



Consultation Draft Open Space Strategy



Printing and environmental instructions:

This facing page has been left blank to facilitate double sided printing. Please print sparingly and follow the 3 R's guidance: Reduce Reuse Recycle in that order.

When printing please use a conservation grade paper from FSC certified sources.

‘We all want quiet; we all want beauty for the refreshment of our souls.’

Octavia Hill
b.1838 – d.1912

Contents

Contents	3
Executive summary	4
1: Introduction and purpose	5
2: Open Space within Newcastle under Lyme	9
3: Vision	12
4: Open Space Standards	13
5: Open Space Strategy	15
Acronyms and other terms used in this document	33

Executive Summary

The Open Space Strategy is a review and future guide to how the Borough Council manages its open space asset base to ensure that the needs of the community are met in the most appropriate way. It seeks to ensure that high quality, accessible open space can continue to be provided at appropriate locations for residents and visitors to the Borough to enjoy. The strategy review also addresses how land outside of the Council's ownership is maintained, with the intention that it is managed in a complementary way with municipal land. Produced in parallel with the Open Space Strategy (and with a shared evidence base) is a Newcastle under Lyme Green Infrastructure Strategy which considers open space at the 'landscape scale'.

The audit of existing open space includes the following types of open space; (i) Parks & gardens (ii) Amenity green spaces, (iii) Natural and semi-natural green spaces (iv) Designated play spaces for children and young people, (v) Allotments and (vi) Green corridors. Outdoor sports facilities are not part of the Open Space Strategy review as this is dealt with through the Sport England compliant Playing Pitch Strategy.

Research undertaken in preparing the Open Space Strategy review has shown that Borough of Newcastle under Lyme has a valued and well-distributed network of open space comprised of spaces of varying sizes that have historical, cultural, aesthetic and recreational significance – in a word the open space asset is 'diverse'. The research has also shown that the quality of open space in the Borough is generally good or very good. This finding does not extend to all of the buildings located in open space, some of which are clearly a challenge to maintain and their original purposes have long since passed. New methods are needed for managing these and where these challenges cannot be addressed removal may be the only remaining option.

There are great challenges going forward, especially with regards to municipally owned and managed open space. These challenges are greater than at any time in the last 70 years. The most significant of these is reduced staff and financial capacity to deliver open space services. A further notable challenge lies in the relationship between open space and new development; as the Borough Council needs to allocate more land for economic purposes; including housing and commercial.

It is certain that the model of municipal management that has been in-place for generations will have to change to reflect new realities and this will not be an easy process. However, change presents opportunities as well as threats; for example, it is clear that some open space areas can be more multifunctional and better connected to communities and any reduction in the area of open space can free resources to invest in improved facilities on other sites.

The single greatest challenge will be to bring the 'wider community' and 'users' along with changes. Loss of local amenity will almost certainly be met with resistance even when alternatives are made available. Good communication and transparency are prerequisites for addressing these issues but objections will occur wherever rationalisation is proposed. The Borough Council needs to have clear and well-articulated counter-arguments in support of rationalisation.

The Open Space Strategy review contains ten strategies which provide a road map for the duration of the new Joint Local Plan; encompassing quality, quantity, developer contributions and access among others.

1: Introduction and purpose

The review team and overall approach

1.1 In August 2015, Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council appointed a team led by MD2 Consulting Ltd to review and update an existing Urban North Staffordshire Green Space Strategy and a separate Rural Green Space Strategy. The strategy review and project management were conducted by MD2 Consulting Ltd with mapping support, data production and GIS by The Mersey Forest project. Included in the review was the data, approaches and outcomes of previous studies. The resulting review documents and this strategy report form part of the supporting evidence base for the emerging Newcastle under Lyme/City of Stoke on Trent Joint Local Plan. The review has been prepared in a way that maintains a joined up approach between the two authorities with a view to ensuring that green space planning, management and maintenance, is underpinned by a strategic and operational framework that is:

- a. solution orientated;
- b. fully integrated with a suite of allied studies and planning documents and
- c. realistic & achievable both in terms of delivery and maintenance and set within existing and future budgetary constraints.

The National Planning Policy framework

1.2 The methodology for the strategy review conforms to meeting the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance on Open Space. The NPPF in paragraphs 73 and 74, identifies the need for high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation, as an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. It is further stated in the NPPF that planning policies need to be based on robust and up to date assessment of needs for open space, sport and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land should not be built upon unless it is shown to be surplus to requirements or can be replaced in a suitable location.

1.3 The NPPF also highlights the importance of maintaining and enhancing public rights of way and access by linking existing networks, planning for biodiversity and ensuring that local ecological networks are considered within planning policy. Paragraph 114 requires local planning authorities to plan positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure within their Local Plans. In support of this the Council has appointed MD2 Consulting Ltd to prepare a



Image 1: above, Wolstanton Play Area

Green Infrastructure Strategy for the Borough which meets this requirement. The evidence base for both the Open Space Strategy and the Green Infrastructure Strategy is shared.

Planning Practice Guidance

1.4 The Government has issued Planning Practice Guidance to local authorities on how open space should be accounted for in planning for new development and when considering proposals that may affect existing open space. They state that “open space, which includes all open space of public value, can take many forms, from formal sports pitches to open areas within a development, linear corridors and country parks. It can provide health and recreation benefits to people living and working nearby; have an ecological value and contribute to green infrastructure, as well as being an important part of the landscape and setting of built development, and an important component in the achievement of sustainable development”. The guidance also states that it is for local planning authorities to assess the need for open space and opportunities for new provision in their areas. They should also have regard to the duty to cooperate where open space serves a wider area.

1.5 Planning Practice Guidance replaces earlier Planning Policy Guidance and a companion guide¹ to the earlier Planning Policy Guidance (PPG17) is still highly regarded as good practice and has influenced the approach to the preparation of this Strategy update. Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council have decided to assess their open space requirements in a robust way this has involved a consultation exercise, an audit of sites, update of the North Staffordshire and Rural Green Space Strategy’s and proposals to address management challenges in a resource limited environment.

1.6 It should be noted that the Open Space Strategy update addresses the open space network across the Borough, notably but not exclusively from a recreational perspective. Produced in parallel with the Open Space Strategy (and with a shared evidence base) is a Newcastle under Lyme Green Infrastructure Strategy which considers open space at the ‘landscape scale’. This pays particular regards to ecological networks, biodiversity and the provision of ecosystem services to local people such as the ability of green areas to mitigate against climate change.



Image 2: above, Cotswold Avenue

1.7 An open space network may also contain designated local green space which is a way to provide special protection against development for green areas of particular importance to local communities. The Local Green Space designation is for use in Local Plans or Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDP). Designating a local green space needs to be consistent with local planning for sustainable development in the area. In particular, plans must identify sufficient land in suitable locations to meet identified development needs and the local green space designation should not be used in a way that undermines this aim of plan making. Because an area appears in this strategy update as open space does not mean it is automatically a designed local green space.

¹ Assessing needs and opportunities: a companion guide to PPG17.

The nature of the guidance

1.8 The Open Space

Strategy is intended to guide how the Borough Council manages its open space asset base to ensure that the needs of the community are met in the most appropriate way. However, the strategy review also addresses land outside of the Council's



Image 3: above: Silverdale Cemetery

ownership, with the

intention that it is managed

in a complementary way with municipal land. In the climate of reducing local authority resources, it has proven necessary to review how the Borough Council approaches its role in the future and to explore different mechanisms for delivering open space services in line with projected capacity and resource reductions.

Open Space Strategy structure

1.9 The commission has led to the production of suite of documents:

- A **report** (this document) which updates the findings of previous studies and describes the findings. It is intentionally an extended summary report, brief and to the point and summarising the whole suite of documents produced which are listed below.
- A **spreadsheet** which is a working document for the Borough Council and which is the main output of the study covering over 500 sites across the entire Borough.
- A standalone document on how the **Open Space Standards** were determined and what the standards are (summarised in this document).
- **Framework plans** for three spatial subdivisions of the Borough, these being Newcastle under Lyme (Urban), Kidsgrove (Urban), Rural including smaller settlements.
- **Report of consultation**, notably recording the findings of the Great Outdoors Survey undertaken as part of the evidence gathering.
- An **Action Plan** of which key elements are summarised in this report.

Geographical scope

1.10 The geographical scope of the review is the whole of the Borough of Newcastle under Lyme. The Borough is broken down into three 'framework areas' to assist assessment and planning; these are Newcastle under Lyme (Urban), Kidsgrove (Urban), Rural including smaller settlements. The audit, community needs assessment and Open Space Strategy includes the following types of open space:

- **Parks & gardens** (this includes urban parks, country and formal gardens)
- **Amenity green spaces** (over 0.25ha) (includes informal recreation spaces, village greens, etc.)
- **Natural and semi-natural green spaces** (this includes woodland and scrub, grassland, heath or moor, wetlands, open and running water, bare rock habitats)
- **Designated play spaces** for children and young people.
- **Allotments** (this includes other forms of urban agriculture such as community orchards)
- **Green corridors** (this includes river and canals (including their banks), cycling routes, pedestrian paths etc.)

Outdoor sports facilities are not part of the study as this is dealt with through the Sport England compliant Playing Pitch Strategy.

Lifetime of the strategy review

1.11 The intended time span of the reviewed Open Space Strategy is for the life-time of the Joint Local Plan for Newcastle under Lyme and City of Stoke-on-Trent. It is anticipated that the Open Space Strategy will be refreshed mid-way during this period.

Legacy documents

1.12 As stated in paragraph 1.1 this report updates a North Staffordshire Green Space Strategy and a Newcastle under Lyme Rural Green Space Strategy. Both of these former strategies are superseded by



Image 4: above, Thomas Street Kidsgrove.

this strategy report.

However, these former

strategy documents are not

entirely redundant and should be considered as an extension of the evidence base for this updated Strategy; since they provide historical context and useful site information.

Open Space vs. Green Space

1.13 Previous reviews in Newcastle under Lyme have been headed as 'Green Space Strategies'. The National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance makes preferential reference to 'Open Space'. It is clear that these term are interchangeable with regards to this strategy review but to be consistent with NPPF parlance the term 'Open Space' is now used.



Image 5: above, Lyme Brook

A responsible approach

1.14 Preparing an Open Space Strategy is not a task to be undertaken lightly. Those involved shoulder significant responsibility in

making recommendations that affect the quality of life of residents and visitors for the next generation and have the additional responsibility of fairly representing the intent and good-works of previous generations whose legacy they are dealing with. These points have not been forgotten

when preparing the Open Space Strategy and for the most part irreversible actions have been avoided so that future decisions can be taken without prejudice.

2: Open Space within Newcastle under Lyme

Overview

2.1 The Borough of Newcastle under Lyme has a valued and well-distributed network of open space comprised of spaces of varying sizes that have historical, cultural, aesthetic and recreational significance – in a word the open space asset is ‘diverse’. As with most other local authority areas, open space in Newcastle under Lyme is, to a large extent a ‘public good’ enjoyed by many and bringing benefits to individuals and whole communities. It is also a well-used resource and is inter-generational, serving the needs of the very young through to the very old. It is high in social equity too, as it is, in the most part, free to use at the point of delivery and is well spread throughout all areas. The privatisation of open space which has become a highly controversial issue in some parts of the country (notably in London), has not yet impacted on the Borough.

2.2 The Borough has distinct urban settlements in the towns of Newcastle under Lyme and Kisdgrove but also an extensive rural area, interspersed with smaller settlements and villages. The open space in the towns typically reflects the overall urban structure with town parks, amenity grassland and playing fields dominating the open space. Generally, access to these areas is good. In rural areas natural green space dominates open space, however access to natural green space is variable and this limits the recreational potential in some instances.



Image 6: above, Allotments at Loggerheads

Quality and sensibility

2.3 Work undertaken in preparing the Open Space Strategy review has shown that the quality of open space in the Borough is generally good or very good. There are some areas that are deficient in quality and require improvement; however, in the opinion of the consultants these are fewer than might normally be expected in a review. Hence it is possible to say that the management of open space is at the time of the review good and that the sites are consequently of a good quality too. This does not extend to all buildings located in open space, some of which are clearly a challenge to maintain and their original purposes have long since passed. New methods are needed for managing these and where these challenges cannot be addressed removal may be the only remaining option.



Image 7: above, The Wammy

2.4 The review has shown that in the urban areas there is a valuable history of traditional open space creation and management, exemplified by the ‘Britain in Bloom’ participation and formal bedding. This has led the consultants to the conclusion that there is a notable ‘heritage sensibility’ in

Newcastle under Lyme. This was not anticipated prior to the review and is more typical of tourist destinations such as Buxton, Harrogate or Shrewsbury. This discovery is to be welcomed and maintaining this sensibility is part of this Strategy.

Countryside sites

2.5 There are important countryside sites in the Borough of which Apedale Country Park, Silverdale Country Park and Keele University are notable examples. These sites have a particular value in providing ‘close to nature’ experiences and a more informal recreational experience. Access to these sites is such that a significant number of the visitors travel to these sites by car, bicycle and to an extent by public transport. Hence they can be regarded as excursion destinations. Keele University campus is the largest in England and has an exceptionally good landscape; however, it is thought that many residents are not aware that the campus is accessible to non-university users. Of particular note at Keele University are the lakes, parkland and arboretum.

Open Space and Green Infrastructure

2.6 Open space is a vital component of the Borough’s overall ‘Green Infrastructure’. It is also the most accessible Green Infrastructure. Accompanying the Open Space Strategy review is a new Green Infrastructure Strategy for Newcastle under Lyme. The Green Infrastructure Strategy is a separate document. In addition to the role of open space for recreation, play and its aesthetic



Image 8: above, Arnold Grove

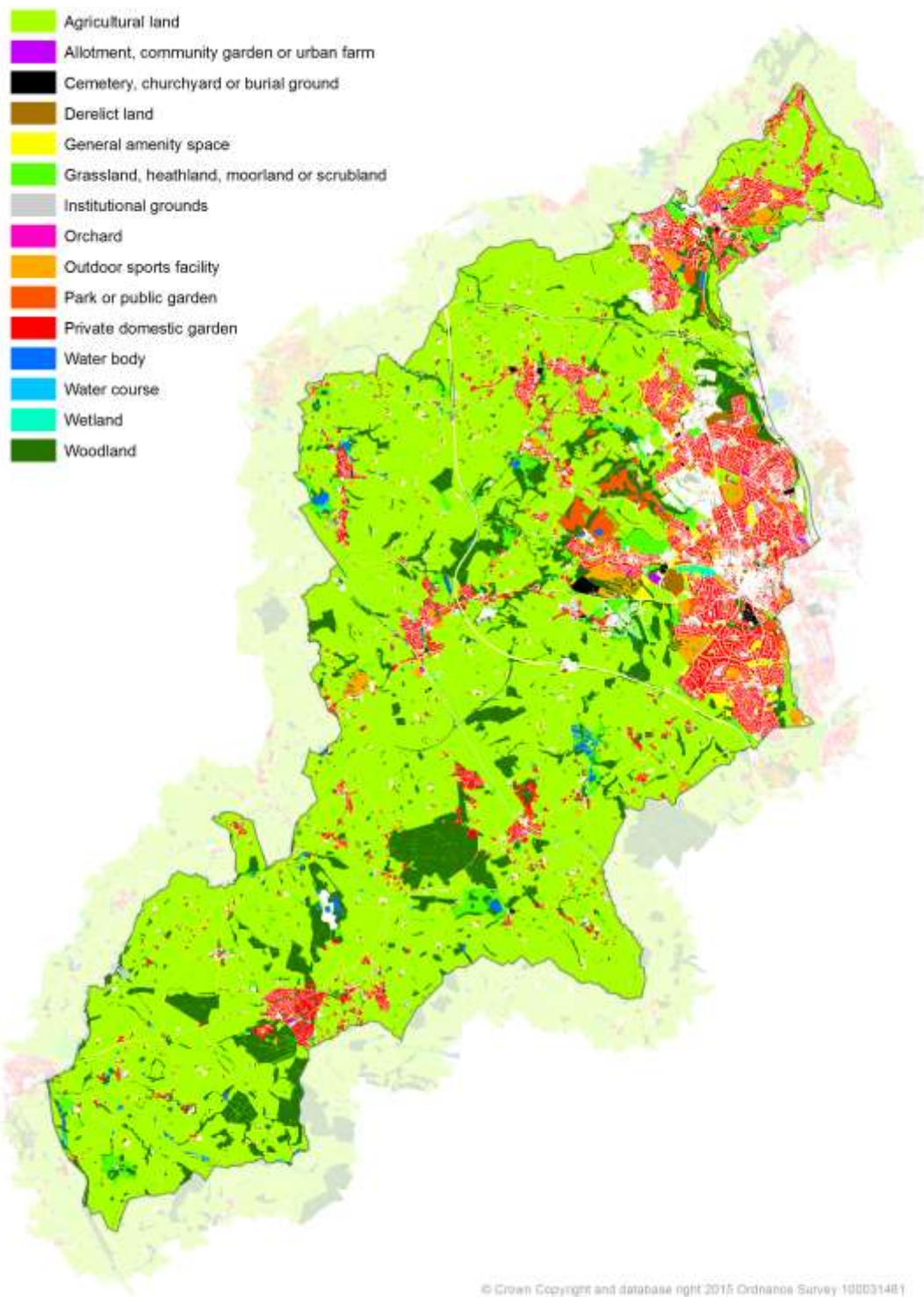
value; it is as important to recognise the role of open space in terms of habitats for wildlife, as a multifunctional landscape, providing connectivity for people, and for the ecosystems services (life support system) it provides. In future open space will provide land for delivering nature based solutions, which help the locality to adapt to the extremes of global changes of which flooding is expected to be a major factor. Plan 1 shows a Green Infrastructure typology map for the Borough, of which the open space included in this Open Space Strategy review is included.

Challenges going forward

2.7 There are great challenges going forward, especially with regards to municipally owned and managed open space. These challenges are greater than at any time in the last 70 years. The most significant of these is reduced staff and financial capacity to deliver Open Space services. A further notable challenge lies in the relationship between open space and new development; as the Borough Council needs to allocate more land for economic purposes; including housing and commercial. It is certain that the model of municipal management that has been in-place for generations will have to change to reflect new realities and this will not be an easy process. However, change presents opportunities as well as threats; for example it is clear that some open space areas can be more multifunctional and better connected to communities and any reduction in the area of open space can free resources to invest in improved facilities on other sites.

2.8 The single greatest challenge will be to bring the ‘wider community’ and ‘users’ along with changes. Loss of local amenity will almost certainly be met with resistance even when alternatives

are made available. Good communication and transparency are prerequisites for addressing these issues but objections will occur wherever rationalisation is proposed. The Borough Council needs to have clear and well-articulated counter-arguments in support of rationalisation.



Plan I: above; A Green Infrastructure (GI) typology map for Newcastle under Lyme places ‘open space’ in a Borough-wide context. The GI typology is more extensive than that for open space as it includes all non-sealed surfaces. The map clearly shows that open space types are very important in terms of the Borough’s overall Green Infrastructure.

3: Vision

3.1 Developing the vision statement was one of the key steps in preparing the Open Space Strategy. It is shown below along with a process diagram showing the stages of preparing the Open Space Strategy (see Figure 1).

Our vision is to maintain the traditions and quality of the Borough's open space for the continued enjoyment, health and recreation of residents and visitors. We will do this by, prioritising quality over quantity, celebrating our green heritage, giving space to nature and seeking innovative ways to fund our work. We will know we have succeeded if we hand over the Borough's open spaces to the next generation and they are able to enjoy its benefits as we have.



Figure 1: above; the main stages of undertaking the Newcastle under Lyme Open Space review.



Image 9: above, accessible woodland is of high recreational value and important for biodiversity

4: Open Space Standards

4.1 A separate report details how the standards for open space were determined. The key processes involved included a bespoke consultation process – *The Newcastle Great Outdoors survey and a benchmarking comparison with similar local authorities’ provision*. With the exception of the City of Stoke on Trent (included as this strategy update is part of the evidence based for a Joint Local Plan with them) all the local authorities were identified through use of the CIPFA Nearest Neighbour model and are listed below in order of their statistical nearness in descending order (i.e., No.1 – Amber Valley is the nearest):

Standards are not the same as targets and the two terms should not be confused. In this Strategy review, ‘standards’ refers to (i) a measure that supports comparative evaluations and (ii) a measure of performance at the strategic (Borough-wide) level.

1. Amber Valley
2. Chorley
3. Wyre Forest
4. Erewash
5. Gedling
6. Broxtowe
7. Chesterfield
8. South Staffordshire
9. Cannock Chase
10. High Peak (inside and outside the National Park)
11. Newark and Sherwood
12. Fenland
13. Bassetlaw
14. South Ribble
15. Carlisle
- Stoke-on-Trent

4.2 In preparing the Standards reference was made to key guidelines of which the former Companion Guide to PPG17 (still regarded as good practice) and the Fields in Trust (FiT) ‘Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play: Beyond the Six Acre Standard’ were influential. In respect of development the FiT recommended application of quantity benchmark guidelines for equipped/designated play space has been adopted for the Newcastle under Lyme Open Space Strategy review (Table 1).

Scale of Development	Local Area for Play (LAP)	Locally equipped Area for Play (LEAP)	Neighbourhood Area for Play (NEAP)	Multi-use games area (MUGA)
5 - 10 dwellings	√			
10 – 200 dwellings	√	√		Contribution
201 – 500 dwellings	√	√	Contribution	√
501+ dwellings	√	√	√	√

Table1: ‘Fields in Trust’ guidelines for equipped/designated play space have been adopted in this Open Space Strategy review and should be read in conjunction with Table 2. The tick next to an item refers to provision on-site as part of a development scheme rather than through developer contributions.

4.3 The Open Space Standards table is reproduced at Table 2. The column headed (AREA HA) is the total area in hectares calculated for each type of open space in the Borough. For reference, one hectare is approximately the size of a full-sized rugby pitch.

OPEN SPACE TYPES	COUNT	AREA (HA.)	CURRENT PROVISION (Hectares per 1,000 population based on 124,381 pop)	PREVIOUS STANDARD (Hectares per 1,000 population)	PROPOSED QUANTITY STANDARD (Hectares per 1,000 population)	PROPOSED ACCESS STANDARD (measured in straight line)		
						URBAN	Neigh	RURAL*
Parks and gardens	35	436.29	3.51	2.35	3.10	Local 400m	Neigh 800m	District 1600m
Amenity green space	112	128.31	1.03	No standard	0.90	220m [open green] & 700m [MUGA]		
Natural and semi-natural green space	181	1746.22	14.0	3.60	3.60	600m		
Designated play spaces for children and young people	81	51.35	0.41	0.76	0.41	LAP 100m	LEAP 400m	NEAP 1,000m
Allotments	12	13.60	0.11	No standard in last audit	0.15	400m (5-10 min walk)		15 min* drive
Green Corridors	16	46.03	0.37	No standard	No standard	No standard		
Outdoor Sport Facilities	NO STANDARD							

Table 2: The Open Space Standards table for Newcastle under Lyme. A Playing Pitch Strategy addresses outdoor pitch sports facilities.

4.4 It can be seen from Table 2 that the Borough is relatively well provided for in terms of open space. Most notable is the amount of natural and semi-natural greenspace. Only the provision of allotments is below the set standard. It should be noted that as the population of the Borough grows, localised deficits of open space will increase; hence there is a need for new open space to accompany new development, to ensure that open space provision keeps pace with population growth. The present distribution is shown in the three Framework Plans which accompany both the Open Space Strategy and Green Infrastructure Strategy.



Image 10: above, Pool Dam Playing Fields

5: Open Space Strategy

Open Space Locations

5.1 Knowing where Open Space is located is essential to devising a Strategy. The Consultants team have produced a highly detailed spreadsheet to accompany the Open Space Strategy review. This spreadsheet provides Borough Council Officers with an analysis of recorded open space sites in the Borough of Newcastle under Lyme including their condition. Having recorded the Open Space sites, it is possible to devise an Open Space Strategy to accompany the new Joint Local Plan.

Quality Strategy

5.2 The quality of sites in Newcastle under Lyme is good to very good (see Table 3). This is a strong foundation for maintaining quality. There are good reasons to maintain high quality:

- Site usage, as measured by the number of visits and repeat visits, is higher when the site is of a good quality
- A greater mix of people use sites of good quality, hence there is less social exclusion
- It is a lower cost to maintain a site in a good condition than to let it decline and then have to invest a large amount of money to return it to a good quality
- Good quality sites are more likely to secure the interest and involvement of volunteers in its maintenance and in running events.
- Good quality sites are a tourism asset and hence contribute to the visitor economy
- Quality allows the Borough Council and its partners to seek recognition in the form of awards and grants. This in turn builds 'pride of place' in the community.

5.3 'Fields in Trust' have issued quality guidelines and these are recommended as the principles of quality management. The list below is an embellishment of these:

- Parks should be of 'Green Flag' standard or equivalent
- Open space should be appropriately landscaped
- There should be positive (as opposed to reactive) management in place
- Open space sites should include the provision of paths
- Fear of crime or harm should be designed out



Image 11: above, Church Lane

5.4 The 'Green Flag Award' standard or equivalent should be sought for all public-run open spaces, this requires annual renewal. A similar award, the Green Pennant, is available for community managed open space and participation is also encouraged. The checklist for 'Green Flag' ('Green Pennant' is similar except the marketing) and is recommended as an ongoing checklist of quality.

- A welcoming place
- Healthy, safe and secure

- Clean and well maintained
- Sustainability
- Conservation and heritage
- Community involvement
- Marketing
- Management

	Urban (no.)	% of urban	Rural (no.)	% of rural	Total (no.)	% Total
Total no. of sites	326		227		553	
Total no. of sites audited/scored	176		81		257	46.5
Score > 80%	104	59.1	8	9.81	112	43.5
70 – 80%	60	34.1	38	46.9	98	38.2
< 70%	12	6.8	35	43.2	47	18.3

Table 3: Open space results from 2015/16 site audits. Of the sites audited in 2015/16 only 18.3% fell below a quality score of 70%; overall this is a very strong performance.

Quality Strategy

The recommended strategic target for quality is 80%. Sites below a threshold of 70% are a priority for further assessment as follows:

Step 1: understand why the site is below target, this is a role for the land owner, planners and site managers. This step will generally involve a further site visit to check that the scoring is still correct (or has risen or deteriorated further)

Step 2: decide on a corrective course of action for example: (i) *Site requires investment – seek funding*, (ii) *Site has a number of limitations which need overcoming – resolve limitations*, (iii) *Site is not valued or in the wrong place – consider alternative use*

Step 3: Carry out courses of action

Step 4: Ensure that these sites are audited when an open space audit is next carried out.

'Green Flag' and 'Green Pennant' awards or equivalent should be sought for key open space sites. Key open spaces are those which are a major focus for visitors and include urban parks, country parks and equipped play areas.



Image 12: above, Ickey Pickey Teen Play

Quantity Strategy

5.5 Table 2 indicates that with the exception of allotments the quantity of different open space types (referred to as the typology) is ahead of the standard. At first appearance this gives the Borough Council flexibility in terms of quantity across many open space types. However localised factors as shown in the Framework Plans provide a more detailed and nuanced understanding of distribution. In view of this the Borough Council is not free of constraints on what can or cannot be rationalised if this proves necessary. In practice any reduction in quantity has to be justified on a case-by-case basis and also be in general alignment with either extant legacy planning policies or the new Joint Local Plan when it is approved. In reality it is probable that there be some losses and some gains in terms of open space during the life of the new Local Plan. Losses are likely to take place in underused, wrongly located or uneconomic open space and gains made in open space required as part of new developments or because of the need to provide land for nature based solutions to combat global change (e.g. flood management etc.).

5.6 In line with most local authorities a standard has not been set for Green Corridors, however this is a typology where the evidence points to an increasing demand. Linear corridors are valuable as cycleways, habitats, walking & running routes and importantly for Green Infrastructure connectivity. Because of these uses green corridors make a particular contribution to health and wellbeing and also act as a transport alternative when they also function as cycleways.

5.7 The quantity of natural and semi-natural green space is greatly in excess of the standard; however, this quantity needs further interpretation. The majority of this open space type is not in Council ownership and hence subject to many variables especially in terms of access. Furthermore, some areas of natural and semi natural greenspace are subject to nature or economic management (e.g. woodland). In view of the importance now being given to Green Infrastructure it is the case that having a large area of natural and semi-natural green space is a strong-positive in terms of providing ecosystem services to the local population.

Quantity Strategy

Every effort should be made to maintain the quantity of open space at the highest level possible subject to:

- (i) economic viability,
- (ii) planning policy and
- (ii) sustenance and improvement of the Borough's Green Infrastructure network.

Rationalisation, when considered, should be the subject of careful site planning and local consultation (including site master-planning notably where an existing open space may have the potential to accommodate other uses whilst maintaining its primary open space function).

Opportunities for new open space should be seized on the back of new development and a formula for assessing this adopted in the new Joint Local Plan.

The Borough Council's Development Control function should ensure that developers fully meet their agreements in practice.

Wherever possible opportunities to create new or upgrade existing green corridors should be taken.

The Strategy for allotment provision needs to be updated in the light of the Open Space Strategy review.

Access Strategy

5.8 The Newcastle under Lyme access standards apply equally to urban and rural areas with the exception of allotments. In this case the urban standard is set as a walking distance (400 metres) and in the rural area a driving time (15 minutes). These are within the range of other authorities and recognise that in rural areas it is not practical for pedestrian only provision. Distance standards are shown as a linear distance but when making planning decisions the route to an open space type should also be considered. In practice, very few routes follow straight lines and users will normally follow pavements, green corridors and cross busy roads at traffic lights.



5.9 The needs of different users also need to be factored both in terms of the distance standard but also in respect of internal circulation patterns. Path surfaces should be on the one hand as unobtrusive as possible but simultaneously as multi-purpose as possible and cost effective to maintain. Providing access for people that might not otherwise be able to use a site due, for example, due to disability is a priority and guidelines are available on surfaces and access systems. Infrastructure is necessary at major sites for disabled parking.

5.10 Site entrances and exits are an important part of access. They function as gateways and should as far as possible be conveniently located subject to amenity constraints of nearby residents and safe ingress/egress to adjacent roads. Site entrances are also natural locations for site interpretation including circulation route maps showing how to access key features.

Image 13: above, Fitness Equipment at Clough Hall Park

5.11 During the lifetime of the Open Space Strategy it is expected that the use of 'smart' devices to navigate and measure distance travelled, calories expended, and market events and facilities etc. will continue to increase. The Borough Council is advised to keep new technology under review and coordinate access to open space with Apps & mobile mapping.

Access Strategy

Distance standards should be used as a target in future open space planning.

Full consideration should be given to how people access sites in practice (i.e. via pavements, major road crossings etc.) alongside the linear access figure when decision making is taking place.

The needs of special groups (such as those with disabilities, parents with buggies etc.) should be factored in when planning access to and within key sites.

The use of new technology should be kept under review and appropriate provision made to promote access to open space with Apps & mobile mapping.

Diversity of Provision Strategy

5.12 Maintaining a diversity of provision is necessary if the needs of the whole community are to be met. This includes having some open space sites that can meet a wide range of minority interests. In many cases this requires little more than access to land, water or air without undue restrictions. It

may be beneficial to consider site provision under the NPPFs ‘duty to cooperate’ as suitable sites may exist close to the Borough boundary. Some types of open space are well understood and there are clear processes in place for identifying these and having appropriate management in place, for example in relation to play provision. However, this does not extend to hobby interests and a number of hobby-areas have been identified in Table 4, the list is not exhaustive:

Radio controlled models – boats, planes, drones	Kites	Non pitch sports such as orienteering and archery	Non pitch recreational activities/games such as boules, geocaching, drafts, chess.
Bouldering	Bird watching	Overnight camping and BBQs	Tai Chi
Extreme challenges and boot camps	Trim trails	Cloud watching	Dark skies/ astronomy
Pond dipping	Nature Watching	Fishing	Water based recreation

Table 4: Hobbies and other interests that make use of open space, the list is not exhaustive.

5.13 There is a need to create and maintain biodiverse areas. This clearly links with the Borough’s Green Infrastructure Strategy and the Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan. Former industrial or housing areas may have developed valuable natural vegetation and should be protected from redevelopment whenever possible, even though they may be registered as brownfield land. Biodiverse areas provide food for wildlife and also support foraging. There is currently great interest in foraging to the extent that it has become a problem in some areas (e.g. Bristol). However, foraging for wild food and craft materials is to be applauded, hence the need for areas where people can gather without undue constraint. Setting aside areas of amenity green space for wildflower meadow management is increasingly popular and can create a positive image for the Borough and potentially save maintenance costs through reduced cutting.

5.14 The typology for youth provision is one of the most challenging as it is known to cause conflicts with other users notably through littering, graffiti and bad-language. However, problems are often over-inflated and the positive benefit to young people in terms of outdoor activity and avoiding anti-social behaviour is of great significance. Ideally street workers/volunteers should support activities on the ground. The types of provision include: Skateboarding, BMX, Table Tennis, Hang-out shelters and Basketball hoops.

<p>Diversity of Provision Strategy</p> <p>Maintain a wide diversity of open space types, plan for some minority interests on a regional or on a ‘duty to co-operate’ basis.</p> <p>Cater for minority interests as these are often overlooked this includes ensuring an adequate provision for youth and support this through grass roots street workers etc.</p> <p>Maximise biodiversity, especially to foster visual impact (e.g. wild flowers) and meet the demand for foraging. Place a high-value on established brownfield land as nature areas.</p>
--



Existing Planning Policy and the New Joint Local Plan

5.15 The Borough Council has saved policies relevant to open space provision which remain extant beyond September 2007. These are drawn from the Newcastle under Lyme Local Plan 2011 (adopted 2003) and remain in place until the new Joint Local Plan is formally adopted. These policies have both influence and relevance to the open space strategy review. The most relevant saved policies are to be

found in Section 6 - Community Facilities and Section 7 – Natural Heritage, of the Newcastle under Lyme Local Plan 2011 (adopted 2003). There are further policies in other sections which are also relevant. The key legacy policies from the Newcastle under Lyme Local Plan 2011 (adopted 2003) are summarised in table 4.

Image 14: above, Orme Road, Skate Park

N2: Development and nature conservation – site surveys	N3: Development and nature conservation – protection and enhancement measures	N4: Development and nature conservation – use of local species	N8: Protection of key habitats	N9: Community woodland zones
N10: New woodland - considerations	N12: Development and the protection of trees	N13: Felling and pruning of trees	N14: Protection of landscape features of major importance to flora and fauna	N16: Protection of a green heritage network
N17: Landscape character – general considerations	N18: Area of active landscape conservation	N19: Landscape maintenance areas	N20: Area of landscape enhancement	N21: Area of landscape restoration
N22: Area of landscape regeneration	N24: Water based landscape features	S3: Development in the green belt	H1: Residential development: sustainable location and protection of the countryside	H7: Protection of areas of special character
E2: Chatterley Valley	E3: Lymedale Park extension	E5: Church Lane, Knutton	E8: Keele University and Keele Science Park	T12: M6 Corridor
T16: Development - general parking requirements	T20: Telecommunications development – required information	C2: Retention of allotment gardens	C3: Publically accessible open space, Poolfields, Newcastle	C4: Open space in new housing areas.
C8: Country Parks	C9: Countryside Parks	C11: New footpaths, horse routes and cycleways	C13: Additional facilities at Apedale Community Country Park	C17: Camping and caravan sites
C19: Burial ground Bradwell	C20: Madeley Village Hall	C21: White Rock – Apedale Road	B9: Protection of harm to conservation areas	B10: The requirement to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of a conservation area
B13: Design and development in conservation areas	B14: Development in or adjoining the boundary of conservation areas	B15: Trees and landscape in conservation areas.	IM1: Provision of essential supporting infrastructure and community facilities	IM2: Compliance with policy concerns

Table 5: Saved policies from Newcastle under Lyme Local Plan 2011 (adopted 2003) relevant to open space. Each grouping is colour coded to show which part of the Plan the policy refers to.

5.16 The Newcastle under Lyme & Stoke on Trent Core Spatial Strategy was adopted in October 2009 with the intention that it would serve the period from 2006 to 2026. Relevant policies within this document (see Table 6) also form part of the current development plan until the new Joint Local Plan is adopted. The Core Spatial Strategy has a strategic vision and aims and says that ‘The Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme and the City of Stoke-on-Trent will be a prosperous, vibrant, environmentally responsible and successful area of choice for businesses, visitors and residents in the period up to 2026.’ It goes on to say that the outcomes of this transformation will be - population retention, rising income levels, strengthened housing markets, healthier people with a strong sense of well-being and an enhanced reputation. The vision is based upon strategic aims related to people, prosperity, place & image. All of these strategic aims are reflected in policy. Open space is highly relevant to the strategic aims by providing high quality living places for people; helping to create settings for development which fosters prosperity; and through enhanced image, civic pride and environmental resilience.

CSP1: Design Quality	CSP2: Historic Environment	CSP3: Sustainability and climate change
CSP4: Natural assets	CSP5: Open space/sport/recreation	CSP6: Affordable housing
CSP7: Gypsy and travellers		

Table 6: Relevant core strategic policies - those highlighted in green are strongly linked to open space. Those highlighted in orange are less strongly linked. Any not listed are not relevant or very marginally so.

5.17 The core spatial strategy has three key spatial principles; (i) Targeted Regeneration, (ii) Economic Development and (iii) Movement and Access. This is supplemented by area spatial policies for Newcastle Town Centre (ASP4), Newcastle and Kidsgrove urban neighbourhoods area (ASP5) and Rural area spatial policy (ASP6). There is a strong coalescence between the spatial areas and the Framework Plans produced for the Open Space Strategy review.

Existing Planning Policy and the New Joint Local Plan Strategy

Open Space is a cross cutting policy theme because it strongly influences quality of life and place shaping. However, to emphasise its importance it is recommended that the new Joint Local Plan should contain a specific policy on Open Space as well as a separate specific policy on Green Infrastructure. These should between them cover the issues of connectivity, multifunctionality, landscape, recreation, health & wellbeing and biodiversity.

The policies on Open Space and Green Infrastructure should also reflect the current focus on housing led growth and the need to accommodate new residential development within the urban area wherever practically possible.

There may be Open Spaces that can be rationalised and reallocated for development. However, strong recognition is also needed of the importance of Open Space and Green Infrastructure in respect of maintaining quality of life for new residents as well as existing residents and that housing development should not break ‘green’ connectivity which is essential in the delivery of ecosystem services and resilience to climate change impacts.

Development Strategy

5.18 Saved policy C4 of the Newcastle under Lyme Local Plan 2011 (adopted 2003) is a detailed policy which endeavours to secure appropriate amounts of new open space in new housing areas as set out in Figure 1 below. Relevant policies designed to secure new open spaces within the joint Core Spatial Strategy are far less specific, since they are not designed to be overly prescriptive with regard to the facilitation, delivery and maintenance of new open space, which is instead covered

much more generally in policies CSP1-7 in table 5 above. The Council's intention was to address more detailed policies covering new open space provision in a new "Site Allocations and Policies DPD's" specifically relating to areas and topics covering not just housing (Newcastle Town Centre, Areas of Major Intervention, General Renewal Areas and Other Areas of Housing Intervention). Since these DPD's have never been produced and adopted; suitably robust, yet flexible planning policy designed to facilitate the required quality, quantity and typology and maintenance of new open spaces will be a requirement that will need to be addressed and included within the new Joint Local Plan.

POLICY C4: OPEN SPACE IN NEW HOUSING AREAS Appropriate amounts of publicly accessible open space must be provided in areas of new housing, and its maintenance must be secured. To this end, on sites with ten or more dwellings, or at least 0.4 hectares with fewer dwellings, taking a gross figure for all contiguous development areas, developers will be expected to provide for open space in accordance with the following: i) Publicly accessible open space must be provided pro rata at a scale of 0.1 hectares for each 50 houses. ii) Appropriate play equipment must be provided within new housing areas with 100 or more dwellings, taking a gross figure for all contiguous development areas. The amount of equipment required will be appropriate to the size of the development. iii) Where new play areas are provided within the development, each must be of at least 0.1 hectare and be located so that no child has to walk more than 0.4 km (0.25 mile) or cross a major road to reach such an area from home. iv) In the case of developments of fewer than 50 dwellings, areas of new housing development or in other situations where the Council considers that such a course of action would be more appropriate, developers will be invited to make some other contribution in accordance with a scale to be determined by the Council. v) The design and location of new play areas must take into account community safety issues.

Figure 1: Saved Newcastle-under-Lyme Local Plan Policy C4: Open Space in new Housing Areas.

5.19 In order to develop appropriate new Local Plan policies to be used in circumstances where new development is proposed, credence must be given to the pros, cons and overall effectiveness of legacy policy, which needs to be adapted, updated, redrafted and improved as necessary to reflect the aims and objectives of current national planning policy guidance. There are a number of current drivers intended to achieve sustainable development, notably the current national planning policy focus upon housing led regeneration, which may lead to new residential development on some open spaces. The opposite side of the coin is that budgets are declining quickly, such that new ways must be found to maintain new open spaces, which must also be recognised and reflected in new planning policy and associated planning agreements. Moreover, there is a need and requirement to facilitate delivery of new open spaces in all other types of new development. New open space provision must be integral to a development to add value to new developments and not provided as an afterthought or on left over pieces of land (cross ref to Quantity Policy). Credence must also be given to the potential connectivity between new open spaces and existing open spaces, when this proves practical and possible (cross ref to Green Infrastructure Strategy).

5.20 In circumstances where there are clear surpluses in open space provision, in terms of quantity relative to location and/or typology, it may be appropriate to consider reallocation of land for the provision of new development, in whole or in part. In particular, this will help the Borough Council to deliver its required housing numbers in order to meet its evidence based targets, although land may be given over to other non-residential uses when circumstances indicate or dictate there is a proven market need or demand.

5.21 Reallocation of land to hard end uses, particularly housing, when the evidence supports it, will help contribute towards the emerging spatial strategy in the new Joint Local Plan. There is an added advantage that cash from the sale of open space land for development, if an appropriate proportion can be ring-fenced, may be generated and utilised to provide new facilities on open spaces in the

form of new capital projects to enhance their attractiveness, or otherwise generate maintenance budgets for their future management /improved management at a time when maintenance budgets are diminishing quickly. In addition, development on parts/areas of some sites may be set towards their ongoing viability when ongoing provision is threatened through lack of maintenance revenues, provided that monies are ring fenced for future maintenance.

5.22 There are some key provisos however:

- This approach may apply both to sites within development limits and for open space on the edges of settlement boundaries in accordance with an agreed spatial strategy, but care must be exercised in consideration of any potential development on open spaces in the open countryside well beyond settlement limits;
- Open spaces with development potential will have to be assessed, screened and analysed for development constraints that have potential to prevent or seriously compromise new development, unless suitable mitigation proves possible; and crucially;
- That a suitable communications strategy is developed and articulated which explains the need and logic of the approach, because removal of or development on open spaces can be highly sensitive. This has to be addressed through the political process in concert with Council Members.

<p>Locate new development within open spaces that are underperforming or surplus to requirements.</p>	<p>For this strategy to be implemented a number of sequential steps should be followed:</p> <p>Step 1: Can evidence be provided that an open space is surplus to requirements relative to local availability/quantity of existing provision/typology.</p> <p>Step 2: Is its development or partial development consistent with all other relevant policies in the new Local Plan.</p> <p>Step 3: Consider whether any loss of amenity will be offset locally by improvements elsewhere.</p> <p>Step 4: Has the resultant loss of Green Infrastructure been satisfactorily addressed in plans for the redevelopment of the site.</p> <p>Step 5: Is a master-plan needed, or has one been prepared to address development constraints and opportunities that arise, including the creation of new open spaces.</p> <p>Step 6: Can remaining and newly created green areas be properly managed in the long term.</p>
---	---

The Open Space Standards (see Table 2) are central to the future planning and provision of facilities

Figure 2: Procedure for Reallocation of Open Spaces to Alternative Uses

linked to development. The standards have been used to identify:

- areas of quantitative deficiency or surplus
- deficiencies in accessibility;
- quality deficiencies.

5.23 The quantity, quality and access standards described above should also be used to guide the level of developer contributions to ensure that adequate provision is made for green infrastructure as a consequence of development. Since opportunities to provide additional open space in the urban areas of the Borough are known to be limited, it will be necessary in some cases to substitute the provision of new green infrastructure with a financial contribution. In the first instance these financial contributions should be used to invest in existing open spaces to make them more useable, to increase the range of offerings within each open space, and to improve their capacity to support ecosystem services.

5.24 To secure financial contributions, the Council could use the complementary mechanisms of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) or planning obligations (as authorised under the Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990). If the Council uses a S106 based tariff system, its use will be severely restricted in taking further contributions because of 'Pooling Restrictions'. CIL is intended to be used for general infrastructure contributions whilst S106 obligations are for site specific mitigation. Decisions on CIL will be taken within the context of the scaling back of S106 obligations and the potential income streams for funding infrastructure. The CIL Regulations 2010 defined the circumstances where each can be used and where they are not appropriate. Subsequent changes in the regulations (amended 2011, 2012 and 2013) and experience in setting and using CIL have led to a clearer picture of how they can be best utilised. With respect to CIL, The Borough Council will need to prepare a charging schedule and this should support the development strategy of the new Joint Local Plan. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan is also a material factor in this regards. Contributions secured by planning obligations will need to meet the statutory test set out in Regulation 122 of the CIL Regulations:

- Necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms,
- Directly related to the development, and
- Fairly and reasonably related in scale to the development.

Each individual case will need to be looked at carefully before seeking S106 tariff payments. If there is not sufficient evidence to meet the statutory tests the authority may risk challenge that the decision has been taken unlawfully. It will also be vulnerable at any planning appeal. To make optimum use of the CIL and S106 requires pro-active infrastructure planning and funding.

5.25 The Council's approach in deciding whether all or some of the contribution are secured via planning obligations or via CIL will therefore need to factor what can actually be secured in terms of new Green Infrastructure or open space development which is manageable and significant without pooling finance from more than one development (see Figure 3). This might be resolved by defining a range of 'strategic projects' drawing from the Green Infrastructure Strategy spatial strategy map. Alternatively, this might be considered on a type-by-type basis.

The Council may well find that Green Corridors, Parks and Gardens, Allotments, and Natural and Semi-natural Green Space might benefit from a strategic approach, based on pooling of contributions (i.e. CIL), while Children's Play Provision, Amenity Greenspace, and trees can be handled through Planning Obligations.

Figure 3: CIL vs Planning obligations by type

5.26 If the Council is minded to use CIL, interim requirements and procedures related to commuted sums might be required. This can be achieved through an SPD with pre and post CIL introduction provisions. All guidance relevant to on-site provision will remain applicable post CIL introduction. CIL offers greater flexibility than Section 106 Agreements: it can make it easier to mitigate the impact of development by using CIL funds to provide new as well as enhance existing open space. The CIL regulations do not cover change of use: CIL cannot be charged on development that involves a change of use from non-residential to residential. If the Council wishes to ensure a contribution can be secured under a change of use from non-residential to residential scenario, this should be explicitly captured in the Council's SPD. Even if a specific formula is agreed, it must not compromise development viability, otherwise decisions may be challenged at appeal.

5.27 Applying the standards also requires determining the type of development to which the standards apply. The selection of types of development the standards should apply to will need to be informed by the scale, location and range of new developments anticipated for the new Local Plan period. If the Council anticipates significant large commercial/business developments, it would be desirable to ensure such developments contribute to the Borough's overall green infrastructure by featuring an adequate canopy cover in their parking area, while contributing to other green infrastructure provision which might be used by their customers or employees (e.g. amenity green space and green corridors so that employees and customers can access the development by cycle).

5.28 If, however the Council only anticipates small scale commercial/business developments, an argument can be made in favour of concentrating on residential developments for the application of the standards through planning permission and build commercial and other development into CIL where the cumulative benefit could be directed to a significant new GI development defined by the authority. If the Council is aware of major non-residential sites or redevelopments, the open space requirement could also be secured through site specific allocation policies or development briefs.

5.29 Since Council budgets are declining rapidly, local authorities will have to address the prospect of having to maintain open spaces to agreed standards differently than is possible under current arrangements. New open spaces will no longer be able to be realistically maintained by the public purse since budgets will not likely be sufficient to even maintain existing open space resources in future. Since there is a drive towards housing based regeneration to promote economic recovery and to meet housing need, it will be necessary to introduce private maintenance agreements for new open space provided as part of new residential development schemes. This is effectively a supplementary tax payable by the owners/occupiers of new residential estates.

5.30 Private maintenance agreements from occupiers must be transferrable upon sale or transfer of a property and logically, Section 106 agreements are the logical mechanism to secure and implement them. These agreements will be secured from developers, who will be required to include appropriate provision within formal terms and conditions of plot sales. However, additional information should be provided to prospective and actual purchasers to make it crystal clear that this requirement is obligatory and necessary and will require a dedicated supplementary monthly, annual or term contribution to be paid, as may be agreed. If the Local Authority decides to adopt schemes for future maintenance, then cash contributions should be the minimum sought, but should be sufficient to cover a period of at least 20 years.

5.31 It will be important to ensure that robust means are needed to collect contributions (through direct debit) and agreement on who or what types of organisation will be responsible for undertaking the works. Ideally, contributions should be co-ordinated by a charitable trust or possibly by a dedicated residents' association with a formal legal charter. Maintenance needs to be delivered to a set standard which must be produced and agreed prior to formal completion of new open

spaces; works must be tendered to suitably qualified organisations or contractors; and regular independent inspections must be undertaken to ensure standards are being maintained, again paid for as part of the global agreement. This can include play area inspections, which require much more frequent inspection. Independent organisations undertaking and monitoring maintenance must provide evidence of their maintenance works/ inspection regime to the organisation responsible for organising maintenance.

5.32 An SPD is recommended as the optimum way to address the implementation of private maintenance agreements. This may, for example, set out the method for delivery or provision of new green areas, inspection of open spaces, as well as the standard to which they will be maintained. It is important to note that delivery and maintenance/inspection are likely to be two separate but related issues.

5.33 A cost model for off-site contributions was produced (see Table 7) by updating the cost-model from the 2007 “Urban North Staffordshire Green Space Strategy”. This is now based on the Standards set out in the in the “Newcastle Under Lyme Open Space Strategy.” The model was cost indexed to account for inflation using the Bank of England RPI rates for 2007 – 2015, this remains a fair model to secure contributions. New Open Space Standards for amenity green space and allotments have been added. This creates a total contribution for new open space/improvement of existing open space of £4,439 per dwelling at current rates, which will need to be reviewed periodically or index linked to inflation. However, there are a range of important changes to be highlighted:

- In 2007 the cost contribution standard was set below the funding required per dwelling. This equated to 53% being met by the developer and 47% by the Borough Council or another public provider. At that time, it was reasonable to assume that the Borough Council or other public providers would ‘make good’ the shortfall. This is no longer considered the case as the Borough Council’s budgets have been dramatically reduced. For that reason, developers are now normally expected to meet all of the costs. However, the impact is significant due to increased costs and the funding required per dwelling to the developer has risen from £1,791 to £4,427. If the Borough Council’s offset is removed, then the rise is more modest from £3,391 to £4,427.
- The calculation now includes ‘Allotments’ for the first time which is benchmarked in cost terms as equivalent to ‘Designated Play Space’ or ‘Outdoor Sports’ in terms of the cost of management and maintenance. Amenity green space is included at the same rate as natural and semi-natural green space.
- The Outdoor Sports figure is included for benchmarking only and to avoid an unintentional absence. The Open Space Strategy review no longer considers ‘Outdoor Sports’ which is dealt with under the Newcastle under Lyme Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS). If a separate contribution schedule is agreed by the Borough Council for ‘Outdoor Sports’, then this item can be removed and will hence reduce the overall open space contribution costs from £4,427 to £3,317. It should be noted however that the PPS does not deal with all ‘Outdoor Sports’ only those specified in the Sport England PPS methodology or those added to at the Borough Council’s request.
- If the Council uses CIL then a new charging schedule will be required which will replace Table 6.

Open Space Typology	Rate (£/m2)*	Rate (£/ha)*	Local Standard (ha/1,000 pop.)	Funding Required per Dwelling*	Contribution Standard (ha/1,000 pop.)	Funding Required per dwelling*
Parks and Gardens	£24	£239,112	3.10	£1,853	3.10	£1,853
Amenity green space	£6	£66,925	0.90	£151	0.90	£151
Natural and semi-natural greenspace	£6	£66,925	3.60	£602	3.60	£602
Designate play spaces for children and young people	£50	£499,333	0.41	£512	0.41	£512
Allotments	£50	£499,333	0.15	£187	0.15	£187
Outdoor Sports	£50	£498,705	0.90	£1,122	0.90	£1,122
Total				£4,427		£4,427

Table 7: Cost model for offsite contributions, updated from Urban North Staffordshire Green Space Strategy 2007. Based on a figure of 2.5 people per dwelling

Development Strategy

In respect of on-site provision within new developments the following are recommended as good practice measures for Newcastle under Lyme:

- For residential; 0.004 hectares (0.01 acres) per dwelling of open space shall be provided for the total number of dwellings, irrespective of type or tenure; notwithstanding
- That such open space will be provided in areas of not less than 0.1 hectares (0.25 acres) regardless of development size;
- Roadside landscaping will not be counted as open space towards this requirement;
- In locating open spaces within new developments due consideration should be given to the incorporation of features of ecological interest, linkages with existing footpaths and open space networks and the need to avoid nuisance to neighbouring residential properties.

And that where appropriate, a satisfactory scheme for the provision of open space in an alternative location will be acceptable.

A cost model for off-site contributions will need to be agreed based on Table 7. The resulting cost schedule should be indexed to inflation and account for both capital and maintenance costs over a defined period. For on-site provision, cash contribution towards maintenance should be the minimum sought, unless private maintenance arrangements are proposed. Amongst other authorities investigated through desk study, the sums required to cover maintenance costs range from 10 to 20 years. Given the financial situation that local authorities face there is a strong argument in favour of seeking private maintenance contributions from occupiers which are transferrable upon sale. It will be important to ensure that robust means are needed to collect contributions (through direct debit) and agreement on who is responsible for undertaking the works.

An SPD is recommended as the optimum way to address the implementation of private maintenance agreements. This may, for example, set out the method for delivery or provision of new

greenspace, as well as the way that it will be maintained. It is important to note that delivery and maintenance are likely to be two separate but related issues.

Financial Strategy

5.34 Budget reductions are anticipated up to and beyond 2020. Since open space functions delivered by the Borough Council are mostly non-statutory; budget reductions are expected to exceed those of other service areas. Income generation potential is unlikely to wholly bridge the gap; although it should be part of the financial strategy.

5.35 In the short term budget reductions are inevitable and this will lead to reduced capacity and level of service. However, the precautionary principle can be applied here, so it is recommended that the Council avoids making irreversible decisions. Historically, the public sector economy has grown and shrunk in cycles and it would be deleterious to the community if the Council had closed off the opportunity for growth in capacity at a later stage. An example of this is that workforce reductions may be necessary in the short term, but recruitment could recommence at a future date if the public sector is allocated more money. So whilst the loss of skills will be hard to replace and in the absence of recruitment a whole generation of workers may be excluded from open space management this situation may turn around in 10 – 15 years' time.

5.36 Given the reduction of both staff and financial capacity it is necessary to look towards a mixed economy of providers. Whilst the providers of services may be different the transfer of ownership is to be strongly resisted; to paraphrase “when its gone – its gone forever”. Some of the opportunities in developing the mixed economy of open space management include:

- Requiring associate open space landholders/managers to take direct responsibility for open space management, this may include land held by educational establishments, highways, playing fields and developers.
- Clubs and leagues can be asked to accept the management responsibility for playing fields and contract the Council or an alternative provider to undertake the grass-cutting.
- As described in the development strategy; developers should be required to put in place schemes where residents pay directly for the open space created as part of the development, and, this should be transferrable to new householders through sale. Collection of funds from householders can be problematic so the Council should insist that the developer has a robust and automated collection system in place as a condition of planning approval.
- Transfer of land management responsibility to Parish and Town Councils. Parish and Town Councils can levy a precept on the local community to generate funds for management. The precept is collected by the Borough Council but allocated to the Parish or Town Council. It should be noted that at the time of the preparation of the Open Space Strategy that the precept is not capped, however this could change. Some Parish and Town Councils are reluctant to fully use their precept which is an issue for Council members and beyond the remit of the Open Space Strategy. Allied to this is the use of Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) to create new open space in local communities. NDPs can also be used to designate local green space if approved by the examiner and voted for in a local referendum.

5.37 The Borough Council should use this Open Space Strategy review to address the overall open space asset base using the three Framework Plans, new Open Space Standards, Audit spreadsheet, Action Plan etc. A smaller asset base is the consequence but has the benefit of enabling reinvestment onto sites which provide a higher profile and greater public benefit. However, at this point, it is necessary to repeat that the transfer of ownership of open space, where it will remain as

open space, is to be strongly resisted. Where the open space in question is no longer to remain as open space but be subject to a change of use then guidance on this can be found in the development strategy above. Where disposal accompanied by a change of use is intended then a consultation process is required prior to its transfer to an asset management plan.

5.38 Increased commercialisation can go some way to offset budget reductions and may generate increased activities. There are numerous ways to achieve this. Some of the most popular and replicable are:

- Offering franchising opportunities in major open spaces (e.g. Country Parks and Urban Parks) such as (i) cafes and restaurants (ii) sport and active recreation minor retail outlets (of a scale suited to the sensibility to the space) – such as skate board, rock climbing and bouldering, BMX and mountain biking etc. (iii) paid for attractions (e.g. high ropes courses); (iv) markets such as street food, flea markets, art markets etc.; (v) music and theatre including promenade events and festivals.
- Sponsorship of open space by a Company who can then display their marketing information at key visual points and can also use the open space for corporate events ranging from entertaining business guests through to staff development. Sponsorship opportunities include parks, roundabouts and prominent amenity green space.

5.39 The Council may need to organise in a new way to meet future challenges with respect to its open space services. The characteristics of a smaller, leaner organisation are:

- Entrepreneurial in generation of income and creative in delivering services in new ways
- More commercial in making its services available to others and attracting money generating activities into its open space
- Significantly increasing its role as an enabler, facilitator and commissioner of services
- Adept at partnership working
- Strong on marketing and communications
- Dedicated to attracting grants and funds from outside the area, which are secured through competitive processes

5.40 The Council should fully understand all of the costs of providing its open space services and practice full cost recovery when offering services internally and externally. The full cost of an activity or output or project is the direct costs of the activity and the appropriate portion of all other costs of that service.

Financial Strategy

Address budget reductions and consequent reduction of services but seek to offset in part by increased commercial activity.

The Borough Council should have a good understanding of total cost and practice 'full cost recovery'.

Avoid irreversible decisions notably to allow for future expansion when the economic cycle changes. It is acceptable to transfer land management of open space to alternative providers but with the Borough Council retaining the ownership of sites (example is Parish and Town Councils who can use precepts to fund management works).

Organise the service department as an entrepreneurial enabler and facilitator.

Consider alternative use of sites no longer fit for purpose, noting the constraints found elsewhere in this Strategy, to reduce the asset size.

Consider reducing maintenance operations on sites which are not required to meet local standards or which have a lesser community value and use

Reinvest funds from rationalisation into open space improvements

Require developers to have mechanisms in place where residents pay directly for the open space created as part of the development and that this is transferable on sale. It is essential to have a robust and automated collection mechanism.



Image 15: left, Pool Dam Marshes

Investment Strategy

5.41 It is anticipated that resources for Open Space investment will remain severely limited until at least 2020 and possibly beyond. In a resource limited environment the potential for investment is highly limited but not impossible. Realistic instances of investment opportunities include:

- Funds released from rationalisation
- Funds generated through new development (planning agreements or S106), CIL
- Local authority invest-to-save funds
- Grants from external organisation including National Lottery funders.
- One-off grants from governmental sources
- Sponsorship from business

5.42 The investment strategy (Table 8) is a, listing-in-priority-order, of how investment funds should be deployed. It should be made clear that investment is an entirely different consideration to management funds or revenue associated with current staffing; these are dealt with under the financial strategy. The proposal to increase the staffing resource in support of increased volunteering (see Volunteer Strategy) is not included in the list as it is a revenue cost. It is assumed that existing management funds are sufficient to retain the standard of current open spaces above the 80% quality threshold.

Investment Strategy

1	Sites which currently fall below the 80% quality standard which it is determined should be retained as open space.
2	Open space that provides (or could provide) enhanced open space connectivity including green corridors or improved multifunctionality.
3	Sites where a capital investment could significantly reduce ongoing revenue running costs and/or increase income earned from a site.
4	Sites where a funding opportunity presents itself (although this does not appear at the top of the list they should almost invariably be taken in a resource limited environment)

5	Sites where investment would lead to improved ecosystem services or protection of neighbouring communities from climate change impacts (an example is the re-engineering of amenity grassland as flood retention areas)
6	Sites new/or existing which attract or retain significant new economic investment in the Borough, for example through attracting more tourists to stimulate the visitor economy.
7	Refreshment of facilities that are nearing their end of life e.g. play equipment
8	Improvements to open space path networks, parking, on-site interpretation, shelter, provision for youth.
9	Refurbishment or removal of time-expired built structures if these have not been dealt with under a higher listing.

Table 8: Investment strategy in priority order. 1 is highest and 9 is lowest.

Volunteer Strategy

5.43 Volunteers are already involved in open space within the Borough. They have a key role to play which extends beyond the obvious roles which lie in site care, events and general oversight. Volunteering also builds a 'sense of ownership', builds skills, enables a knowledge exchange between the young and the old (intergenerational), reduces isolation of individuals and provides health and well-being benefits; in other words, open space not only needs volunteers - volunteers also need open spaces. The most common form of volunteering is through groups such as 'friends of parks' etc. but there are various opportunities to extend this into conservation volunteering, woodland management, tree-wardens (see Tree Council for more information) and organising and supporting a larger number of events.

5.44 The Borough Council already has staff active in support of such activities and this is seen as a crucial service and one which should be expanded. Whilst additional revenue costs would be involved the positive gearing ratio is very considerable, both in terms of the financial offsets made and the opportunities created. Creativity is needed in delivering support to volunteers for instance; (i) in recruiting a wider range of participants especially from non-typical social milieu, (ii) finding new ways for volunteers to be involved, (iii) providing training support so that volunteers are competent in a wider range of tasks, (iv) providing insurance cover for volunteer activities (Linking to TCV could be useful here), (v) accessing college students such as those at Keele University. Whilst to some extent these activities may already be in place, as stated there is considerable opportunities for further development.

Volunteer Strategy

Volunteer involvement is critical to the successful management and development of the Borough's open space assets. Whilst the Borough Council is already successfully involved it is an area for further revenue/staffing investment with potentially large returns.

The strategy for volunteering should not be undertaken in isolation from the offer/support available through other organisations, of which TCV, Groundwork, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust are amongst those mentionable. However, there are a myriad of existing local volunteer organisations which can be used as a platform to connect with potential volunteers.

The approach to volunteering should also involve developing skills, supporting inter-generational activities, reducing social exclusion and supporting health and wellbeing. In respect of these linking with NHS service providers, GPs, offender rehabilitation and community & neighbourhood services are desirable attributes.

Targets should be set for the number of volunteers involved and expanded upon annually.

Events strategy

5.45 Key open space such as urban parks and country parks are highly suited as event venues. Events can deliver a wide range of benefits; these include:

- Introduce new users to sites which in turn may lead to independent repeat visits. There is some evidence in research that this can lead to increased participation from hard to reach groups.
- Perform an educational role especially in:
 - raising understanding of the facilities available in a given open space,
 - environmental education,
 - family and 'fun' events which deliver social cohesion,
 - demonstrating local crafts and the work of artisans,
 - music making introductory sessions on new activities that they can participate in.
 - growing plants, saplings and learning about planting and basic horticulture
 - venue for skills training especially manual dexterity, horticulture and urban forestry
- Lead to greater awareness of local authority services and support local studies
- Increase community pride in the Borough
- Attract visitors from outside of the Borough hence providing a 'show-casing' opportunity

5.46 The Borough has long participated in 'Britain in Bloom' and had considerable success. This is to be celebrated and should be continued. It is an evidential activity which reaches many citizens and apart from the physical results of attractive plantings and community participation it also raises awareness of open space management as a valued council service.

Events Strategy

Maintain events as a key feature of open space use whilst accepting that in a resource limited environment more efficient approaches will be required. This will be an ongoing activity and require continued creative thinking at the management level. In particular, the Borough Council should continue the existing trend by moving from being an 'organiser' to an 'enabler & facilitator'. Staffing should be used, as far as possible, to support events created and led by volunteers.

The Borough Council's main contribution is access to the open space, publicity support and the training and insuring of volunteers as required.

There may be exceptions to the 'enabler and facilitator' role created through activities requested through other service departments or events that are part of externally funded projects, in which case, full cost recovery should be sought.

Acronyms and other terms used in this document

Biodiverse/biodiversity:	The variety of natural life
BMX:	Bicycle motocross
Brownfield:	Previously developed land
CIL:	Community Infrastructure Levy
CIPFA:	The Chartered Institute for Public Finance & Accountancy
Core Strategy:	Compulsory local development document
FiT:	Fields in Trust
Framework Plans:	Three technical appendices to the strategy review that apply the standards at a local level.
GPs:	General Practitioners
Great Outdoors Survey:	Public consultation undertaken between October and December 2015
Green Flag/Green Pennant:	Nationally recognised quality awards
Ha or HA:	Hectare
Local Plan:	Statutory document which sets out a vision and a framework for the future development of the area.
NDP:	Neighbourhood Development Plan(s)
NHS:	National Health Service
NPPF:	National Planning Policy Framework
SI06:	Planning obligations under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)
SPD:	Supplementary Planning Document
TCV:	Trust for Conservation Volunteers

Photographic credits

MD2 Consulting Ltd.

Credits

Rebecca Allen, Stewart Donohue, Roger Tait, Helen Beech; Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council.

All adults and young people who completed the Newcastle under Lyme Great Outdoors survey.

All participants at the stakeholder workshops.

The authors of legacy documents and extant strategies consulted in preparing the Open Space Strategy.

Officers of adjacent local authorities for their time and input which is gratefully acknowledged.

Consultants: Clive Davies, Glenn McGill, Jane McGill, Marinella Spano, Paul Davies (all of MD2 Consulting Ltd), Tom Butlin (The Mersey Forest).



MD2 Consulting Ltd
The Dene
36 Nevilledale Terrace
City of Durham
DH1 4QG

www.md2.org.uk
info@md2.org.uk