

Parks Services

Parks &



Green Spaces

Strategy 2004-2014

Oct 2004

amended Oct 2013

Forward

We are very pleased to introduce this Parks and Green Spaces Strategy for our Borough. It sets out our collective vision for improving green spaces, and the aims and objectives Parks Services seek to achieve over the next ten years together with our partners and the community.

Our gratitude is extended for the input of a wide range of people and organisations, whom have kindly offered their endorsement of the strategy. As a result it is strongly rooted in the needs of the community.

The strategy will be used to help allocate resources and produce detailed plans of action, secure new Green Spaces and fund improvements to existing spaces. It is the basis for developing partnerships as part of our long-term management objectives. The Council has made a policy commitment to this strategy and we look forward to furthering its aspirations to the benefit of the Borough and its visitors.

Sue Ireland Head of Parks Services



**Maureen Moulds Cabinet Member for
Leisure, Youth & Community Safety**



CONTENTS



FORWARD	2
1.0 BACKGROUND	4
2.0 INTRODUCTION	5
2.1 WHAT IS A PARKS AND GREEN SPACES STRATEGY?	5
2.2 WHY DO WE NEED A PARKS AND GREEN SPACES STRATEGY?	6
2.3 VISION FOR A PARKS AND GREEN SPACES STRATEGY.....	7
3.0 INVOLVING COMMUNITIES	8
3.1 WHO ARE OUR CUSTOMERS?	8
3.2 RESEARCH.....	8
4.0 AIMS	9
4.1 COMMUNITY	10
4.2 IMPROVEMENT	11
4.3 MANAGEMENT	12
4.4 ENVIRONMENT	13
5.0 KEY ACTIONS	14
5.1 IDENTIFYING IMPROVEMENTS AND SETTING PRIORITIES.....	14
5.2 IMPLEMENTATION	14
5.3 REVIEW	14
6.0 SUMMARY	15
WHAT YOU CAN DO?	17

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1.0 Background

Chelmsford, like many other boroughs` faces challenges and opportunities concerning its green spaces. Economic growth is linked to a better quality environment, and the Government has recognised the opportunities by funding a national agency, CABI Space¹, to champion urban parks and green space. Chelmsford Borough Council has a strong commitment to providing good quality Parks and Green Spaces. This is acknowledged by the DTLR², our open space planning policies being cited as a case study in its publication "Improving Public Parks, Play Areas and Open Spaces," and reflected in regular Essex Playing Fields Association awards. Further recognition was granted for the Council's work on promoting "Quality of the Built Environment" by the award of Beacon Council status for 2003/04.

In 2003 a Best Value telephone survey of local residents found that 83% (users at least once in past 12 months) were satisfied with Parks, Open Spaces and Children's Play Areas provided and managed by the Council. This same survey showed strong support for promoting more public awareness of these areas. The Council recognises this in its core values as stated in the Corporate Plan, "Building On Our Success".

The high regard for the Council's Parks and Green Spaces is further indicated in the CIPFA³ comparison with Chelmsford's nearest neighbours, published June 2004 This indicates an 82% satisfaction rate (all respondents, users and non- users, the highest rating in the family group) and 90% from users of once or more a month. We want to continue this commitment by introducing a Parks Strategy which sets clear, publicly consulted priorities for our Parks and Green Spaces over the next ten years.

¹ A division of the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, who administer the Green Flag Award scheme in conjunction with the Civic Trust.

² Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions

³ Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountants

2.0 Introduction

2.1 What is a Parks and Green Spaces Strategy?

Green Space strategies help everyone responsible for green spaces to provide well designed and well managed Parks and Green Spaces. A strategy sets out a collective vision for improved green spaces, which meet community needs and provides a reference point for allocating resources and detailed plans of action.

The Chelmsford Borough Parks and Green Spaces Strategy is a statement of our vision, overall aims and key Park and Green Space issues, which Parks Services intend to address, through our Service and management plans, with our partners (includes sports, crime, environmental, access, childcare, youth, Parish and Town Council Groups) over the next ten years. The strategy is an overarching document which will form the framework for developing new future policies. It takes account of the local community's suggestions and priorities, which inform investment priorities for capital and revenue funds, and provides the basis for forming partnerships as part of the long-term management and maintenance requirements.

Parks and Green Spaces are defined by PPG17 (Planning Policy Guidance 17) as parks and public gardens, country parks, natural and semi-natural green spaces, green corridors (e.g. linear routes and riversides), outdoor sports facilities, provision for children and young people (e.g. play areas and informal ball games areas), allotments, community gardens and city farms, cemeteries and churchyards, amenity green spaces (e.g. visual enhancement amongst housing developments) and accessible countryside on the urban fringe. This strategy encompasses Council owned/managed Parks and Green Spaces, (therefore it excludes country parks, community gardens, city farms, and most cemeteries and church yards), but compliments the developing Local Development Framework (Local Plan replacement), which also considers non- Council provision.

2.2 Why Do We Need a Parks and Green Spaces Strategy?

“We in Government recognise the many benefits that good quality Parks and Green Spaces can provide in enhancing people’s quality of life and creating decent, attractive places where people will want to live, work and play. That is why they form an important part of our programme to build stronger, more sustainable communities now and in the future.”⁴

The majority of people recognise the essential “quality of life” value of Parks and Green Spaces. Research, policies and strategies emphasise the importance of green areas as ‘lungs’ within the urban environment. Green spaces are valuable to the future of our communities. We need them for leisure, sport, relaxation, and spaces to play on, for growing of food and as integrated links to a sustainable transport network. We also need to experience wildlife, and to help preserve it. Green Spaces play a valuable role by contributing to mental and physical well being. They need to be protected from development, and sometimes be improved e.g. by new landscaping schemes.

A clear strategy, linked to the Council’s corporate aims and objectives can help secure new Green Spaces, and funding for improvements to existing ones through the planning system, for the benefit of the whole community.

In particular, the development of new policies related to the Local Development Framework will be included in the future strategy, to enable provision and management of parks and green spaces for the community. For example, research on PPG17 and the local implications will be featured.

⁴ Yvette Cooper, Minister for Regeneration - ‘Raising the Standard, The Green Flag Award Guidance Manual’

2.3 Vision for a Parks and Green Spaces Strategy

The Council's vision for Chelmsford is set out in three documents, as below:

2.3.1 "Our Future" – the Community Plan (2003 – 2008)

'The borough of Chelmsford will be at the leading edge for economic, social and environmental excellence at the heart of Essex, where people choose to live, work and visit because of the ever-improving quality of life available to all, now and for future generations.'

2.3.2 "Building on Our Success" – the Corporate Plan (2003 – 2006)

Guided by this vision and initially its predecessor ("Prosperity and Partnership"), the Corporate Plan 2003- 2006 "Building On Our Success" sets out how the Council will seek to achieve the vision. The actions comprise of two main strands, to which a Parks Strategy will strongly contribute:

- ❖ Achieving the highest quality service for all our citizens
- ❖ Supporting the objectives of the Chelmsford Community Plan

2.3.3 "Celebrate Chelmsford" – the Local Cultural Strategy (2002 – 2007)

A wide range of issues has been assembled, enshrined in the Council's Local Cultural Strategy. Culture has not been given a rigid definition, having many aspects and different meanings to different people, including Parks and Green Spaces. This document states:

'By 2007, Chelmsford will be a centre for cultural excellence, where people choose to live, work and visit because of the high quality of cultural life across the borough.'

2.3.4 Parks & Green Spaces Strategy

Our vision for green spaces is that:

“Chelmsford’s green spaces belong to local people. They should be safe, cherished and accessible to all; managed for the future in order to co-ordinate and balance the needs of various interest groups fairly, and to achieve an ever-improving quality of life for all our residents and visitors”

3.0 Involving Communities

3.1 **Who are our Customers?**

When we talk about Parks and Green Spaces, almost everyone is a “customer”, using green spaces for a variety of activities, in passing or benefiting from the visual amenity. As a result our consultation sought to obtain a wide cross section of views. across the Borough.

Through the recent Best Value review process⁵ organisations and consumers were asked about their future priorities and needs. The research included:

- Parks, green spaces and allotments
- Recreation grounds and sports pitches
- Hylands estate
- Play services

3.2 **Research**

Further research is needed to look at the ways of involving people in more localised green space issues, such as voluntary partnerships with other organisations, “friends of” groups and community groups. We also need a co-ordinated strategy for involving volunteers in the work we do concerning green spaces, not just things such as litter picking, e.g. the “Just Bin It” campaign, but across a whole range of work. The first step, however has been to ensure the basis of this strategy is what the community want and need, which involved:

⁵ LCPS BV Phase 1, 2 and 3 research

- ❖ Consultation with other Services, partners and consumers⁶ on this draft document, and incorporating revisions based on the feedback received (May/June 2004).
- ❖ Incorporation of any revisions after seeking the views of Elected Members at the Councils Community Review Committee, 8th September, 2004

Hence, this document now represents a shared vision and a statement of community priorities for future development of Chelmsford's Parks and Green Spaces. It will be developed further to reflect Government spatial policy requirements. We await the completed PPG17 research currently being led by Town Planning Services and will develop the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy accordingly.

- ❖ To include appropriate outcomes from the qualitative/quantitative open space research work in respect of the replacement Local Plan (Local Development Framework documents), and incorporate the views of Elected Members.

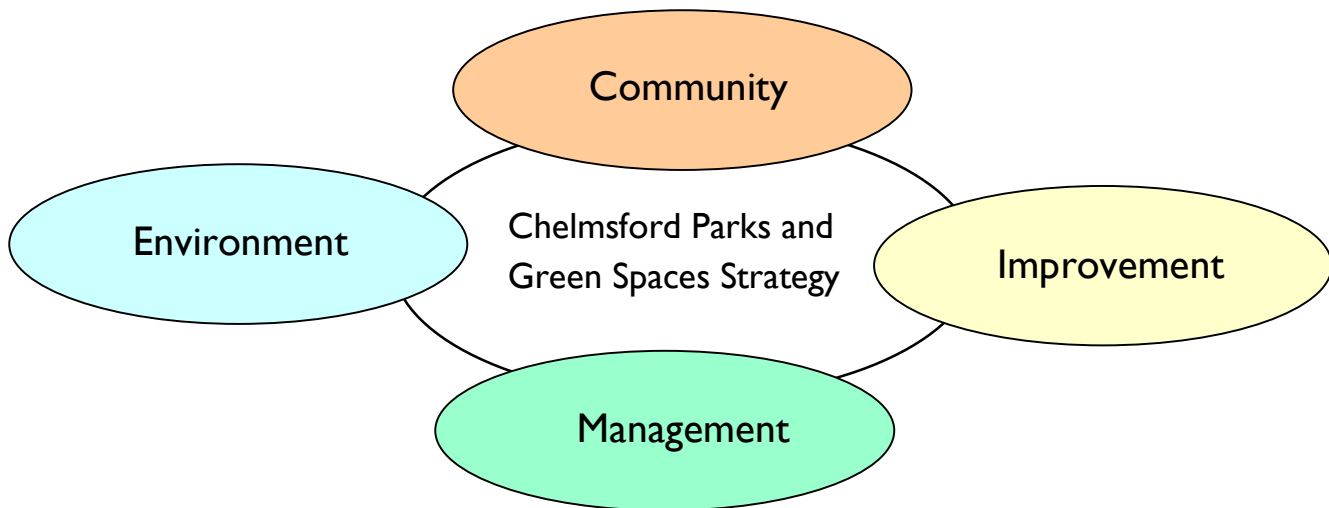
4.0 Aims

The aim of the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy is to:

- ❖ State a collective vision and direction for the future development of Chelmsford Boroughs Parks and Green Spaces
- ❖ Involve the local community and organisations in planning for, developing and promoting diverse, but balanced opportunities for use of Parks and Green Spaces within the resources available.

⁶ Parks Services 'Towards a Parks Strategy Questionnaire

The Strategy focuses on four key areas set out below:



4.1 Community

Aim

- To encourage community involvement and participation in green space planning and management

Objectives

- Establish Parks Forums to involve the community in the planning and management of parks and green space issues
- Consider opportunities to improve parks and green space security and reduce the fear of crime
- Develop initiatives to encourage community involvement in Parks and Green Spaces, and in doing so, reduce anti-social behaviour

Actions

- Investigate the establishment of parks forums/friends groups and how the community wish to become involved
- Identify site specific concerns about security/personal safety issues via consultation with the community, organisations and partners/agencies
- Continue to develop and implement initiatives with partners/agencies to allay the fear of crime when using Parks and Green Spaces
- Develop a park ranger service to encourage community involvement

4.2 Improvement

Aim

- To improve the quality of Parks and Green Spaces

Objectives

- Use internal and external consultation to identify key quality issues
- Focus resources on issues the community consider important and use that knowledge to improve Parks and Green Spaces
- Investigate and use best practice in quality accreditation to improve Parks and Green Spaces

Actions

- Develop quality initiatives such as the nationally prestigious “green flag award” scheme for specific sites
- Develop opportunities to improve existing sites/facilities and create new parks/green spaces
- Increase the range of open-air activities/children’s events in parks and raise awareness of existing activities; to encourage community involvement.

4.3 Management

Aim

- Set specific aims and objectives for individual Parks and Green Spaces to make the best use of resources

Objectives

- Give priority to all aspects of safety and security of park users; raising grounds maintenance standards, and combating vandalism when considering development, improvements or maintenance regimes of Parks and Green Spaces.
- Maximise support for parks development and maintenance through external funding opportunities, and ensure new resources are prioritised as above to benefit park and green space consumers
- Produce management plans for individual Parks and Green Spaces

Actions

- Develop individual park management plans, including programmes of costed improvements, which reflect the development priorities of park users as indicated in the primary objective, above.
- Address the impact of new development by applying green space planning policies, or seek developers financial contributions through planning agreements

4.4 Environment

Aim

- To protect Parks and Green Spaces and enhance the natural environment

Objectives

- Develop an open space audit to assess the environmental value of Parks and Green Spaces and implement changes where practicable
- Support the Council's Biodiversity Action Plan

Actions

- Produce an audit assessment methodology based on criteria being developed by CABI Space, to evaluate the importance and role of each park and major green space and where feasible, implement actions to enhance the natural environment of specific sites
- Contribute to, support and develop Chelmsford's Biodiversity Action Plan

5.0 Key Actions

5.1 Identifying Improvements and Setting Priorities

Economic pressures will continue to limit resources and as a result improvements to Parks and Green Spaces must be prioritised to reflect this, and our consultation feedback. This Strategy and its Key Actions will help us to achieve this, leading to the production of site specific Management Plans for specified Parks and Green Spaces. Out of these, specific actions plans will be developed, including issues such as staff resources, costs and timescales.

5.2 Implementation

Implementation of the Key Actions will be achieved by working with colleagues, partners, special interest groups, and the wider community. Sources of funding, some of which are not open to the council but are open to individuals, organisations and communities need to be investigated. We must build on the good practice to date, such as our Beacon Council status for “Quality of the Built Environment” and the high degree of customer satisfaction with Parks.

5.3 Review

The Parks and Green Spaces Strategy must always be capable of embracing changing circumstances, political and organisational changes and new or different funding opportunities. It may in fact never be “finished” by accepted definition if it is to evolve and move forward. Each year the Key Actions priorities from this Strategy will be integrated into the annually reviewed Parks Service Plan and site Management Plans and progress monitored accordingly. After five years a review will be undertaken with public input to amend, add or delete actions in line with what the community wants to achieve.

6.0 Summary

Below are summary tables of priority actions identified by consumer consultation. Since it is envisaged this document will be accessible to the public, details of how to obtain further information, comment or get further involved are also stated.

Consultation Priorities for Future Development of Parks and Green Spaces, Ranked by Importance (from Parks and Green Spaces Questionnaire)

1. Improvement of existing /creation of new Parks and Green Spaces = 50.0%

2. Community involvement in Parks and Green Spaces = 34.4%

3. Enhancing the natural environment of Parks and Green Spaces = 15.6%

Summary of Priority Actions Identified by Consultation

Community:

*** Identify site-specific concerns concerning safety and security issues of Parks and Green Space Users and consult the community/partners/agencies on seeking to resolve these**

*** Investigate the establishment of Parks Forums/Friends Groups and how the community wish to be more involved**

Improvement:

*** Develop opportunities to improve existing sites/facilities and create new Parks and Green Spaces; and specifically, increasing the range of activities/raising awareness of existing open air activities, including children's events in parks)**

Management:

*** Develop individual Park Management Plans taking account of safety and security of park users; raising grounds maintenance standards, and combating vandalism when considering development, improvements or maintenance regimes of Parks and Green Spaces.**

Environment:

*** Where feasible, implement actions to enhance the natural environment of specific sites**

What You Can Do?

It doesn't matter about your age, gender, ethnic group or ability. You can get involved in your local Parks and Green Spaces by

- letting us know your ideas- complete the boxes throughout this document, or add any other comments in the additional comments box below:
- taking part in community consultations
- working in a community group on developing park/green space Management Plans
- setting up or joining a park/green space 'Friends Group'
- helping to carry out park and open space surveys
- supporting local community green space projects
- telling the Council straight away (daytime) if you spot something wrong in a park or green space, or via ParkWatch report line: 07831 189918 (vandalism and outside normal office hours)

For further information contact:

Glenn Parkington (01245 606610), Parks Services, Chelmsford Borough Council, Civic Centre, Duke Street, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 1JE, or email parksservices@chelmsfordbc.gov.uk

Strategy Review

A copy of Parks and Green Space Strategy Review 2009 is available online.

If you would like to be involved, or require further information please provide your contact details in the box below in order that we may contact you. Alternatively, telephone us on 01245 606610.

Name	
Address	
Town	
Post code	
Telephone	
Email	

If you have any comments to make please write in the box below and return to us using the FREEPOST address:

Parks Services

Chelmsford Borough Council

FREEPOST NAT 14994

Chelmsford

CMI IBR

Please write your comments here.

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