

8.1 Local Authority

Local authorities managing greenspaces is the traditional approach to ownership and management, where land is owned, managed, and maintained by the local authority. New development sites are transferred from the developer with a commuted sum towards maintenance for a specific period. Therefore, maintenance and management are funded out of council tax monies.

Advantages	Disadvantages
- Straight forward and ownership issues are simple. - A tried and tested approach. - Maintenance can be carried out by teams already in the area. - Possible economies of scale for maintenance costs, when maintenance combined with other green spaces. - No obligations on residents to provide financial contributions or provide commitment for management.	- Risk of insufficient funding from shrinking council budgets. - Once commuted sum of money has been spent, maintenance standards may fall. - Monies may go into a central fund rather than going towards a specific site/project. - Competition for funding with other council services could affect ability to maintain satisfactory standards of maintenance. - Low levels of community involvements and sense of ownership.

8.2 A Trust

An independent charitable organisation that takes responsibility for managing parks and greenspaces. This could either be an established trust with responsibility for multiple spaces e.g. a wildlife trust or a new trust specifically established for a park or green space.

A trust will usually take a long lease on a site (125-150 years) with the local authority or a developer having the freehold. The Trust will have charitable status and a board of trustees which make decisions on how the land is managed. Funding for management and maintenance is obtained by returns on investments, property rental, grant aid etc.

Advantages	Disadvantages
A Trust can provide high standards of maintenance in the long term	If establishing for a specific site, they can be complex and costly to set up.

Advantages	Disadvantages
especially from a well-established trust. ➢ Potential for greatest scope for imaginative and creative design management. ➢ Trusts are likely to be based on site, and therefore can be more in touch with users of the greenspace and respond more quickly to issues and incidents. ➢ Rates relief on property can be used for charitable purposes and charities have a privileged tax position. ➢ The Trust could seek funding contributions from sources that the council cannot such as grants or charitable donations. ➢ Generally predictable/guaranteed income. ➢ A good option for community involvement.	➢ Difficult to recruit suitable trustees. ➢ Funding shortfall if investments do not provide returns. ➢ If a developer is establishing a Trust, it can be a costly option. ➢ May be perceive as not a "proper public park" by local authority which could produce difficulties.

Case Study – Shenley Park Trust, Shenley, Hertfordshire

Shenley Park Trust was established in 1992 as part of a new housing development and operates as an independent charitable trust. It develops, manages, and maintains a 45-acre rural park for the local community of Shenley.

The Trust was granted a 150 lease on the park by Hertsmere Borough Council along with a lump sum of money which was spent on renovating the properties on the site, restructuring the park and some was invested to provide an annual income for the park. The rental income on the properties pay for staff wages and every day running costs. No other funding is given to the Park and it is an example of a self-financing park.

There is a team of staff managed by the park director which are responsible for the day to day running of the park. The Board of Trustees oversee the running of the park to ensure its aims and objectives are being met and run in accordance with the Charities Commission.

Photo taken from article - https://www.hertfordshirelife.co.uk/out-about/places/exploring-shenley-park-1-

8.3   **Management Company**

Land is managed and maintained by a private management company. This is a common approach when new large housing developments are completed. Landownership is retained by the developer or could be transferred to the management company. At first management and maintenance is funded by the developer then converted to the management company with contributions from the residents.

Advantages	Disadvantages
➢ Management/maintenance is usually to a high standard. ➢ Financial endowment is not required.	➢ No scope for community involvement and ownership. ➢ Annual fees can be expensive for residents.

Advantages	Disadvantages
➢ No ongoing costs or responsibilities for a local authority.	➢ Management of spaces may be at a national rather than local level. ➢ Management depends on long term view of the developer/management company. ➢ Risk that the management company fails to maintain the greenspace to a good quality or that they go out of business.

Types of management company include:

- *Residents Management Company* – residents run a company to manage the greenspace, with residents in a development owning a share in the company and paying annual service charge.
- *Management Company employed by landowner* – landowner or developer maintains ownership but responsibility sits with management company.
- *Management Company owning land* – ownership is passed to a management company who are responsible for management of land. The company may be a not-for-profit company working across the country.

8.4 Town/Parish Councils

Town and parish councils are a popular option for managing parks and greenspaces across the country. These can either be given on a long-term lease or asset transferred.

Currently some parks and greenspaces are managed by town and parish councils but not all, most notably across the eastern part of CWAC.

Advantages	Disadvantages
➢ Can identify issues and needs quickly within local area. ➢ Have more access to external funding sources. ➢ Opportunities for the local community to get involved within the management of sites.	➢ Appointing contractors to complete work could be difficult. ➢ Responsible for more liabilities. ➢ Councillors will need to give more time up from other areas to manage the park.

8.5 The Community

Community empowerment is becoming more important within our parks and greenspaces. People want their voices to be heard in the planning and delivery of park services. There are different ways in which parks and greenspaces could be managed by communities. The consultation as part of the open space study in 2016 highlighted that there were already a large number of active friend's groups with CWAC.

1. **Community Ownership** – where a park is owned and managed by a community.

2. **Community Stewardship** – the local authority retain ownership of the park but volunteers and friends of groups are responsible for managing the park.
3. **Community Co-management** – the local authority, volunteers and friends groups work together in equal partnership to protect parks and greenspaces although the local authority retain ownership and liability for the land.

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Community Ownership	➢ The community who use the space can identify issues quickly. ➢ Give communities greater involvement for shaping their parks and green spaces. ➢ Boost local employment and improve skills of residents. ➢ No ongoing costs or responsibilities from local authorities.	➢ Community control may become 'exclusive' rather than 'inclusive'. ➢ Pressure on residents to step-up and give up time. ➢ Potential lack of professional knowledge to manage and maintain a successful park.
Community Stewardship	➢ Less responsibility and ongoing costs from local authorities. ➢ Local authority can retain liabilities which community groups may not be able to obtain. ➢ Communities can access different funding sources to local authorities.	➢ Pressure on residents to step-up and give up time. ➢ Potential lack of professional knowledge to maintain a successful park.
Community Co-management	➢ Local authorities can keep some level of overall control of parks and green spaces. ➢ Satisfaction of working together as a partnership. ➢ Ability to access different funding.	➢ Partners may have different agendas, and could be difficult to agree on matters.

Case Study Community Ownership – Hardie Park, Stanford le Hope, Essex

Hardie Park is a community led park. Local residents took ownership of the park in 2011 in order to develop and enhance the area for the benefit of the local community. Friends of Hardie Park is a Registered Charity and Community Interest Company and is a not-for-profit organisation. The trustees govern the charitable organisations and volunteer their own time for the park. They also rely on volunteers for the daily running of the park.

Over the years the site has been developed by the group, and now the park provides a café and play facility 7 days a week. The park also holds events and clubs to generate income for the management and maintenance of the park.

Picture from Friends of Hardie Park website - https://www.friendsofhardiepark.co.uk/events/events_2019/

Case Study Community Stewardship – Arnos Vale Cemetery

Arnos Vale is a 45-acre Victorian cemetery with listed buildings and monuments based in the centre of Bristol. Owned by Bristol City Council but managed by the friends of group. The group was able to draw upon Heritage Lottery and English Heritage funding to restoring the historic buildings on site, create meeting spaces, host events and talk and build a café and gift shop. This work prevented the closure of the cemetery and safeguarded the site for the local community for years to come.

Picture from Arnos Vale website - https://arnosvale.org.uk/

Case Study Community Co-Management – Lordship Recreation Ground, Tottenham

Lordship recreation ground is owned by Haringey Council and up until 2002 suffered from a lack of resources and under usage. From 2002, there has been an increase in partnership between park users, the Friends of Lordship Rec, community organisations and the council to set out a strategy for the recreation ground and encourage investment.

The park has seen strong community empowerment practices which has led to securing substantial investment and make physical improvements to the park. The impact of the work has led to park usage double, attract a diverse range of users and increased the number of autonomous user group generating activities.

In 2013 the recreation ground was award Green Flag status following funding being received from various schemes. The Lordship Rec Users Forum brings together all partners who have an interest in Lordship Rec on a monthly basis to discuss future development and to ensure communication and coordination between partners.

Picture from Haringley Council website - https://www.haringey.gov.uk/libraries-sport-and-leisure/parks-and-open-spaces/z-parks-and-open-spaces/lordship-recreation-ground

9.0   GOOD PRACTICE, QUALITY AND GUIDANCE

9.1   Green Flag

The Green Flag award scheme recognises and rewards well managed parks and green spaces. It sets the benchmark standard for the management of recreational outdoor spaces across the UK and around the world.

Achieving Green Flag status brings many benefits with it. It enhances pride and reputation for the site providing a sense of achievement and demonstrating to the community that a clear improvement to the site has been made. It can also provide a knock-on effect for the regeneration of an area in turn bringing improvements to health and education. Sites can see an increase in tourism and potentially a boost in funding through external funding improvement grants.

A successful Green Flag award site provide evidence of a sound management plan which must understand their users, their site and their management strategy which are scored against 27 different criteria. The criteria framework aims to be flexible across different types of green space so that rather than a formulaic list of "must haves" it acts as a guide for the way professionals and communities approach the management of sites.

The criteria is split into the following sections:

Section 1 – A welcoming Place

Section 2 – Healthy, Safe and Secure

Section 3 – Well Maintained and Clean

Section 4 – Environmental Management

Section 5 – Biodiversity, Landscape and Heritage

Section 6 – Community Involvement

Section 7 – Marketing and Communication

Section 8 – Management

Within CWAC, there are currently 6 Green Flag Parks; Grosvenor Park, Caldy Nature Park, Westminster Park (Chester), Whitby Park, Castle Park and Northwich Woodlands.

We recommend that these sites and sites that CWAC council would like to achieve Green Flag status are audited on an annual basis using the quality audit template at appendix 2. A score of 60 or above would indicate that the site is on track/likely to achieve the green flag award, although it should be recognised that there are other criteria that will also need to be met in order to meet the required standard i.e. the desk based criteria, and also the Environmental Management, Marketing and Communications and Management criteria. The audit will also identify which areas are in need for improvement.

9.2   Building with Nature Standards for GI

Building with Nature provides a framework of quality standards to ensure the design and delivery of high-quality green infrastructure, so that developments will also deliver for the natural world and healthy communities. Parks and green spaces are key areas within a green infrastructure network, and therefore this framework should be considered in the improvement and management of sites.

Drawing from evidence and good practice, high quality green infrastructure has been defined at each stage of the development process, from planning and design, through to long-term management and maintenance. The standards enable nature friendly features to be integrated throughout the development.

Developers can apply to have their scheme assessed, and planners can have their policy document accredited by Building with Nature. The standards[6] are also free to use and can assist with the planning and development of new places and communities.

The framework of standards is divided into four themes:

- Core – provides a multifunctional network which responds to local context and policy, and is climate resilient and future proof;

- Wellbeing – is accessible, inclusive, can be enjoyed all year, is locally relevant, socially sustainable and distinctive;

- Water – manages water quantity and quality, maximising opportunities for amenity and biodiversity, is innovative, resilient, and locally distinctive;

- Wildlife – provides bigger, better, more joined up spaces that are locally relevant, nature rich and provide ecological networks.

9.3   Managing Green Space – CABE

This guide produced by CABE sets out the key points for successfully managing green spaces. It also outlines the resources the green space managers can draw upon to the describe the critical services that green space provides to local communities.

1. *High-performing services depend on strong and motivational leadership*

The most important driver of performance is the quality of political and managerial leadership and the access a green space team has to this. A strong leader provides advocacy, vision, ambition, secures funding, builds partnerships, and drives innovation.

2. *Unified management and maintenance functions matters*

Green space services which separate day-to-day maintenance functions from the overall management find it hard to deliver good quality and efficient services. This separation can lead to competing priorities and communication failure. When services are integrated,

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[6] https://www.buildingwithnature.org.uk/how-it-works

priorities are much more likely to be shared and there is better advocacy and interests of the service.

3. *The location of a service, whether in a dedicated parks department or a larger department is not the most important driver of performance*

The division or directorate within which green space services are placed is not of major importance except for when it is part of a larger waste department. Here it risks being neglected because the priorities are focussed on statutory responsibilities.

4. *An active understanding of the policy and practice context is needed to stay responsive and relevant*

It is critical to keeping alert to internal and external context. The government is advocating that local authorities share services to deliver efficiencies and to empower communities to lead on service delivery.

5. *Provide evidence to gain the support of leaders and partners*

Tracking change and having benchmarked data is invaluable for both strategic planning and day-to-day management. It is important to set indicators to clearly measure the contribution to green spaces over time.

6. *Transparent, legible, structures are more effective for those using and delivering the service*

Structures that place, in an organisational sense, green space managers close to senior management encourages better and a more frequent, communication and co-ordination. Having a transparent service structure, where it is clear who is responsible, is also beneficial for users of the service and avoids duplication.

7. *Effective and targeted partnerships underpin successful services*

Green space services are non-statutory and can meet the objectives of other public service areas so active partnership working is fundamental to success. This is about ensuring that the green space service's delivery objectives are met with partners from national and local agencies, and friend's groups. Delivery in partnership with communities is critical.