

Parks and Green Spaces Strategy



Mansfield
District Council

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Introduction

Parks and green spaces can act as areas for quiet contemplation, provide opportunities to interact with nature and provide spaces for communities to get together.

This strategy sets out Mansfield District Council's strategic vision and objectives for parks and green spaces in the district over the next ten years. Its role is to consider what spaces we have and what their quality is, explain the importance of green space to our communities, and celebrates our achievements.

It sets the context for a specific local green space standard for Mansfield District Council. It explains why we need to have standards, and sets out the local planning context within which they will be developed and applied.

The strategy also sets out the key challenges facing Mansfield District Council and our partners in the provision and maintenance of green space in the District over the coming years. It recognises that there are challenges to meet but also opportunities to make best use of our resources and adapt to change.

What all parks and green spaces have in common is they are a valuable community resource for everyone to enjoy the outdoors.

Our priorities are to preserve, protect and enhance our parks and green spaces ensuring everyone can access them.

Parks and Green Spaces Team

July 2017

Jargon Buster

The terms **parks, open** and **green spaces** are used to describe areas that offer health and well-being benefits and opportunities for formal and informal activities, play or relaxation.

All open spaces in the remit of the Mansfield District Council's Parks Team are referred to as **green space**. They are not to be confused with hard landscaped areas such as car parks, market places and town squares.

Some parks have **formal** equipment or facilities, such as play areas, bowling greens and pavilions. Some **informal** parks are just a green area with goal posts or used primarily by dog walkers.

Other green spaces are designated **Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)** or small green areas within housing estates – **amenity space**.

The term **provision** refers to the overall resource of parks and green spaces required to adequately meet the needs of residents in a given area.

A quick guide to green space typologies:

Typology	Definition
Small amenity spaces	Small open grassy areas sometimes with seating, landscaping and spaces supporting informal play
Parks and recreation grounds	Local parks with one or two play/sports pitches or other sport facilities
Green corridors	Linear green spaces best suited for walks, cycling and commuting to school and work, often along rivers and restored mineral railway lines
Local nature reserves and other natural areas	Areas specially designated and managed for nature conservation or forestry
District-level parks	Larger parks that offer a wider range of leisure facilities and can support community events such as Park Run, concerts and fairs

Our Vision

We aim to provide a high standard of service excellence to realise Mansfield District Council's priorities for the people of Mansfield.

We recognise the importance of wildlife and biodiversity in our environment and their contribution to the lives of everyone in the district.

We strive to ensure our services are managed to take practical opportunities to improve and maintain the quality of our green spaces.

The Scope of this Strategy:

- Audit all existing publically accessible parks and green spaces, regardless of ownership in order to provide an up-to-date picture of the location, distribution, type and quality of provision across the District
- Establish an appropriate Mansfield Green Space Standard that will meet the varied and particular needs of Mansfield residents
- Identify key challenges and opportunities to indicate how these spaces contribute to the overall health and well-being of our communities

Central to this strategy is the 'Mansfield Green Space Standard' which acts as a benchmark for meeting the varied and particular needs of Mansfield's residents. This is based on the principle of providing safe, good quality and accessible green space near to where people live. The standard is an important tool for:

- identifying shortfalls in provision
- establishing feasible options for making good any shortfalls
- improving and rationalising provision

The standard and strategy have been developed based on a comprehensive audit and assessment of all existing publicly accessible green spaces in the district, regardless of ownership. This provides an up-to-date picture of the location, distribution, type and quality of green space provision.

This strategy is a 'live' document and work will be updated periodically to respond to changes in national policy, funding, best practice and local circumstances.

Our Parks and Green Spaces

Background

The 19th Century saw the introduction of the first public parks in England. The philosophy was recreational green space should be available for everyone, not just the privileged few. It was hoped parks would reduce disease, crime and social unrest as well as providing 'green lungs' for the city.

Titchfield Park, for example, has been used as a recreational green space by the public since 1880. In 1914, the area was first named as Titchfield Park and gifted to the Mansfield Corporation, which became Mansfield District Council.

Other examples of this legacy include:

- The Duke of Portland and other landowners bequeathed parks, like Yeoman Hill Park, from their estates for 'the public good' or to help commemorate the world wars.
- Pit tips have been restored to community woodland (Oxclose Woods) and country park-like settings (Vicar Water Country Park)
- Parks and green spaces have been created on dis-used quarries and green corridors from former mineral railway lines
- Formal designation of Local Nature Reserves through partnership working between Mansfield District Council, Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust and Natural England
- Land given to Mansfield District Council and other groups upon trust for perpetual use, made possible through the public open space act 1906,
- Legal agreements have been drawn up to protect areas for public recreation
- Communities have purchased land or have been given responsibilities to manage these areas for public enjoyment (e.g. Mansfield Woodhouse Millennium Green)
- New green spaces made possible through new development contributions.

Today, our parks and green spaces are still important parts of our community, culture, heritage, health and environment. They act as areas for active sport and play, rest and relaxation. They provide many opportunities to interact with nature and for communities to come together. What they all have in common is they are valuable resources for everyone to enjoy the outdoors.

Our Green Space Resource

There is over 920 hectares (ha) of publically accessible green space in the district.

The Council owns and/or is responsible for managing over 260 ha of green space including:

- 90 parks and recreation grounds
- 35 Play areas
- 16 Allotment sites¹
- 9 Local Nature Reserves
- 7 Green Flag award winning parks
- 5 Outdoor gyms
- 4 Cemeteries
- 1 Parkour facility
- 1 Pitch & Putt course
- 1 Skate plaza
- Sports Pitches²

This amount of green space varies in size and function - from very small amenity sites (0.4 ha or less) to large natural areas including publicly accessible woodlands and restored collieries (ranging from 30-150 ha in size). The larger natural areas are generally located on the edge of the urban areas.

Although taking up a smaller total area, amenity spaces make up a high proportion of the total number of green spaces in the district (43%).

Larger district-level parks, generally distributed centrally, offer a wide range of facilities. Local parks, recreation grounds and larger amenity spaces (i.e. open mown grassed areas) are more evenly distributed across the district, serving local neighbourhoods and clubs.

A summary of MDC owned and managed green spaces can be found at Appendix 1.

Summary of Audit Findings

According to our 2015 green space audit and assessment, as a whole, the district's collective green space resource is of overall good quality and a majority of residents live within a short walk (approximately five minutes) to nearby green space.

The work highlighted a number of significant issues. The first was that the definitions used for green spaces, open spaces, parks, recreation fields vary so much between councils that a real comparison based on quantity is generally meaningless. At a more local level, ward boundaries which are drawn for reasons of defining the

¹ Refer to separate MDC Allotment Strategy for further information

² Refer to separate MDC Playing Pitch Strategy for further information

population into equally sized political areas, take no notice of parks and green spaces other than potentially see them as boundaries and either include or exclude them. Therefore, there are residential areas with very little green space within them but major high quality provision all around.

The district and its green spaces face challenges including limited funding opportunities and health and deprivation inequalities. In some areas there is limited access to green space and play facilities, especially those of good quality. In other areas, access may be good but facilities are limited.

The majority of the District-level parks (e.g. Titchfield and Carr Bank parks) are located through the central core areas of Mansfield and Market Warsop, which makes them most accessible to the greatest number of people.

It is likely that the creation of new green spaces within planned urban extensions or as part of new housing developments within the urban area, will help to meet the needs of residents who do not live within a 5 minute walk.

A summary of national guidance on open space requirements used in the study can be found at Appendix 2.

A comprehensive Community Open Space Assessment is due to be published in 2017.

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Key Challenges and Opportunities

The following cross cutting challenges and opportunities help inform our objectives, priorities and actions for improving and managing our green spaces.

They reflect national and local trends and priorities and are placed into three main areas:



People

Challenges

Demographic Trends

The 2011 Census figures show an increase in population (7.6%) in the district since 2001. Likewise the number of households (based on number of dwellings) in the district has also experienced a proportional increase (3.6%) compared with 2001.

Based on the current area of formal recreational green space, the district exceeds national targets per 1,000 population indicating, in principle, that there is enough green space to meet growing demands.

Key factors including how close green space is to where people live, its quality, type and facilities available are all likely to have a greater influence on local demands for green space.

As with other facilities, such as doctor's surgeries and schools, increases in population are likely to increase demand for green spaces. This clearly has implications for how we prioritise where new green space and facilities should go and what improvements are required.

Good quality green spaces, the mix of experiences they have to offer and how they are promoted are key factors in how well these spaces will meet the health and wellbeing needs of a growing population.

The population of the UK is ageing and with this comes new challenges for ensuring the mental and physical health and well-being needs of older people (e.g. 65 years plus) are addressed. Based on 2011 statistics, Mansfield has a slightly higher proportion of people over 65 years of age (17.2%) when compared with the national average (16.4%). The health and well-being requirements and preferences of older people need to be considered as part of the future role of our green spaces.

Opportunities

Creating new green space and improvements to existing green space

New and different types of green space provision will need creating. Improvements will need to be put in place where there are observed deficiencies in provision ensuring that the existing and future green space resource is fit for purpose. Where feasible, this should include meeting increases in demand for green space and health needs for all ages and abilities.

Local standards are essential for guiding minimum requirements for green space. They ensure safe and easy access to good quality nearby green space and support the health and well-being needs of residents.

Needs are most likely to be addressed through financial contributions from new development and other funding sources such as external grants and partnership working.

Working in partnership

There are opportunities to continue to work with our communities and partners to gain a better understanding of what type of facilities and design requirements are needed to help meet local needs.

Tackling inactivity and obesity, whilst improving our overall health and well-being

A major public health issue facing the UK is how to tackle the increasing incidence of obesity in adults and particularly, children. The overall health of the district's population is a cause for concern; key well-being indicator results are generally worse than the national average, including lower life expectancy rates, childhood obesity rates and a higher proportion of the population suffering from a limiting long-term illness*.

There is a growing national agenda to encourage greater uptake of physical activity to help address physical and mental health problems. This is reflected in the creation of health and well-being boards. The Nottinghamshire Health and Wellbeing Board was established to improve the health and well-being of the people within the county.

*Public Health England's health profile for Mansfield District (2015).
<http://www.apho.org.uk/resource/item.aspx?RID=5051>

Dementia - is a growing concern as the population ages. Dementia costs the economy annually, more than the economic cost of cancer and heart disease combined. Based on the growing evidence having access to green space is beneficial for our physical and mental well-being.

Approximately two-thirds of people living with dementia currently live in their own homes and tend to be at the earlier end of the onset of dementia.

Indices of Multiple Deprivation

IMD scores reflect a wide range of issues, many of which such as health, education, income are inter-related. In essence, it helps us identify which communities are most in need and less likely to access facilities that many others are able to, such as gyms, leisure facilities, and tourist destinations.

Nearby safe and easy access to green space

Ensuring people live within safe walking distances of nearby good quality green space is essential for supporting people's well-being. This is supported by a wealth of evidence. It is estimated that if every household in England were provided with good access to quality green space, £2.1 billion in healthcare costs could be saved (based on 2009 study).

Assessments of the district's green spaces (2015) and playing pitches (2015-2016) identify where there are gaps in access to and quality of green space, play and sports provision. This information helps us to understand where improvements are needed, prioritised and addressed.

There are opportunities to understand how best to integrate the needs of people with disabilities, support natural play and understand how green spaces can be more dementia friendly.

Recognising & inspiring greater community cohesion

Green spaces are crucial meeting places for communities to interact and come together. This includes informal meetings around children's play areas and utilising the spaces for more formal celebrations and activities such as outdoor concerts, summer festivals and fayres, Park Run, and orienteering courses.

The Parks and Leisure departments support a variety of programmes throughout the year. Opportunities exist to increase the types and variety of programmes encouraging further use of the district's green spaces.

Many of the district parks are supported by active Friends Groups who support improvements and activities. They also support skills improvements and provide opportunities for community cohesion.

Partnership working

Nottinghamshire Health and Well-being Board's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (date) emphasises the need to work in partnership to address the district's health needs. Opportunities exist to continue developing partnerships to address inequalities and support health and wellbeing initiatives.

Place

Challenges

Gaps in access to green space

The 2015 assessment of all green spaces in the district found that a majority of residents have good access to some form of green space nearby, whether it is a small amenity space, local park, nature reserve or larger, multi-user park. The effect of major roads and other physical barriers limiting access to green space was also assessed. Based on walking distances and barriers, there are key areas in which residents don't have access or very limited access to nearby green space within an identified safe and easy walking distance.

Gaps in access to play space and sports provision

The 2015 assessment considered access to nearby play provision for children and young people. Fewer than half the residential properties were within a maximum 5-minute walking distance of a play area and approximately 60% within a 15-minute walking distance to teenager play space.

The 2016 playing pitch assessment indicates quality is a key issue that needs addressing. Many of the playing pitches assessed are of 'standard' quality verging on poor.

Need for quality improvements

The 2015 assessment surveyed the quality of green spaces.

Overall, the average quality of green and play spaces in the district was considered good but welcoming, accessibility, play value and place shaping qualities required the greatest improvements.

Funding limitations

Funding improvements through new residential development is one of the way of addressing gaps in access to and quality of nearby green and play spaces. This is limited to the where the development takes place, as funding is required to be spent within a reasonable nearby distance so new residents can benefit from any planned improvements.

Some funding grants are limited to community groups and others require coordinated partnership efforts.

Ownership

Mansfield District Council owns most of the parks and other urban amenity green space in the district. The Welbeck Estate, Forestry Commission and Nottinghamshire County Council own the larger natural green spaces on the urban edges. Other community groups and trusts own a small number of urban and urban fringe green spaces.

Opportunities

Addressing gaps in access and quality

Any gaps in access to and quality of nearby green space are most likely to be addressed through financial contributions from new development and other funding sources such as external grants.

Carefully considering community open space and playing pitch assessment findings will help with prioritising improvements in order to get the best out of limited resources.

Working in partnership

External organisations, landowners and volunteers are our most valuable resources for seeking to address funding and resource issues.

Engagement with our communities

Engagement with local communities will help support us in prioritising resource improvements.

Opportunities Challenges

Accessibility

Access to play equipment and facilities should be easily available to everyone regardless of age, ability or disability. Future maintenance and planning of our green spaces should ensure accessibility improvements are addressed where reasonably practicable.

Opportunities to improve accessibility for all:

A 2015 quality survey of the district's green spaces and play areas has identified where there are likely to be inequalities in access to and around these areas.

This information is useful for prioritising improvements and for undertaking more detailed assessments in order to understand accessibility needs in greater detail.

Environment

Challenges

People and nature

Whilst there is growing collective evidence that supports nature's healing and well-being benefits, less people (particularly children) are getting out and enjoying it. This may be for a number of reasons such as play spaces are too far away, safety perceptions, not enough time or not the right type of provision. Mansfield District Council Citizen's Panel questionnaire indicates that poor quality of green space is a key perceived barrier to accessing nearby green space.

The same survey also highlighted that respondents placed a high value on having access to natural green space (97.3% in agreement that having access to natural green space was important).

Providing access to a mixture of formal and informal green spaces and improving the 'naturalness' of green spaces is a recognised need.

More than just outdoor recreation

Green spaces, on their own and connected together, provide:

- good functioning green infrastructure for supporting healthy communities
- places to enjoy the district's heritage
- places for wildlife
- lessen the impacts of flooding, provide shelter and cooling stations in the presence of climate change
- act as commuting routes to school and work.

Often these benefits are not understood. As a result they can be overlooked and under resourced.

Opportunities

Nature nearby

Based on the 2015 community open space assessment results, a majority of residents have access to nearby natural green space from where they live (84% of residential properties have access within a 10-minute walk). Quality of natural green spaces varies greatly, potentially limiting wider use and enjoyments in some areas.

There are opportunities to improve access to and quality of, natural areas. This strategy aims at prioritising improvements and meeting inequalities, where possible.

There is also evidence that providing more natural areas can reduce maintenance costs.

Learning from the best

There are opportunities to draw upon successful examples of well-designed green spaces within the district, research, best practice and community consultations.

This collective knowledge should guide improvements for existing green space and the design of future spaces.

Natural Play spaces

Having access to natural areas for play is shown to enhance children's concentration, creativity, physical abilities and handle change.

Recognising and promoting these areas in the district and enhancing existing green space can help improve our children's health and well-being.

Designing new green and play spaces with this in mind is a proactive approach to design.

Protecting and enhancing nature and natural services

Over half of the district's green spaces support natural play and/or habitats. At least 12% are historically important and 12% act to lessen impacts from flooding.

New and enhanced green linkages can be supported through planning policy and requirements from new development.

Improvements will need to be prioritised in order to make the best of limited resources.

Promoting and enhancing green benefits

There are opportunities to recognise and enhance the wider benefits of green spaces and corridors, known collectively as **green infrastructure**.

A range of actions can help enhance wider benefits:

- partnership working
- prioritising through the design of green space
- promoting what we have

Our Achievements

Investing in green space

During the early 2000s, the Heritage Lottery Fund led the way in championing improvements in parks. Both Carr Bank Park and Titchfield Park had investments in excess of £2m.

More investment in our parks and green spaces has been generated through financial contributions from developers known as Section 106 agreements.

New and improved spaces and facilities

New green spaces have been created and new facilities added to existing parks to enhance their greater use. This has been made possible by a combination of Section 106 funding, external funding and working with communities to meet their needs. These include:

- 9 Local Nature Reserves to support the study and enjoyment of wildlife
- Pond dipping and picnic areas in Quarry Lane LNR
- Fishing platforms and pond scrape at The Carrs
- Installation of outdoor gyms in Titchfield Park, Racecourse Park, Kings Walk Open Space and Chesterfield Road Park
- Design and build of the bandstand in Carr Bank Park
- Improved facilities for Pétanque clubs at Titchfield Park and Carr Bank Park
- Unique Parkour (free running) facilities at Queensway Park

Consulting with schools and colleges, Friends Groups, Councillors, sports clubs, parks users and residents about their views of our facilities and green spaces continues to help inform future projects.

Working in partnership

We have supported the development of a number of projects helping to ensure that our parks and green spaces are inspiring and active community spaces:

- Extending wildlife areas, such as: community orchards at Carr Bank Park and the Whinney Hill woodland
- Planting new community orchards in the Ravensdale LNR, The Carrs and Pleasley
- Supporting 10 Friends Groups who help us care for our parks and green spaces
- Working with Friends Groups to put on events, such as open air concerts at Yeoman Hill Park; wildlife events and fun-days
- Working in partnership with agencies on funding bids and management plans (e.g. Environment Agency, Natural England, Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust and Sherwood Forest Trust)
- Working with Friend Groups, partner agencies and schools to create wildflower meadows, participate in International Clean-up Day, design flower beds, organise tree and bulb planting events and produce new interpretation panels
- Promoting events such as Park Run at Manor Park, Xplorer, fairs and the Warsop Carnival

The Mansfield Green Space Standard

The aim of the Mansfield Green Space Standard is to identify a suitable minimum level of green space and play provision for the people of Mansfield. This has been based on:

- A district-wide assessment of all publicly accessible green space and play spaces
- Review of National guidance, research and examples of best practice
- Green Flag quality assessment criteria.

Not all residential areas will currently meet the standard but in setting it, we have a good picture of where there are gaps in access to green space and a clear target to aim for improvements.

In areas where there are recognised gaps in provision, the Council will seek ways in which to improve provision, for example:

- where new development can improve an area
- through partnership working
- by seeking external funding or sponsorship.

It must be recognised that, with limited budgets and resources, it will take time to improve the district's green space resources to the levels we believe our communities deserve. This strategy maps a way forward to achieve this.

Where areas exceed the standard, this does not mean that green space or facilities can be lost but simply that those areas may not currently require additional provision.

The Green Flag Criteria can be found at Appendix 3.

The full methodology of the Mansfield Green Space Standard can be found at Appendix 4.

Further information on providing green space on new housing developments will be included in the proposed Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document, part of the emerging Mansfield Local Plan 2011 to 2031.

The Mansfield Green Space Standard

1. Core Green Space

The Council will seek to ensure, where feasible, that residents have safe and easy access to:

1. Green space within a 5 minute (400 metres) walking journey
2. Play space (formal or natural play area) suitable for a range of ages within a 5 minute (400 metres) walking journey.
3. Natural green space within a 10 minute walking journey (700 metres).

2. Access to Wider Facilities

The Council will seek to ensure that residents have safe and easy access to:

1. A 'district park' within a 15 minute walking journey (1,000 metres)
2. Teenager provision with a 15 minute walking journey (1,000 metres)

3. Quality

The Council will seek to ensure that all green spaces will be of overall 'good' quality. Priority will be given to:

1. Being welcoming and accessible for everyone
2. Incorporating safe and secure design principles
3. Supporting social interaction through design and available facilities
4. Contributing positively to wildlife and natural play
5. Contributing positively to the surrounding area through place shaping
6. Meeting the needs of local communities, for which a green space serves.

Applying the Standard

The Mansfield Green Space Standard sets out our approach for ensuring adequate access to green space for residents in the district. Improving access to green space and quality of green space requires a creative and multi-layered approach. Potential approaches to improving provision could include:

- Create new green space or play provision through development Section 106 contributions or where other funding allows.
- Improve/upgrade facilities on existing sites e.g. putting a play area on amenity space to create a new local park or upgrade a local park to a district type park, where access to a district park is limited.
- Improve access to spaces by installing or improving access points, or improvements to existing barriers to access such as road crossing points for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Improve quality of existing green spaces in-line with Green Flag criteria. This may include creating new paths and landscaped areas or installing new litter bins and benches.
- Where access is limited to only small amenity sites and there are no realistic opportunities to create new green spaces in the local area, create a 'collective green space theme', where a number of small sites within approximately 5-10 minutes walking distance of each other, can provide a variety of facilities. For example:
 - linking smaller sites through an exercise activity trail with supporting education or interpretive signs
 - creating a series of other themed uses or landscaped designs.

Maps of the district are available on request which show:

- Types of Green Space
- Nature Nearby
- Distribution and Access to Formal and Informal Green Space
- Types of Play Space
- Access to All Green Space
- Access to Play Space – 5min Walk
- Access to Natural Green Space – 10min Walk
- Access to District Parks and Recreation Grounds – 15min Walk

The Mansfield Context

The district's green space provision plays a central role in meeting Mansfield District Council's corporate priorities:

- A thriving, vibrant and sustainable district
- Strong safe and resilient communities
- Clean and welcoming environment

Legal and planning

Although providing and looking after parks and green spaces is not a statutory function (i.e. not a mandatory legal duty) of Mansfield District Council, there are a number of recreation and public health acts that give local authorities the powers to maintain and improve parks and green spaces. These include:

Public Health Act (1875 as amended) Physical Training and Recreation Act (1937)	Establishes land for public use for leisure and sport
Open Spaces Act (1906)	Gives local authorities powers to manage open spaces
Public Health Amendment Act (1907)	Gives local authorities means to equip and also seek charges for their use
Town and Country Planning Act (1990)	Seeks to ensure new green spaces are created as part of new development, existing green spaces are protected and green space is part of good design
Local Government Act (1999)	Provides local authorities with the powers to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of their communities

National planning policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2012) sets out Government policy and directs planning policy at a local level. Protecting and improving green spaces is an important part of the NPPF's definition of sustainable development (NPPF, paragraph 7).

The NPPF (paragraph 73) emphasises that: *'Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. The assessments should identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities in the local area. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sports and recreational provision is required.'*

We have addressed the requirements in the NPPF by:

- mapping all the publicly accessible green spaces in the district, regardless of ownership
- assessing this resource against Nationally suggested standards
- identifying deficits and potential surplus provision
- establishing a minimum local standard for accessing green space and quality of green space supporting what and where green space is required and
- setting out a framework for implementing the standard.

Local planning policy

The Mansfield District Local Plan (2011 to 2031) contains policies which seek to protect parks and green and open spaces unless certain criteria are met; this is in accordance with the NPPF. The policies will apply to all existing and new parks and open spaces regardless of ownership.

Certain green spaces may fall under additional protection covered by other policies in the Local Plan, such as, Green Infrastructure and Local Green Space. These include:

- Green infrastructure – this recognises the interconnected relationships between recreational green spaces, green corridors and areas of countryside.
- Local green space – this is a special designation which protects a select number of green spaces recognised as having a unique value for residents.
- Allotments – protection is based on a separate Mansfield District Council's Allotment Strategy

Delivering the Strategy

To achieve our vision, we have set six green space strategic objectives:

1. To create high quality and well maintained parks, green spaces and local nature reserves
2. To encourage the use of parks and green spaces to support healthier lifestyles
3. To improve links between our green spaces, town centres and neighbourhoods
4. To raise awareness and education of parks and green spaces including Local Nature Reserves and wildlife conservation
5. To improve the biodiversity of our parks and green spaces
6. To inform appropriate policies in the emerging Mansfield Local Plan to protect existing open space from development and establish appropriate standards for provision of new parks and green spaces through development

The Action Plan at Appendix 5 details how we plan to meet our Green Space Strategic Objectives. This is a 3 year working document and will be reviewed in line with the Council's corporate priorities

Governance and Performance Management

Mansfield District Council can only be responsible for the management and control of parks and green spaces we own and manage. We will seek to work with partners, friends groups and others to ensure our communities get the most benefit from their facilities.

The Green Space Strategic Objectives

1. To create high quality and well maintained parks, green spaces and Local Nature Reserves

Well managed parks and green spaces encourage communities to use their local spaces, take pride in where they live, and they can help promote community cohesion. They can be an integral part of daily life from taking a walk in the park, enjoying a local nature reserve and a family trip to the playground, to participating in sport on a recreation ground. They offer free or low cost facilities for everyone.

Aesthetically pleasing green space increases the value of an area. They help to retain established business and help to attract new investors, residents and visitors. However, poor quality spaces scarred by vandalism, neglect and anti-social behavior can have a negative effect on any community and can make investment hard to achieve.

We want people to regularly use and visit their local green spaces, for a variety of reasons. We have already identified a number of improvements that we wish to make, for example:

- Ensure that our existing Green Flag Parks (Carr Bank, King George V, Titchfield, Peafield, Quarry Lane LNR & Yeoman Hill) maintain their status
 - These are our flagship parks and we will strive to continue to showcase horticultural excellence.
 - Encourage the professional development of staff and increase horticultural skills and knowledge.
- Encourage visitors to all our parks and green spaces and increase the length of time they stay there (dwell time)
 - We strive to ensure all our areas, from recreational playing fields to ornamental parks are inviting, clean, safe and of an acceptable horticultural standard.
 - We will look at improving facilities in areas where there is very little to meet the needs of the local community.
- Further develop our District Parks
 - We will look at ways to improve facilities on offer including refreshment venues and unique attractions
 - Identify potential funding streams to raise capital and revenue money to ensure sustainable projects.

2. To encourage the use of parks & green spaces to support healthier lifestyles

Parks and green spaces contribute to all aspects of health and well-being. Spending time outside in the fresh air relaxing, unwinding, watching wildlife and enjoying the scenery is also keeping us healthy - both physically and mentally. By ensuring people have access to attractive, clean and well maintained areas we can help to empower people to take responsibility for their own physical and mental wellbeing.

On average, one visit a week to a park for between 10-60 minutes is enough to raise self-esteem; while 10-15 minutes at least three times a week will allow the human body to synthesize enough vitamin D to supplement physiological health.

Evidence suggests that those people living in urban areas, particularly with high levels of deprivation, are less likely to regularly visit parks and green spaces. For example:

“People who live within 500m of accessible green space are 24% more likely to meet recommended levels of physical activity. Reducing the sedentary population by just 1% could reduce UK morbidity and mortality rates valued at £1.44 billion.”

What nature can do for you, Defra October 2010

In order to deliver this objective we will:

- Devise a programme of events
 - We will work with Leisure & Sports Development colleagues to develop free or low-cost activities for everyone.
- Enhancement of outdoor recreation facilities
 - We will consult with communities to ensure any money raised or funding secured is spent on what people really need.
 - We will strive to ensure that everyone, regardless of where they live, is within reasonable walking distance of a high quality green space.
- To promote and encourage Green Exercise
 - We will strive to work with colleagues and partners to raise awareness of the benefits parks and green spaces.
 - We will ensure all new equipment and facilities installed have maximum user value.

This work will support partners working in public health, education and local communities to tackle poor health and obesity by developing strategies to encourage increased use of all parks and green spaces for exercise, and by developing a detailed strategy for encouraging appropriate exercise by older people in our parks, including provision of equipment.

3. To improve green linkages between our green spaces, town centers and neighbourhoods

Mansfield District Council isn't just limited to managing parks and nature reserve. We also provide a network of trails for people to walk or cycle; green corridors and habitats that support wildlife migration. This is known as green infrastructure. It provides five vital key elements beneficial to our lives:

- Recreation
- Nature Conservation
- Climate Change
- Historical Importance
- Visual and Landscape Character

Well designed and integrated Green Infrastructure can deliver a range of benefits. These benefits can be:

- Economic - An attractive environment can support inward investment in Mansfield
- Social - Publicly accessible green space contributes to and enhances the quality of Mansfield.
- Environmental - Protection and enhancement of the natural environment.

Combined, these benefits have a considerable and measurable impact upon the quality of place. Therefore we intend to:

- Develop a cultural/heritage route and attractive, clean, safe walkways
 - We will strive to work with partners and volunteers to improve pedestrian signage and interpretation boards.
 - We will aspire to produce up-to-date informative maps, leaflets and downloads to encourage visitors and users.
- Increase accessibility to our parks and green spaces
 - We will ensure there are reasonable entrances into our parks and green spaces for everyone.
 - We aspire to improve the pathways on our Local Nature Reserves.
- Maintain and enhance the green corridors in the district
 - We will work with colleagues, partners and volunteers to prioritise areas to improve wildlife habitats and boost bio-diversity.
 - Work with colleagues and partners to link into the Local Green Infrastructure Plan

4. To raise awareness and education of parks and greens spaces including Local Nature Reserves and wildlife conservation

By involving the community, schools and even passers-by with events such as tree planting and wildflower meadow sowing, people are given a sense of ownership of a green space. For example, children will grow up knowing they have helped to create an orchard, see it grow and flourish and eventually reap the benefits of free fruit.

Learning and understanding the significance of our environment helps to promote a greater respect for it. Mansfield District Council is proud of the commitment to its green spaces from volunteers and the community. Together we work to transform places with Friends Groups and local schools.

It is vital we continue to support volunteers and install a sense of ownership within the community. Strengthening our relationship with organisations such as the Sherwood Forest Trust, Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust and the Environment Agency are essential for sharing specialist skills and knowledge.

“You’ll never forget your first badger – just as you’ll never remember your highest score on a computer game – no matter how important it seemed at the time.”

Nick Baker, TV Presenter & Naturalist

To achieve this we will:

- Increase community engagement with schools, Friends Groups and Partner Agencies
 - Work with partners, to continue to explore options and models to improve the management and enhancement of our parks and greenspaces, including seeking alternative supplementary sources of funding and resources.
 - We will aim to work with six schools on environmental projects and encourage youth involvement with Friends Groups.

- Identify and prioritise environmental issues
 - We will aim to keep levels of detritus, litter and graffiti on parks and green spaces to a minimum.
 - We will investigate ways to prevent dog-fouling and raise awareness of the health and environmental risks it brings.
 - We will ensure that all works undertaken on our parks and greens spaces are in line with our Parks Environmental Policy

- Preserve and celebrate our natural history
 - We will continue to provide and improve information about our parks SSSIs, LNRs via on-site interpretation
 - Work with colleagues and partners to produce a marketing plan including the use of social media to promote areas of interest.

5. To improve the biodiversity of our parks and green spaces

Biodiversity, or having as wide a range of species as possible, is an important part of creating a sustainable natural environment. No matter how small each animal, plant and insect has a role in the eco-system.

To assist in protecting important ecologically sensitive sites by reducing recreational pressure on them, Natural England encourage improving the 'naturalness' of closer urban parks and access to nature on their doorsteps.

Natural England emphasises that '*natural*' does not necessarily mean it has to be rare or notable enough to be a designated site. We find nature in wildlife, open landscapes, seasonal changes and places of tranquillity.

The improvement and consideration of biodiversity is an integral element in all the parks and Local Nature Reserves management plans.

6. To inform appropriate policies in the emerging Mansfield Local Plan to protect existing green space from development and establish appropriate standards for provision of new parks and green spaces through new development

As development occurs and new communities are formed we recognise that there is a requirement for new green space or improvements to existing sites to provide for better facilities for the growing population.

We have brought forward this and related strategies to identify the facilities we have, the importance and accessibility of them and set standards for what we want to achieve.

The emerging plan will also contain policy which will require new housing developments to make new open space provision in accordance with the standards set out in this strategy. Specific detailed planning guidance based on this strategy will be set out in an accompanying supplementary planning document. This can be updated in line with any significant review of this strategy.