

# Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2022-2030

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# FOREWORD

By Cllr Jill Mannion Brunt, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing



Chesterfield is not your typical market town and not your typical borough. It is perfectly located at the heart of England and well connected via the United Kingdom's road and rail network; it affords residents a great quality of life, being on the doorstep of the stunning Peak District National Park and a place with high quality, affordable housing. Although benefiting from key developments and growth in recent years, the legacy of declining industries has contributed to high levels of deprivation and significant health and wellbeing challenges in some parts of the borough.

The parks and open spaces within our borough are an important element of what makes Chesterfield an attractive place to live, work and visit. They have an essential role to play in improving the health, wellbeing and quality of life for our communities as well as attracting visitors from far and wide. As seen during the 2020 – 2021 Covid-19 pandemic our parks and open spaces offered a real lifeline to many residents and enabled them to continue to access free exercise and wellbeing opportunities when many other options were unavailable to them.

Now more than ever our green spaces should be protected, enhanced, and cherished for generations to come. Good quality, accessible open spaces provide sporting and recreational facilities, green lungs for communities to breathe and contribute to a vibrant economy, encouraging higher quality and more sustainable economic development. Through increasing biodiversity and enabling sustainable landscapes they also make a crucial contribution to reducing the impact of Climate Change and help us to work towards our Climate Change targets of a net carbon neutral council by 2030 and borough by 2050.

For our open space network to be fully utilised, it is important to recognise our community's needs. Several issues are key to the success of this strategy including improving the quality and accessibility of provision and maximising opportunities to engage communities to create a shared ownership and pride for our parks and open spaces.

# Executive Summary

## Our Vision for parks and open spaces

'For every park and open space to offer a high quality and fulfilling experience; supporting biodiversity, promoting health, well-being and enjoyment, and improving the quality of life for residents and visitors to the borough.'

Our Parks and Open Spaces Strategy establishes an understanding and ambition for the borough until 2030. A robust evidence base has been drawn from national policies and initiatives, local consultation and analysis of existing parks and open space provision. This has enabled the development of local standards and policies, which provide a framework for this strategy.

The parks and open spaces within our borough are an important part of what makes Chesterfield an attractive place to live, work and visit and their value to communities has been reinforced through the Covid-19 pandemic. Parks will be a powerful part of our recovery from the pandemic helping to create stronger, more connected, healthier communities.

The Parks and Open Spaces Strategy is key to guiding the Council's protection and investment in parks and open spaces and providing a platform for increased community engagement. The aims of the strategy are:

- to provide clear and transparent guidance and priorities for improving parks and open spaces
- to reduce inequality in those areas of highest deprivation according to the index multiple deprivation by providing good quality and accessible parks and open spaces
- to enhance local leadership and commitment to improving and investing in parks and open spaces
- to provide high quality evidence to underpin and support funding bids to improve parks and open spaces including community engagement opportunities
- to feed into and maximise visibility within the Council's key strategy documents the Council Plan and Local Plan
- to enhance our contribution to key agenda's including the climate emergency, nature recovery, improving accessibility and responding the borough's challenging health and wellbeing profile
- to support negotiation with developers for 'planning gain and support' for open space investment / provision across the Borough

- to develop parks and open spaces using local standards, evidence base and policies to provide a framework for prioritisation and resource allocation for management and improvement

Informed by audits and consultation and linking into key strategic documents and priorities, a series of **Parks and Open Space Strategy Themes** have been developed. These themes, which incorporate core objectives, will be used guide the development of the delivery plan and the specific activities that will be implemented to achieve the vision, reflecting the needs and aspirations of communities in Chesterfield.

1. Using a clear approach for investment in parks and open spaces
2. Using our resources effectively and sustainably
3. Increasing the use of our parks and open spaces
4. Engaging with our community and partners effectively

This strategy sets out local standards and policies which the Council will use to focus resources where they are most needed and where they will have the greatest impact for the future. It sets out the framework within which we will seek to engage with partners, communities and funders in order to maximise resource allocation both in terms of quality of provision and outcomes. The parks and open spaces strategy will also influence the authorities' approach to levelling up and will inform the allocation and prioritisation of resources across a range of opportunities.

Through this strategy the Council will support the delivery of good quality, accessible open spaces that provide; sporting and recreational facilities, green lungs for communities and contribute to higher quality and more sustainable economic development. In addition, through increasing biodiversity and enabling sustainable landscapes they also make a crucial contribution to reducing the impact of Climate Change and help us to work towards our Climate Change targets of a net carbon neutral council by 2030 and borough by 2050.

The development of the Strategy has been informed by extensive consultation with residents and stakeholder groups. The results of the survey demonstrate the high regard in which our parks and open spaces are held and will be used to inform our action and work plans. The strategy will inform collective decision making about parks and open space opportunities and enable resources to be utilised in an efficient and effective manner.

The Parks and Open Spaces Strategy is a framework and guide for the development of our parks and open spaces over the next ten years. We will develop a five-year costed delivery plan to set out the key activities to be progressed; this will be sufficiently flexible to reflect upon local need as well evolving challenges and strategic priorities.

Delivery of the parks and open spaces strategy will be the responsibility of Chesterfield Borough Council; however, we will continue to work with partners and engage with local communities to maximise the delivery opportunities of this strategy.

# SECTION 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Background

Parks and other open spaces play a big part in what makes Chesterfield Borough an attractive place to live, work and visit. They are places for everyone to enjoy and encourage and promote healthy lifestyles as well as providing much needed places to meet family and friends and relax. Good quality open space can also enhance our economy by providing employment opportunities in a number of sectors including leisure and tourism.

This strategy sets out a range of local standards, against which assessments of our parks and open spaces will be undertaken. This approach will enable us to focus resources where they are most needed and where they will have the greatest impact for the future. It sets out the approach within which we will seek to engage with funders, partners and communities in order to maximise resource allocation both in terms of quality of provision and outcomes such as reducing health inequalities.

Our previous Parks and Open Spaces Strategy was launched in 2014 and has been a catalyst for wide ranging improvements in the quality of parks and open spaces but also led to a significant increase in community engagement. Since the launch of the strategy, over twenty Friends of Parks groups have been supported and encouraged by the Council and play a significant role in securing external funding to drive improvements and attracting more people to use their local park. Key collaborative improvements include:

- Reducing the impact of climate change via our extensive tree planting scheme and careful development of our landscaping and maintenance schemes
- Developing a comprehensive resource pack and officer support to enable new Friends of groups to form and existing groups to flourish
- Chesterfield in Bloom is firmly established with thousands of residents through schools, local businesses, community groups and as private individuals taking part in this campaign to green our borough. The Council has achieved gold standard four years in a row up to 2020
- Holding five prestigious Green Flag awards - Queen's Park, Holme Brook Valley Park, Eastwood Park, Pools Brook Country Park and the Crematorium

- Completed the restoration of our Grade II\* listed Queen's Park's western boundary with sympathetic fencing and extensive landscaping works
- Provision of a new 3G artificial sports pitch at Queen's Park, enabling a variety of sport and recreation
- Refurbished play spaces with challenging and innovative play equipment and also introduced outdoor gyms, multi-use games areas and skate parks
- Increased events and activities in our parks by working with a range of partners for example Stand Road Bonfire Night, County Cricket, Gala Days and Chesterfield Pride
- Developed masterplans and management plans for our key parks to maximise quality, engagement and biodiversity. This includes several areas of the borough being declared as local nature reserves and tracts of woodland are now being actively managed and made more accessible
- Effective management of a range of semi-natural spaces under the DEFRA high-level stewardship scheme

In the light of all these improvements and achievements, public satisfaction with local parks and open spaces in Chesterfield Borough remains high with 83% of residents being very satisfied or satisfied with provision (based on 2019/20 Local Government Association Are You Being Served survey methodology).

## 1.2 Strategy scope

The Parks and Open Spaces Strategy covers the whole borough of Chesterfield and includes all publicly owned parks and open spaces. Allotments, sports pitches and play areas are referred to throughout the strategy however there are separate strategies for these specific open spaces.

Parks and open spaces over 0.2 hectares or more across a range of typologies are included within the strategy. This equates to over 592 hectares of publicly owned parks and open spaces. The largest category of provision is natural and semi-natural spaces which accounts for 313 hectares. This is predominantly due to the two country parks within the borough (Holmebrook and Poolsbrook) which account for over 130 hectares of provision.



### 1.3 Strategy aims

The Parks and Open Spaces Strategy is key to guiding the Council's protection and investment in parks and open spaces and providing a platform for increased community engagement. The aims of the strategy are:

- to provide clear and transparent guidance and priorities for improving parks and open spaces
- to reduce inequality in those areas of highest deprivation according to the index of multiple deprivation by providing good quality and accessible parks and open spaces
- to enhance local leadership and commitment to improving and investing in parks and open spaces
- to provide high quality evidence to underpin and support funding bids to improve parks and open spaces including community engagement opportunities
- to feed into and maximise visibility within the Council's key strategy documents the Council Plan and Local Plan
- to enhance our contribution to key agenda's including the climate emergency, nature recovery, improving accessibility and responding the borough's challenging health and wellbeing profile
- to support negotiation with developers for 'planning gain and support' for open space investment / provision across the Borough
- to develop parks and open spaces using local standards, evidence base and policies to provide a framework for prioritisation and resource allocation for management and improvement

### 1.4 The Council's role

Local authorities are advocates and custodians of parks and open spaces. They can:

- Improve, maintain and review existing parks and open spaces
- Provide new, high-quality parks and open space
- Increase green infrastructure within public spaces
- Improve transport links, pathways and other means of access to parks and open spaces
- Provide imaginative routes linking areas of parks and open space for active travel

This strategy and the resultant delivery plan will embed our commitment to the effective management of our parks and open spaces within the borough and recognises the importance to our communities and our economy. The Parks and Open Spaces Strategy contributes significantly to the Council's vision

'Putting our communities first' and our Council Plan delivery across the three priority areas:

- Making Chesterfield a thriving Borough
- Improving the quality of life for local people
- Providing value-for-money services

# SECTION 2: The impact of parks and open spaces

## 2.1 Why are parks and open spaces so important?

The quality of our parks and open spaces can make a significant contribution to the quality of life and health and wellbeing for residents. They provide places to meet, exercise and play but also places to learn about nature or just enjoy a pleasant environment. They are venues for affordable recreation and provide opportunities for young people to undertake creative play and 'hang out'. A spacious green environment can also boost the image of an area, helping to attract inward investment, visitors, and residents alike, whilst key sites are often the focus of civic pride, for example Queen's Park.

Having a strategic approach to parks and open spaces provision can help us to maximise the benefits of parks and open spaces for the whole community. This includes integrating provision into the Council Plan, Health and Wellbeing Strategy and a range of other key plans and strategies. Ensuring that parks and open spaces are a key consideration in our Local Plan is paramount to ensure that planning policies, masterplans, new developments, negotiations and decision making all consider the importance of parks and open spaces provision.

Understanding national policy levers, as well as the purpose and contents of local policies and strategies is critical to address provision of sufficient access to parks and open space and its longer-term sustainability. Local documents should reflect how parks and open space is integral to meeting health and wider priorities and support the protection and enhancement of them.

Now more than ever we can look at parks and open space with a deeper understanding of the wider determinants of health, of which both the built and the natural environment are fundamental pillars. Broadly, it is thought that parks and open space is linked to health and wellbeing in several ways:

- Improving access to parks and open space promotes healthy behaviours including engaging in physical activity and active travel
- Improving social contacts and giving people a sense of familiarity and belonging

- Providing opportunities to develop new skills and capabilities – particularly for young people, there is emerging evidence that spending time in parks and open space is associated with a range of benefits including improved motor skills, better academic performance and increased concentration
- Parks and open spaces including pocket parks, street trees, green walls and roof gardens in urban areas can also help to mediate potential harms posed by exposure to air pollution, the urban heat island effect, mitigate excessive noise and reduce flood risk.
- We are living in a time of real challenge, facing intertwined nature, climate and health emergencies that are having devastating, global impacts. But there are still ways to make positive changes. Restoring nature can help tackle the climate crisis and improve human health too. Nature Recovery Networks - joined-up, nature-rich spaces of all sizes, across all areas are the key. These networks can help to ensure nature's recovery across at least 30% of our land and sea by 2030.

For all these reasons, improving access to quality parks and open space has the potential to improve health outcomes for the whole population. However, this is particularly true for disadvantaged communities, who appear to accrue an even greater health benefit from living in a greener environment. This means that parks and open space also can be an important tool in the ambition to increase healthy life expectancy and improve health and wellbeing outcomes for our communities.

## **2.2 Benefits of Open Space**

### **2.2.1 Health benefits**

A range of academic and community studies have identified clear links between parks and open spaces and improved health and wellbeing. Recent findings include:

- A clear link between green living environments and improved mortality rates in particular for cardiovascular linked mortality
- Increased self-assessed perceptions of good health and wellbeing
- A reduction in the physical and psychological markers of stress, anxiety, and depression
- Improved parental and birth outcomes including more favourable birth weights

- People living near quality parks and open spaces are more likely to meet the national physical activity recommendations, have positive mental health outcomes and are less likely to struggle with weight management
- Improved immune systems
- Positive associations between a greener living environment and improved mental health outcomes for children and young people including emotional wellbeing, reduced stress and improved resilience

Mental health is an area of sharp focus where parks and open spaces can make a significant positive contribution. The physical health, social and economic consequences of poor mental health are substantial. Compared to the general population, people with poor mental health are more likely to have physical health conditions, a lower life expectancy, higher rates of health risk factors such as smoking, alcohol and drug misuse, and are more likely to experience social / economic inequalities such as isolation, unemployment and homelessness or poor housing. Poor mental health is estimated to have an economic and social cost of £105 billion a year in England, with treatment costs expected to double in the next 20 years. In addition to these costs there are incalculable costs to individuals, families, and communities due to lost potential and limited life chances.

### 2.2.2 Social benefits

The social benefits of parks and open spaces have also been a key area for study with a range of benefits identified including:

- The creation of opportunities for social connectedness – taking part in events, activities or just taking time to relax with friends and family
- Children’s play is a key reason for many people to visit parks and open spaces. The importance of play for a child’s development is well documented but there are often challenges around access including concerns about poor facilities, safety and anti-social behaviour
- Passive recreation is also a key social benefit. This can include walking dogs, watching your children play, viewing wildlife, looking at views, reading or resting. Passive recreation is often far more important to individuals lives than active recreation
- Active Recreation – organised sport, children’s play, music, and a range of events. It is estimated nationally that up to 16% of park users will visit for active recreation alone and this accounts for 7.5 million visitors to parks and open spaces each year

- Equality and diversity– different groups have different requirements and expectations of parks and open spaces such as accessible features, opportunities for reflection and worship or celebration of key dates.
- Park and Open Spaces as Educational Resources. The benefits to children have included sensory perception, children’s behaviour, outdoor learning opportunities, different patterns of play.

### **2.2.3 Environmental and climate change benefits**

A range of environmental benefits have also been identified alongside significant opportunities for reducing the impact of climate change:

- Opportunities to enhance screening to reduce noise and absorb pollutants
- Provide diverse wildlife habitats and contact people with nature close to their homes, schools and places of work. These include local nature reserves, areas of natural and semi-natural green space, allotments and river corridors
- Provide opportunities for active travel to reduce car journeys
- Enable specific climate change focused initiatives including tree planting, improving biodiversity and developing sustainable solutions to landscaping and management
- Providing receptor sites and opportunities to improve a range of habitats

## **2.3 The value of parks and open spaces**

Local Government is a major advocate and custodian of parks and open spaces, but the sector faces huge challenges in terms of the funding and maintenance of existing parks and open spaces, let alone the creation of further provision. It is important that in these strained times parks and open spaces are recognised for their broader social, economic, health and environmental benefits and not just viewed as a financial liability. This needs to form part of all investment and divestment decisions around parks and open spaces provision.

The value of parks and open spaces can be quantified by a monetary value for instance the value of the land, the income opportunities or the cost of maintenance but we are advocating those qualitative measures including social, economic, health and environmental benefits are also effectively considered to improve decision making. There is also an increasing body of evidence that demonstrates a positive relationship between the provision of parks and open

space with improvements to community wellbeing and reduced costs for public services including central and local government provision, NHS, Police and Fire and Rescue services:

- Natural England estimate that £2.1 billion per year could be saved in health costs if everyone in England had good access to parks and open space, due to increased physical activity in those spaces. This is primarily through improved mental health outcomes and people meeting physical activity guidelines
- A welfare gains of £1.2 billion per annum is found for people undertaking one or more 'active' visits (30 minutes, moderate intensity activity daily) to parks and open spaces. This includes £760 million in avoidable medical costs
- A number of city based and regional studies have also quantified the savings potential through better health outcomes linked to opens spaces for example £580 million in London, £192 million in Birmingham or £18 million for Wales coastal paths
- Some studies have estimated the annual benefit to society of parks and open spaces for instance £600 million in Birmingham and some have shown the link between £1 spent on parks and open spaces to pounds saved in health costs - £34 in Sheffield
- Proximity to parks and open spaces has also been shown to attract a premium in terms of house prices and area desirability

## **2.4 Inequalities in parks and open space access**

Studies have been undertaken nationally to suggest that there are disparities between the quality and quantity of parks and spaces in different areas and indeed differences in the ways and frequency that communities use and engage with them. This can include:

- Generally lower levels of high-quality parks and open spaces areas with higher deprivation levels
- There is a link between poorer access to high quality parks and open spaces and poorer health and wellbeing outcomes
- People in areas with higher deprivation levels are already more likely to have poorer health and wellbeing outcomes so unequal provision can further compound this issue.
- Studies indicate that all communities benefit from parks and open spaces but there is a disproportionate positive impact for communities with higher

- Deprivation levels Analysis of Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) survey data across multiple years found that infrequent users of parks and open space tend to be – people who are female, older, in poor health, of lower socioeconomic status, with a physical disability, ethnic minorities, people living in deprived areas, those with less local access to parks and open space and people living further from the coast.



# Section 3.0: Barriers to the use of parks and open space

3.1 National evidence and research identifies a range of barriers which may contribute to reasons why some groups are less likely to use parks and open spaces than others. These can include physical barriers, social and cultural barriers or even perception and awareness of opportunities. Barriers identified include:

- Proximity to parks and open space near to home. MENE data shows that two-thirds of visits to parks and open space are within two miles of home.
- Physical obstacles – lack of or poorly maintained road or path networks or challenging topography.
- Transport – lack of public transport options, safe walking or cycling routes or the cost of parking on site.
- Lack of facilities – toilets, benches, cafes.
- Accessibility for example accessible access for people with mobility challenges, seats, accessible toilets, and suitable parking.
- Social experiences – being out in a natural setting is not part of social expectations or background, discomfort over perceptions of what is seen as ‘appropriate’ behaviour in such spaces, feeling unwelcome or out of place.
- Experiences or perceptions of anti-social behaviour, hate crime, vandalism, litter, poor maintenance, poor lighting.
- Limited awareness of provision and how to access.
- Experience and confidence in accessing provision.
- Competing time pressures and interests - MENE survey data indicated that 36% of respondents were either “too busy at work” or “too busy at home” to engage with parks and open spaces and a further 21% just weren’t interested.

3.2 Good practice guidelines developed by CABI (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) to encourage engagement with parks and open space:

- Provide opportunities for ongoing and meaningful consultation with communities to understand the barriers that are preventing them from using parks and open spaces and to collaborate to identify solutions to reduce barriers.

- Utilising inclusive design principles that make it easy and attractive for people to use parks and open spaces and that maximise benefits for the community.
- Undertake bespoke work to engage harder to reach communities to identify activities and actions which could increase their engagement with parks and open spaces.
- A combined approach which delivers physical improvements to parks and open spaces, seeks to reduce barriers to access and promotes social engagement and participation.
- Careful planning and evaluation of proposals and decisions that consider the holistic value of parks and open spaces.

This strategy will seek to address barriers through the development of a five-year costed delivery plan informed by the CABI guidelines. Chesterfield Borough Council like most local authorities face significant challenges in terms of the funding and maintenance of existing provision and investment in new provision. We actively pursue external grant opportunities for improvements and have been very successful in drawing down significant funding to enhance existing provision and to support new provision. There may be occasions however, where match funding is required, or we have been unable to secure external funding for key schemes. In these circumstances it may be necessary to consider the disposal of surplus low-quality open space provision to support the maintenance and enhancement of the remainder of our parks and open spaces network.

# Section 4: Evidence base and Local standards – Refer to Appendix A

## 4.1 Evidence base

A huge range of data underpins the development of our Parks and Open Spaces Strategy. The evidence base, set out Appendix A, is important in setting local standards for the type, location, quantity, quality and accessibility of parks and open spaces, helping to identify levels of provision and to define key priorities for investment. We have produced a comprehensive evidence base document that sets out national, regional, and local information which has guided the development of a set of local standards that will be adopted through this strategy.

## 4.2 Parks and Open Spaces assessment

In 2018 the Council undertook a series of audits to establish the quantity, accessibility, quality of parks and open spaces in the borough and more importantly how the value and contribution that these spaces make to the quality of life for residents. There is localised recognition that there needs to be continued improvements to parks and open spaces within the borough. However, despite the enthusiasm to do so, these continued improvements cannot be achieved all at once and actions need to be organised, prioritised, resourced and adequately funded.

The parks and open spaces assessment and audit scores help us to identify key priorities by enabling:

- Clear policies for protection linked to prescribed and identified sites.
- Developing specific recommendations by area where there are opportunities to improve quality, value and accessibility of green spaces.
- A shared understanding through custodianship of the areas to be retained and protected.
- The use of adopted standards in the Local Plan for the amount of open space to highlight areas where there is potentially a surplus.
- Determined what additional resources are required to build on existing good practice.

The parks and open spaces assessment and audit were undertaken in several key stages including:

- Analysis areas
- Auditing local provision
- Development of local standards for quality and value
- Quality and value assessments
- Development of travel and accessibility standards
- Travel and accessibility catchment assessment

Further details of the methodology used and how scores and values were awarded is contained within our evidence base, but the key findings are detailed below.

### 4.3 Overview of open space typologies

There is over 592 hectares of publicly accessible parks and open spaces within Chesterfield Borough. The largest contributor to provision is natural and semi-natural parks and open space (313 hectares). This is predominantly due to the two country parks (an equivalent to 130 hectares) being categorised within the typology. The table below gives an overview of provision:

**Table 1 – Overview of open space typologies**

Open space typology	Number of sites	Total amount (hectares)
Park and gardens	20	111
Natural & semi-natural parks and open space	33	313
Amenity parks and open space	95	93
Space / provision for children & young people	92	5
Allotments	33	40
Cemeteries/churchyards	10	30
Green corridors	4	n/a
<b>Total</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>592</b>

## 4.4 Local standards for quality and value

Each type of open space receives separate quality and value scores. This also allows for application of a high and low quality/value matrix to further help determine prioritisation of investment and to identify sites that may be surplus within and to a particular open space typology.

Quality and value are fundamentally different and can be unrelated. For example, a high-quality space may be inaccessible and, thus, be of little value; whereas a rundown (poor quality) space may be the only one in an area and thus be immensely valuable. As a result, quality and value are also treated separately in terms of scoring. Table 2 sets out the thresholds for quality and value assessments.

To determine whether sites are high or low quality (as recommended by guidance); the results of the site assessments are colour-coded against a baseline threshold (high being green and low being red). The primary aim of applying a threshold is to identify sites where investment and/or improvements may be required. It can also be used to set an aspirational quality standard to be achieved in the future and to inform decisions around the need to further protect sites from future development.

For example, a park would be expected to feature a greater presence and variety of ancillary facilities (e.g., seating, bins, paths, play equipment, landscaping, etc.) in comparison to an amenity greenspace or other type of open space.

For each typology a different set or weighting for each criterion of quality is used. This is in order to better reflect the different roles and uses of each open space type. Consequently, a different threshold level is set for each open space typology.

For value, there is no national guidance on the setting of thresholds. The 20% threshold applied is derived from our experience and knowledge in assessing the perceived value of sites.

A high valued site is one deemed to be well used and offering visual, social, physical and mental benefits. Value is also a more subjective measure than assessing the physical quality of provision. Therefore, a conservative blanket threshold of 20% is set. Whilst 20% may initially seem low it is a relative score. If a site meets more than one criterion for value, it will score greater than 20%. Consequently, it is deemed to be of higher value.

**Table 2 Quality and value thresholds by typology**

Typology	Quality threshold	Value threshold
Parks and gardens	55%	20%
Natural and semi-natural greenspace	40%	20%
Amenity greenspace	60%	20%
Space / provision for children and young people	60%	20%
Allotments	50%	20%
Cemeteries/churchyards	60%	20%
Green corridors	60%	20%

#### 4.5 Quality assessments and scores

There is generally a good level of quality across open space sites. The evidence base demonstrates that over three quarters (77%) of sites score above the quality threshold. Parks, allotments, green corridors and cemeteries have a high proportion of sites that rate above the quality thresholds. The table below gives an overview of quality.

**Table 3 – Quality scores for assessed open space typologies**

Typology	Threshold	Scores %			Number of sites	
		Lowest score	Average score	Highest score	Below threshold	Above threshold
Park and gardens	55%	44%	61%	86%	4	16
Natural & semi-natural parks and open space	40%	29%	51%	96%	11	22
Amenity parks and open space	60%	33%	65%	87%	26	69
Space / provision for children & young people	60%	50%	67%	91%	23	69
Allotments	50%	36%	58%	73%	1	32
Cemeteries/churchyards	60%	56%	68%	87%	2	8
Green corridors	60%	61%	71%	84%	0	4
<b>TOTAL</b>					<b>67</b>	<b>220</b>

## 4.6 Value assessments and scores

Value assessments have also been undertaken. Nearly all sites (94%) are assessed as being above the threshold for value, reflecting the role and importance of parks and open space provision to local communities and environments. Provision for children and young people is the only typology to have any sites to rate below the value threshold. This reflects for those sites a general lack of quality equipment.

A high value site is considered to be one that is well used by the local community, well maintained (with a balance for conservation), provides a safe environment and has features of interest, for example, good quality play equipment and landscaping. Sites that provide for a cross section of users and have a multi-functional use are considered a higher value than those offering limited functions and viewed as unattractive. The table below gives an overview of value:

**Table 4 – Value scores for assessed open space typologies**

Typology	Threshold	Scores %			Number of sites	
		Lowest score	Average score	Highest score	Below threshold	Above threshold
Park and gardens	20%	39%	51%	90%	0	20
Natural & semi-natural parks and open space		26%	41%	68%	0	33
Amenity parks and open space		15%	32%	60%	6	89
Space / provision for children & young people		15%	63%	91%	11	81
Allotments		9%	28%	56%	1	32
Cemeteries/churchyards		32%	60%	81%	0	10
Green corridors		31%	49%	83%	0	4
<b>TOTAL</b>						<b>18</b>

## 4.7 Parks and open spaces community survey

A parks and open spaces community survey was undertaken by consultants in 2018/19 with 671 respondents taking the opportunity to tell us more about their needs and aspirations for parks and open spaces within the borough. A summary of the consultation report is available within the evidence base but some key messages from the survey include:

- 65% of respondents visit a park or public garden at least once a week

- The majority of respondents use non-vehicular modes of transport including walking, running and cycling to access provision in particular parks (77%), amenity greenspace (62%) and outdoor networks (57%)
- For other types of provision including play areas, country parks and cemeteries the weighting towards vehicle use is higher
- For most types of provision people are willing to travel for around 15 minutes but this increases for certain types of provision including country parks and local nature reserves where the majority of people would be happy to travel for 30 minutes
- In general, respondents consider the amount of provision to be quite satisfactory for most types of provision, similarly with quality
- The factors which would make the biggest difference in terms of increasing the use of parks and open spaces include improved cleanliness, better maintenance and improvements to paths, benches, shelters etc and the attractiveness of sites with landscaping, floral displays etc.

**4.8 In addition to the main survey 236 children took the opportunity to engage in a specific child focused survey in 2018/19. The key findings include:**

- 81% like to visit parks, 66% play areas and 63% nature areas
- The most common reason for visiting these types of open space is to play (81%), meet with friends (61%), to exercise (51%) and to visit with family (46%)
- When asked about what would make parks and open spaces better the most popular answers were making them cleaner and tidier (65%) and more play equipment (64%)

The parks and open spaces community survey found that the most common mode of travel to access open spaces is by non-vehicle methods e.g. walking, running cycling. The most common time willing to be travelled to access provision is 15 minutes. A 15-minute walk is the equivalent to 1.2 kilometres and this radius has been used to map the access to key provision types. For some types of provision – driving is a key method of transport e.g. for country parks and local nature reserves this has also been considered within the audits. The mapping and gap analysis is available within the evidence base.



## 4.9 Local standards for quantity and travel distance

Standards for the quantity of differing parks and open space typologies consider surpluses and deficiencies in provision on the basis of quantitative, qualitative analysis and any consultation undertaken.

The location, accessibility, and quality of parks and open space is also important in ensuring that the areas are well used and appropriate to the needs of the Chesterfield community. Setting distance thresholds for each type of open space for all areas is not easy to achieve, as many factors will influence travel times. The figures are based on generic average travel times. The Local Plan standards provide guidance that help to identify gaps that will be used to inform developer and Council Delivery plans.

In developing and applying standards of provision, it is important to note that:

- National standards of recommended provision have been used for comparative purposes (Fields in Trust Beyond the Six Acre Standard and Accessible Natural Parks and Open Space Standard)
- Existing standards of provision relate to the current level of provision of a specific typology
- Recommended standards of provision are based on local assessment and analysis but may be the same as a national recommended standard if appropriate, and specifically where current levels of provision do not meet a nationally recommended standard as a minimum. Equally, the future recommended standard may be the existing provision, if it is particularly high, and to lose it would significantly change the natural character of the area.

It is not appropriate to set local standards in the same way for each typology; this is because the majority of people access different types of provision in different ways, for example, walking to a park or children's play area, driving to an outdoor sports facility. In addition, the way in which people choose to access different types of provision may be influenced by locational factors, for example, a high-quality park may be within cycling or driving, but not walking distance. With this in mind, we have developed a set of standards below for each typology. There is generally a good level of provision regarding quantity and travel across most open space typologies.

Table 5 – Adopted standards for open space typologies

	Quantity standard	Travel and accessibility standard
Parks and gardens	1.06 hectares per 1000 population	1.2km or 15-minute walk time
Natural and semi-natural	3 hectares per 1000 population	1.2km or 15-minute walk time or 30-minute drive time
Amenity greenspace	0.68 hectares per 1000 population	1.2km or 15-minute walk time
Children and young people	0.27 hectares per 1000 population	1.2km or 15-minute walk time
Allotments	0.39 hectares per 1000 population	1.2km or 15-minute walk time

# Section 5: Our vision and key themes

## 5.1 Our Vision for parks and open spaces:

'For every park and open space to offer a high quality and fulfilling experience; supporting biodiversity, promoting health, well-being and enjoyment, and improving the quality of life for residents and visitors to the borough.'

### Aims of the strategy

The Parks and Open Spaces Strategy is key to guiding the Council's protection and investment in parks and open spaces and providing a platform for increased community engagement. The aims of the strategy are:

- to provide clear and transparent guidance and priorities for improving parks and open spaces
- to reduce inequality in those areas of highest deprivation according to the index multiple deprivation by providing good quality and accessible parks and open spaces
- to enhance local leadership and commitment to improving and investing in parks and open spaces
- to provide high quality evidence to underpin and support funding bids to improve parks and open spaces including community engagement opportunities
- to feed into and maximise visibility within the Council's key strategy documents the Council Plan and Local Plan
- to enhance our contribution to key agenda's including the climate emergency, nature recovery, improving accessibility and responding the borough's challenging health and wellbeing profile
- to support negotiation with developers for 'planning gain and support' for open space investment / provision across the Borough
- to develop parks and open spaces using local standards, evidence base and policies to provide a framework for prioritisation and resource allocation for management and improvement

## 5.2 Themes

Chesterfield Borough Council wishes to protect and preserve public open space. We want to ensure that development proposals and local improvement work take all reasonable steps to avoid harm to the amenity, heritage, biodiversity and recreational value of existing open space.

We have identified four key themes for the parks and open spaces strategy, each with core objectives:

1. Using a clear approach for investment in parks and open spaces
2. Using our resources effectively and sustainably
3. Increasing the use of our parks and open spaces
4. Engaging with our community and partners effectively

The sections below capture the core objectives for each theme and set out the range of activities that will be developed and delivered under each of these themes.

### 5.3 Theme 1. Using a clear approach for investment in parks and open spaces

- Identify key investment priorities by assessing parks and open spaces against an adopted local assessment framework
- Improve the quality of parks and open spaces in line with the identified investment priorities, maximising the use of internal and external resources
- Seek to prioritise the reinvestment of income raised through the parks and open spaces assets, into the maintenance and development of those assets
- Review through our local standards the Parks, Open Space and Play provision across the Borough.

#### Investment in Open Spaces

We will explore and co-ordinate all investment opportunities in our parks and open spaces including for example Heritage Lottery Funding, Sport England, Landfill Tax Credits. We will continue, where appropriate, to seek funding through the planning process e.g., Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy, for open space provision in relation to new development and off-site contributions.

We will develop a five-year costed delivery plan to determine those spaces in need of investment to improve their quality. We will use our evidence base and audits to inform where investment should be directed. These will be linked to, and driven by, gaps in provision and areas of social and economic deprivation.

We recognise that our parks and open spaces require investment and nurturing. We will maximise the use of the Council's general fund revenue budgets and actively seek opportunities to generate income and secure funding for the improvement and regeneration of our parks and open spaces, in partnership with key stakeholders and external agencies.

### **Protection of parks and open spaces**

The Council wishes to protect and preserve public open space by ensuring that assets are not transferred out of the Council's ownership. There may be exceptional circumstances with lease arrangements or where alternative suitable provision can be made if provision is lost through development. We want to ensure that development proposals and local improvement works take all reasonable steps to avoid harm to the amenity, heritage, biodiversity and recreational value of existing open space.

### **Quality and access at strategic and multi-functional sites**

Through this strategy and the evidence-based assessments we will highlight sites that have real potential to reduce gaps in provision. We will also assess sites across the borough with a multi-functional role which provide the opportunity to serve the wider borough. We are seeking to ensure that quality and access at these types of sites is good, and we will be exploring options to enhance provision given their important role across the borough. Such sites play a multifunctional role with regard to nature recovery and biodiversity net gain, environmental services and climate change. These sites include:

**Destination parks** – these parks serve local communities but also attract a large number of visitors from within and outside of the borough. They are of substantial size and often of historic importance. They provide a wide range of attractions and facilities.

**Community parks** - these parks serve a key local need, but which are of sufficient size to accommodate a reasonable range of attractions and facilities. There are 19 sites that are considered as Community parks or have the potential to be community parks with some investment.

**Natural/semi-natural green space** - these sites are primarily 'natural' in appearance, of significant size, listed in the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust register of sites of importance for nature conservation and managed for wildlife but accessible for informal recreation.

**Table 6 – Strategic and multifunctional Parks and Open Spaces**

<b>Destination Parks</b>	
Holmebrook Valley Park	Pools Brook Country Park
Queen’s Park and Annexe	
<b>Community Parks</b>	
Brearley Park	Eastwood Park
Hady Playing Field	Highfield Park
Loundsley Green	Rother Rec
Stand Road Park	Tapton Park
Inkerman Playing Fields	Ringwood Park
Whitecotes Playing Field	Badger Recreation Ground
Thistle Park	Inkersall Green Playing Fields
King George V Playing Fields	Langer Lane Recreation Ground
Manor Road Recreation Ground	Station Road Recreation Ground
Somersall Park	
<b>Natural/Semi Natural Green Space</b>	
Brearley Wetland LNR	Norbriggs Flash LNR
Blue Bank Pool LNR	Phipps Open Holes
Westwood	Troughbrook Wood
Cobnar Wood	Wheeldon Mill Plantation
McGregors Pond	Rother Wetland
Chesterfield Canal	

### **Review of play provision stock**

The quality of play provision has been highlighted as an area of concern within the parks and open spaces audit and community survey. A significantly greater percentage of respondents to the survey were dissatisfied with the quality of play provision when compared to other types of parks and open spaces. Enhancing the stock is a challenge due the demands of refurbishing and improving stock on a regular basis and the capital investment required.

We will develop a five-year costed delivery plan through our parks and open space strategy. The plan will provide the framework for a long-term strategic view to be taken to ensure we have a robust and affordable range of play opportunities across the Borough. In developing the plan consideration will be given to providing more natural play opportunities through creative landscaping. This will be in response to the higher proportion of survey respondents who cited preferring natural play opportunities as opposed to traditional play equipment.

## 5.4 Theme 2. Using our resources effectively and sustainably

- Maximise income and external funding opportunities
- Explore the potential to dispose of or make alternative use of low value and low-quality open space in line with the assessment against the local standards
- Review parks management and maintenance regimes to realise efficiencies and maximise climate change benefit

### **Maximise income and external funding**

We will ensure that income generating and external funding opportunities - including for example Heritage Lottery Funding, Sport England, Landfill Tax Credits are fully explored and appropriately used to positively contribute to achieving the aims of the parks and open spaces strategy.

### **Dealing with Surpluses and Deficiencies in Open Space**

We will ensure that where surplus land exists (where typologies exceed the standards for local communities), modification to the land to address other typology shortfalls within the locality will be considered prior to consideration for disposal where practicable. We will seek to address deficiencies in open space (where typologies do not meet the standards for local communities) by applying for external funding sources and consideration of gain through the planning system.

### **Adoption and Liability of New Open Spaces**

Through seeking to address shortfalls in the Parks and Open Spaces, the Council will reduce its financial liability by actively promoting the transfer to third party organisations e.g., management bodies on new development sites. Where the Council does accept the asset transfer appropriate levels of revenue funding will be agreed in advance and the quality standards identified in the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy should be met, where possible, prior to transfer.

### **Management and Maintenance**

The Council recognises the importance of high-quality management and maintenance of open spaces and will seek to ensure that the quality standards identified in the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy are met. We will continually review how we manage our provision to ensure it provides a high-quality service that is sustainable and accessible. Specifications, procedures and protocols will be developed in order to effectively manage open space.

## **Climate change and biodiversity**

Our parks and open spaces make a significant contribution to our commitment to become a net carbon neutral council by 2030 and borough by 2050. This includes maximising sustainable principles at all our facilities and in the way we manage and maintain our parks and open spaces but also in seeking to increase biodiversity. We have an overarching duty to consider the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and the natural environment. In the management, maintenance and development of open space biodiversity will be a priority. Parks and open spaces can serve as receptor sites for biodiversity net gain from new development sites (off-setting).

Long term climate forecasts (Climate UK), indicate a likelihood of higher average temperatures and more seasonal extremes. This might include a decrease in summer rainfall and an increase in heat waves, and/or an increase in 'flash' rainfall resulting in more flooding, higher sea levels and waterlogged soils. There is therefore a need to build climate adaptability into the maintenance of Chesterfields parks, open spaces.

This will in turn impact on the selection of species for planting, choosing specimens that are resilient to climatic changes. There is potential to improve and promote the environmental sustainability of parks and open spaces and associated buildings and operations, for example, using low emission machinery/vehicles where possible. Chesterfields parks and open spaces can play an important role in reducing the borough's carbon and environmental footprint through for example recycling and composting of parks waste, encouraging local food growing and encouraging cycling, walking and public transport use where appropriate.

Improving the management of the habitats at sites can also help to manage the effects of climate change. For example, the planting of more trees and the restoration of grassland areas can not only lead to the sequestration of more carbon but can also mitigate against flooding events and improve habitat connectivity for species that are most affected by climate change such as birds and bees. We are reviewing our sites to identify opportunities for nature-based solutions, allowing us to mitigate against and adapt to our changing climate, as well as make improvements for both wildlife and people.



## 5.5 Theme 3. Increasing the use of our parks and open spaces

- Develop a diverse and attractive programme of events and healthy activities in partnership
- Promote open space benefits for health, learning and wildlife
- Encourage responsible use of sites and take effective action with partners to combat anti-social behaviour

### **Health and Wellbeing**

Relaxing or participating in active exercise in a park or green space is an effective way to tackle poor health in an urban area. Access to good-quality, well-maintained public spaces can help to improve both physical and mental health by encouraging us to walk more, to play sport, or simply to enjoy a green and natural environment. We will encourage the use of parks and green spaces for a culture of physical activity by all sections of our community.

We will seek to ensure that our parks and open spaces can be beneficial for a range of physical and mental health condition priorities as part of a preventative 'natural health service'. Linking deprived communities and people with health-related issues to parks and open spaces is more important than ever. The council has a supporting public health leadership role, working with valued partners and we will work with our partners to create a joined-up approach using green social prescribing to better support and improve the mental health and wellbeing of local communities through use and development of green space, by supporting people to feel confident and encouraging them to become active participants in the natural world.

### **Equality and Diversity**

The Council is committed to promoting equality and diversity in the provision and management of open space including improvements to parks and open space facilities. This commitment recognises not only our legal requirements under legislation, but also our drive to ensure we make all reasonable adjustments to ensure that our facilities are accessible for our communities.

### **Crime and anti-social behaviour**

We will work with our partners and use a multi-agency approach to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour and improve social cohesion in our parks and open spaces.

### **Signage and Interpretation**

We will ensure that where there is an identified need, appropriate signs and interpretation boards are in place for our parks open spaces. Signage should be fit for purpose and positioned to avoid impairing amenity and creating visual clutter.

## **Marketing and Promotion**

We will continue and seek to improve marketing of open space across the Borough including to fully exploit its value for education, health promotion, improved liveability of neighbourhoods and accessibility via public transport, cycling or walking.

### **5.6 Theme 4. Engaging with our community and partners effectively**

- Increase engagement with key partners and user groups
- Develop volunteering opportunities in parks
- Seek to promote a local river and tree stewardship scheme in partnership
- Support sports clubs and other groups to move to self-management of facilities
- Work with planning and developers to enhance and develop parks and open spaces

## **Community Engagement and Volunteering**

The Council recognises the many valuable benefits that volunteering can bring to individuals, communities and in improving our parks and open spaces. We will continue to encourage and support volunteering in its many forms including Friends of Groups (FrOGs), tenants and residents' associations and the Chesterfield in Bloom committee. In committing to providing and extending the range of volunteering opportunities within the open spaces work programme, the Council has provided technical support and advice to community and voluntary groups that are working on projects which support the delivery of the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy.

We have developed a pack of information to support Friends groups and their activities. We will hold an annual meeting with FrOGS to give advice and support and to enable networking.

## **Consultation**

We will consult with residents, users and community groups, where reasonable, on proposals for development of or changes to parks and open spaces, to ensure community expectations are met in delivering and managing open space and in order to set good examples to other providers.

## **Partnership Working**

We will continue to work in partnership with the public, private and voluntary sectors including providing advice and support and acting as a critical friend in order to manage and enhance our parks and open spaces across the borough more effectively.

### **Strategic Growth Sites**

Known development sites provide an opportunity to establish a more detailed level of clarity in terms of the open space provision requirements as a result of each development. Across the borough there are several planned developments and allocated sites for housing. These developments are at different stages, some have live planning applications, some are allocated, and others are at an initial identification stage.

Developers of all new housing within the borough will be required to contribute to on or off-site open space provision in accordance with the council's adopted standards. On-site provision will be made where appropriate or off-site contributions to additional or improved open space will be sought where we are able to secure it by S106 planning obligation or Community Infrastructure Levy. The recommended quantity provision standards for the borough are applied in order to determine the need for open space provision as part of the development scenarios.

# Section 6: Delivery plan, monitoring and review

## 6.1 Delivery plan

We will develop a five-year costed delivery plan setting out a range of activities to support the delivery of the strategy through the key themes. Key features of the delivery plan will include estimated investment costs to achieve the council's vision for parks and open spaces, taking into account the detailed analysis of parks and open spaces against the local standards established within this strategy.

Delivery of the parks and open spaces strategy will ultimately be the responsibility of Chesterfield Borough Council; however, we will continue to work in partnership where possible and engage with local communities to maximise delivery of the strategy.

## 6.2 Monitoring and review

The development of a delivery plan will be a key tool to manage, control and report on progress. Progress against the delivery plan will be monitored and challenged in line with the Council's performance management framework. This will also include the opportunity to make any amendments to the delivery plan in response to emerging needs and challenges. Key performance information will also be monitored and challenged during the plan period including satisfaction and usage data, quality and value score updates.