



Sandwell
Metropolitan Borough Council



people spaces places



Sandwell Green Space Strategy

2020 - 2030



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Executive Summary

This Green Space Strategy covers the period 2020 to 2030 aligned with the timeframe for the Sandwell Vision 2030. It replaces the earlier Green Space Strategy that was produced in 2010. This earlier strategy helped deliver significant improvements to green spaces with capital investment through the National Lottery Heritage Fund at Dartmouth Park, Lightwoods Park and West Smethwick Park; delivery of the Play Pathfinders programme with improvements to 29 play spaces; provision of outdoor gyms; an overall improvement in the quality of green spaces across the Borough; and the achievement of 12 Green Flag Awards in 2019.

This new strategy has been produced following a review and update of the data about the quantity, quality and accessibility of green space in Sandwell. It has also been developed based on public consultation with residents through a Household and Online Survey and the findings from the Sandwell Go Play Survey which gained the views of children across the Borough. More in depth qualitative consultation through a series of workshops involving staff, friends groups, stakeholders and commercial partners has also informed the development of the strategy. The overall process has been overseen by a Steering Group with representation from key service areas that are involved in delivering services in green space and will be responsible for the implementation of the strategy.

Green spaces make an important contribution to quality of life, and high quality spaces create economic, social and environmental value. Parks and green spaces offer places for sport, recreation and relaxation, benefitting physical health and mental wellbeing. Green spaces can also bring significant community benefits as places to play, encouraging neighbourliness and social inclusion and as a venue for events that bring people together. The environmental benefits of green spaces are well understood: open spaces improve air quality, provide sustainable urban drainage solutions and can help mitigate against climate change, whilst trees cool air and provide shade. Furthermore there is evidence that high quality green spaces have positive impacts upon property prices, are good for business and being close to public space adds economic value.

As such, continued investment in green spaces in Sandwell will help the Council and its partners achieve its vision where “In 2030 Sandwell is a thriving, optimistic and resilient community”. The provision of high quality green spaces that are safe and

accessible can contribute directly to many of the ten ambitions underpinning the Sandwell Vision and the Corporate Plan. The Green Space Strategy makes the case for considering the value of green spaces in this context.

Sandwell is a borough that contains significant amounts of green space. Nearly a quarter (23.7%) of the land area is green space of some form, although this reduces to 13.9% when those spaces with unrestricted access are considered. Overall there are 323 accessible green spaces across the borough amounting to nearly 1,200 hectares. This is characterised by large expanses of Semi-natural Green Space covering 458 hectares, with Parks and Gardens covering 264 hectares. A large number of Amenity Green Spaces cover a total area of 214 hectares, although these typically tend to be smaller spaces than semi-natural green space and parks and gardens. There are over 108 hectares of outdoor sports facilities across the Borough.

Based on a population of 325,460 (2017 Mid-Year Estimates), there are currently 3.63 hectares per 1,000 population of unrestricted green space. This is lower than the neighbouring boroughs of Dudley (4.51 hectares per 1000) and Walsall (4.72 hectares per 1000) and marginally higher than Wolverhampton (3.60 ha per 1,000 population). Against this measure the quantity of unrestricted green space has decreased over time (4.24 ha per 1,000 in 2006), primarily as a result of population increase. With the population predicted to increase by a further 30,300 people by 2030 the future supply of unrestricted green space is expected to reduce to 3.3 hectares per 1,000 population.

However, the supply of green space is not uniform and there are significant variations in the quantity of unrestricted green space at a Town level and to a larger degree at Ward level. The detailed green space audit that underpins this strategy provides the evidence base detailing the quantity, quality and accessibility of green space provision across the Borough. This strategy recommends that steps are taken to reduce the inequalities in the quantity of provision, focused on areas where provision is lowest and where the levels of health and economic deprivation are greatest. Further priorities will be where Low Quality Low Value spaces can be improved. There are significant challenges in addressing these deficiencies which reflect historic patterns of land use, but equally there are opportunities to increase the supply of unrestricted green space by improving the accessibility of those spaces that currently have limited or restricted public access. There may be other opportunities for creating new green space through development where appropriate.

Overall, the quality of green space across the Borough has increased since the first quality assessment was carried out in 2006. The quality of key parks and green spaces has been sustained at the levels recorded in 2013, although the quality of smaller more local level spaces has returned to the levels recorded in 2006. With twelve Green Flag Awards achieved in 2019, all areas of the Borough have reasonable access to high quality green spaces. This has been achieved against a background of significant budget reductions, with maintenance and management budgets less than half the level of 2010/11.

Whilst there has been a reduction in the financial and staffing resources to manage and maintain green spaces over the past decade, the authority has supported the development and expansion of volunteer participation. The numbers of friends groups and voluntary organisations has increased significantly and volunteer participation has made a significant contribution to sustaining the quality of green spaces and ensuring the spaces are well used and a focus for the community. This strategy recognises the significant contribution of volunteers across the borough and recommends steps to ensure a more co-ordinated approach in the future along with an ambition to build capacity and strengthen the Sandwell Green Spaces Forum. The range of roles available to volunteers will be reviewed with the ambition to provide greater opportunities for community participation in Sandwell's green spaces. Opportunities to develop pilot projects around community food production and community gardening will also be explored. Such schemes can offer low cost and inclusive opportunities for improved diet and nutrition, increased physical activity and can contribute to greater social cohesion.

'Big Local' projects and other neighbourhood regeneration initiatives are currently being delivered in Sandwell and green spaces often form an important component of these community led regeneration programmes. The Council and the Parks and Green Space team will support such local initiatives. Opportunities for community asset transfer will also be explored and the Council will support local groups and organisations wishing to consider taking on specific facilities or green spaces where appropriate. The Council will also work with commercial partners to develop new and enhanced green space facilities where feasible and commercially viable.

It is proposed that a political champion for parks and green spaces is appointed so that there is a lead member to ensure that the cross-cutting value and contribution of green spaces is considered at cabinet level within the authority. The political champion will also play a key role in promoting the value of culture, sport and leisure across the borough and resourcing and monitoring the implementation of the strategy. A review of the organisational structure with respect to green spaces and the alignment of budgets is also recommended by this strategy. Action will also be taken to develop a long term investment strategy and to review the arrangements with respect to income generation to allow greater income to be realised and retained within the respective service areas.

Environmental issues at a global and local level have increased in visibility during the development of this strategy. The UK Government has published its 25 Year Environment Plan, has committed to an ambitious legal target to become carbon neutral by 2050 and will publish the Environment Bill in 2020. Sandwell Council is responding to this agenda by developing its own Environment / Climate Change Strategy that will also consider air quality within the borough. This Green Space Strategy identifies the role that green space has in contributing to these pressing environmental challenges relating to climate change, air quality and biodiversity. The Council will create a working group to consider natural capital accounting in the Borough to understand the value of eco-system and green infrastructure services that green spaces provide. Such approaches can support the principle of Biodiversity Net Gain which will soon become a statutory requirement for new development.

Trees and woodland can enhance landscapes, support greater biodiversity, improve air quality and contribute to flood alleviation. Sandwell was one of the partners in the delivery of the Millennium Forest scheme which sought to increase tree cover across the Black Country. A woodland management strategy will be developed to bring these legacy sites into appropriate management. The Council also proposes an ambitious strategy to deliver a Tree for Every Child programme and involve children and young people in contributing to the further development of the urban forest. High profile scheme can help raise awareness of practical action for the environment and signpost people to outdoor education activity and Forest Schools programmes.

The Council will also continue to protect green spaces through the planning process, whilst working with the other Black Country Boroughs and other neighbouring authorities to deliver more homes for new residents. Planning and project-based work at a sub-regional level will continue and officers from Parks and Grounds Maintenance will play a greater role in these processes. Research to inform the development of this

strategy has also identified needs and opportunities with respect to deficiencies in the supply and accessibility of green space and more detailed action plans will be developed to consider how these can be addressed.

A review of the current Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) will set out the overall approach to when Planning Obligations will be required and also set out how they could be used which may include improving green space quality. Sandwell will adopt design guidance, where appropriate, which will be covered in the policies of the emerging Black Country Plan and Black Country Sustainable Drainage design manual. Furthermore, Sandwell will review the adoption policy of recreational green spaces to ensure that the quality of green spaces can be improved and high quality spaces be sustained.

This will be supplemented by the development of Management and Maintenance Plans which will guide improvements to key parks and green spaces on a site by site basis. Grounds maintenance operations will be reviewed with respect to the litter and waste management contract and opportunities to change maintenance practices to support biodiversity gains will be explored.

Children and young people are important user groups for parks and green spaces. However, there are often restrictions on how far children and young people can travel to access places for play, sport and recreation. Through this strategy there will be a focus on sustaining and improving access to green space at a local level for children and young people and improving key pedestrian and cycles routes to allow children and families to safely access green spaces. Other initiatives will consider and identify opportunities for enhancing walking, cycling and active travel for wider audiences.

Parks and green spaces provide excellent, accessible and convenient locations for sport, recreation and leisure activities that encourage people to adopt more active lifestyles. As such they are important assets and infrastructure in supporting the delivery of public health improvements. This green space strategy supports the principles behind the development of a Sport and Active Recreation Strategy and recognises the opportunities to participate in the delivery of future programmes to improve levels of physical activity. The forthcoming Commonwealth Games in 2022 will provide a high profile programme to raise awareness of the benefits of increased participation in sport and activity programmes. Parks and green spaces can provide important venues to contribute to the delivery of the Commonwealth Games legacy.

To ensure that parks and green spaces are safe and well used and make a positive contribution to local communities the Council will adopt a neighbourhood approach to addressing anti-social behaviour in parks and green spaces working with the Environmental Protection Service and West Midlands Police. Targeted works and campaigns such as the Safer 6 (community safety) initiative will also be delivered which will include specific targeted activities for young people and to consider green space improvements to increase greater use and higher natural surveillance.

The recommendations contained in this strategy are set out in an action plan that will be used to deliver and monitor the implementation of the recommendations.

Sandwell Green Space Strategy

2020 - 2030

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1 Introduction

1.1 The need for a Green Space Strategy

The previous Green Space Strategy covered a period of ten years to 2020. Much has changed since the original strategy was developed in 2010, including:

- The development of the new Black County Plan and local planning policy;
- Green space improvements and investment has improved the quality of many spaces;
- Greater community involvement has had a positive impact on green space;
- Some loss to development and also creation of new spaces;
- The economic and funding environment is very different following reducing support from central government and austerity policies;
- Other policies and strategies have changed – the health and wellbeing agenda is increasingly important and alignment with new priorities is required;
- New opportunities such as those offered by the Commonwealth Games that will be partly hosted by Sandwell in 2022;
- Renewed international and national focus on climate change and the commitment in 2019 by the UK government to become carbon neutral by 2050.

1.2 Background to the review

High quality parks and public spaces create economic, social and environmental value. They are also highly valued by local people. Research carried out by CABE Space

suggests that 85% of people surveyed felt that the quality of public space and the built environment has a direct impact on their lives and the way they feel¹.

Research published by HLF in the State of UK Parks 2014 found:

- 2.6 billion visits made to UKs parks each year;
- 54% of adults use parks at least once per month;
- 83% of households with children under 5 visit their park at least once a month;
- £30 million raised annually by friends / user groups.

Subsequently the follow up report State of UK Parks 2016 found that:

- Parks used regularly by 37 million people in UK;
- 57% of adults use parks at least once per month;
- 83% of households with children under 5 visit their park at least once a month;
- £50 million raised annually by friends / user groups;
- £70 million value of volunteering.

In terms of economic benefits, there is evidence that high quality green spaces have positive impacts upon property prices, are good for business and being close to public space adds economic value².

Safe, clean spaces encourage people to walk more and therefore offer significant health benefits. Parks and green spaces offer places for sport, recreation and relaxation, benefitting physical health and mental wellbeing. There is a substantial

1 CABE (2002) - Streets of Shame. Summary of findings from 'Public Attitudes to Architecture and the Built Environment'.

2 CABE Space (2005) - Does money grow on trees?

body of evidence that demonstrates access to good quality local spaces can help people live longer and green spaces can provide solutions to redress worsening public health.³

Green spaces can also bring significant community benefits as places to play, encouraging neighbourliness and social inclusion and as a venue for events that bring people together⁴.

Networks of linked green spaces and green corridors can encourage cycling and lower dependency on the car, reducing levels of traffic and provide opportunities for wildlife migration.

The network of Public Rights of Way: bridleways and public footpaths provide important links between green spaces and residential areas and allow access to the many semi-natural spaces within Sandwell. The role of Public Rights of Way is recognised by this Green Space Strategy but are not explicitly covered by the analysis.

The environmental benefits of green spaces are well understood: open spaces improve air quality; provide sustainable urban drainage solutions and can help mitigate against climate change; whilst trees cool air and provide shade⁵.

Research in Birmingham⁶ has found that the benefits provided by green spaces (natural capital assets) have an indicative value of £11.4 billion (gross asset value) when calculated over a 25 year assessment period. This includes £4.6 billion in health benefits. The total annual benefits add up to £619 million. The value of Council-managed parks and greenspaces to each resident is approximately £542 every year. This means that each £1 Birmingham City Council spends on parks and green spaces

3 Sustainable Development Commission (2008) - Health, Place and Nature: How Outdoor Environments Influence Health and Wellbeing - A Knowledge Base

4 GreenSpace (2004) – Your Parks, The Benefits of Parks and Green Space

5 Trust for Public Land (2008) - How Much Value Does the City Of Philadelphia Receive from its Park and Recreation

6 The Council sets out a recommendation to introduce natural capital accounting later in this strategy

returns more than £24 of wider benefits. Dudley Council has also carried out a different exercise through the Fields in Trust using their Revaluing Parks methodology. This looks at the benefits derived from residents within 1 Km of an accessible green space and the potential value that was attributed to parks and green space services. The study concludes that benefits were typically valued at four times the cost of providing those services.

These factors are now more important than ever with the growing recognition of the climate change emergency. Green spaces are also important areas for wildlife and biodiversity and provide opportunities for local people to experience nature first hand.

Parks and green spaces are the most accessible and well used leisure and recreational facilities across the country and within Sandwell. The regional Green Infrastructure Strategy⁷ recognises the value of green spaces in contributing to the image and environmental quality of the Borough and enhancing people's mental and physical wellbeing.

1.3 Defining green space

Open Space is defined as:

“All open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity”⁸.

Green space is a subset of open space that includes vegetated land or water within an urban area such as parks and (public) gardens, playing fields, children's play areas, nature reserves, woods and other natural areas, grassed areas, cemeteries and allotments along with green corridors like paths, disused railway lines, rivers and canals. Green space does not include agricultural land, private gardens or civic spaces

⁷ Birmingham & The Black Country Wildlife Trust (2011) - The Value of Green Infrastructure in Birmingham and the Black Country

⁸ NPPF (2019) - Glossary

that are part of the built landscape. Green Belt and green space are not synonymous, since the former is a specific planning designation to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open.

A green space typology as set out in the table below has been used to classify all types of green space according to their primary purpose. The strategy recognises that green spaces are multi-functional but a single classification according to the primary purpose has been used to ensure consistency and that spaces are only recorded once. The initial classification is based on land use and primary purpose, and has been adapted from national guidance in “Assessing Needs and Opportunities”, the companion guide to PPG17 which sets out a suggested typology of space for local authorities to use as their starting point. These have been adapted to local circumstances and are shown in **Table 1** below.

Level 1 Typology	Primary Purpose
Parks and Gardens	Accessible, high quality opportunities for informal recreation and community events.
Natural and Natural Green spaces	Wildlife conservation, bio-diversity and environmental education and awareness.
Green Corridors	Walking, cycling or horse riding, whether for leisure purposes or travel, and opportunities for wildlife migration.
Outdoor Sports Facilities	Participation in outdoor sports, such as pitch sports, tennis, bowls, athletics or countryside and water sports. This category does not include sports provision at other Level 1 categorised sites.
Amenity Green space	Opportunities for informal activities close to home or work or enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas.
Provision for Children and Young People	Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children and young people, such as equipped play areas, ball courts, skateboard areas and teenage shelters. This category does not include the play areas and youth provision at other Level 1 categorised sites.
Allotments	Opportunities for those people who wish to do so to grow their own produce as part of the long term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion.

Level 1 Typology	Primary Purpose
Cemeteries and Churchyards	Quieter contemplation and burial of the dead, often linked to the promotion of wildlife conservation and biodiversity. Also includes closed burial grounds used for informal recreation and crematoria.
Institutional Land	Educational land or land owned by other institutions such as hospitals and government agencies.

Table 1 Level 1 Typology based on PPG17 Typology

As part of the 2006 Green Space Strategy all green spaces over 0.2 hectares within Sandwell Borough were plotted in GIS software and classified according to their typology (as defined in Table 1), accessibility and hierarchy (significance). This was later reviewed as part of the 2013 Green Space Strategy and now for this strategy to reflect changes, including site additions or removals, boundary changes or changes in attribute data.

As part of this study the component parts of each green space have been considered and these have been classified using a second level of typology. The relationship between the Level 1 and Level 2 typologies is shown in the table below. It should be noted that the Playing Pitch Strategy has recorded data on outdoor sports facilities and pitch sports and provides detailed information that complements this green space strategy.

Level 1 Typology	Level 2 Typology (components)
Parks and Gardens	Play Youth Sports Semi-natural
Natural and Natural Green space	Play Semi-natural
Green Corridors	Semi-natural
Outdoor sports facilities	Play Youth Semi-natural

Level 1 Typology	Level 2 Typology (components)
	Amenity Green space
Amenity Green space	Play Semi-natural Sports
Provision for children & young people	Play Youth
Allotments	N/a
Cemeteries	N/a
Institutional land	Play Youth Sport Semi-natural
Institutional Land	N/a

Table 2 Level 2 Typology

The table below sets out the accessibility levels that were used to classify the Borough's green spaces.

Accessibility Level	Description
Unrestricted	Sites have unrestricted public access although some sites may have limitations to access between dusk and dawn.
Limited	Sites may be publicly or privately owned but access is limited either by a physical barrier such as membership, or psychological barrier such as a feeling that a green space is private.
Not accessible	Sites are out of bounds to the general public

Table 3 Accessibility Levels

The table below sets out the hierarchy levels that were used to classify the importance or significance of Borough's green spaces.

Hierarchy level	Description
Borough	Those sites whose significance should attract people from across the entire borough. Usually large sites with a range of facilities or designated importance for history or nature conservation.
Neighbourhood	Those sites which perform a function that serves a more immediate community. Unlikely to attract people from across the borough
Local	Those sites which perform a function to a small area – typically areas of amenity green space.

Table 4 Hierarchy Level

1.4 The scope of the Strategy

The introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework and guidance in 2012 (last updated in 2019) has provided a clear framework for the protection and enhancement of natural and other open spaces. Although it has effectively been superseded by the newer national guidance, the previous advice contained in Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17) can still be useful in helping to describe and identify aspects of the open space environment.

This strategy is concerned with green space within Sandwell and in considering the accessibility of green space provision consideration has also been given to that in neighbouring boroughs within 1200m of the Borough boundary. Through the classification process the strategy considers the level of public accessibility of these green spaces.

The scope of the Sandwell Green Space Strategy:

- The strategy covers a time period of 11 years from 2019/20 to 2030 aligned to the Sandwell Vision 2030;

- Includes all green space (including public open space and community open space) that exceeds a size threshold of 0.2ha;
- Private residential gardens or incidental areas, such as road verges, or streets, are outside the scope of the strategy, as per national and regional guidance;
- To provide an evidence base to inform the planning process;
- Support the Council's s106 planning obligations policy and guidance, by providing the necessary evidence base for where new or improved facilities are needed (the process for dealing with these will be set out in more detail in a new Planning Obligations SPD and associated design guidance which, where appropriate, will be covered in the policies of the emerging Black Country Plan and Black Country Sustainable Drainage design manual);
- Inform future decision making, especially the funding of capital and maintenance expenditure programmes;
- To raise the profile of parks and green spaces and to demonstrate the commitment of the Parks and Grounds Maintenance Service and Sandwell Valley and Countryside Management Service to contributing to the overall Sandwell Vision and the ten ambitions;
- To inform service delivery and set out recommendations for Sandwell Council and partner organisations to deliver over the timeframe of the strategy;
- Provide a framework for all those involved in raising standards of green space management in Sandwell.

2 Where are we now?

2.1 Sandwell Borough Profile

Sandwell Borough contains 24 wards each with three elected ward Councillors. The authority has grouped the wards into six town areas each consisting of between three and five wards and containing populations of between c.40,000 and c.80,000 people.

According to the 2017 Mid-year Estimates, Sandwell Borough has a resident population of 325,460 people. The Borough has seen a significant increase in population since 2001 with an increase of 15% (42,784 people) since this time. This has reversed the decline in population experienced between 1991 and 2001. Population density is also much higher than in the rest of England and Wales, at over ten times the national average (with 38.4 Sandwell residents per hectare compared to 3.7 residents per hectare in England and Wales).

Sandwell has a younger population profile than England and Wales. The proportion of residents aged 14 years or younger is notably higher at 21.1% compared to 18.0% nationally⁹. There are also higher proportions of people aged 15-29 and 30-44. Conversely the proportion of older people in Sandwell is lower than the national figures.

Sandwell has become a more ethnically diverse area since 2001. One in three of the population (30.6%) classified themselves as being from a minority ethnic group in 2011 compared to one in five (20.3%) in 2001. Sandwell has a considerably higher percentage of residents of Asian origin than the overall average for England and Wales. This is also the case for residents in the Indian ethnic group, with over four times the national average.

The Borough's population have lower health outcomes than England. For 2015/17, male (77.1 years) and female (81.3 years) life expectancy at birth is significantly lower in Sandwell than England as a whole (79.6 and 83.1 respectively). The pattern is the

⁹ ONS (2011) Census Data

same for healthy life expectancy - male (57.1 years) and female (59.0 years) figures are significantly lower in Sandwell than England (63.4 and 63.8 respectively). In terms of child obesity, for 2015/16 Sandwell has the 2nd highest rate in the region and is among the worst in England (ranked 141 out of 150 local authorities)¹⁰.

This data is reflected in the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) where Sandwell is the 12th most deprived local authority nationally (13th in 2015). Nearly one in five Lower Level Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in the Borough are in the top 10% most deprived nationally and six out of ten are amongst the top 20% most deprived. None of the LSOAs are among the top 20% most affluent.

2.2 Progress since 2010 (recent achievements)

In developing this Green Space Strategy, we have reviewed the achievements of the previous green space strategy and found that this document had helped deliver some significant improvements:

- £30 million investment in key parks and green spaces;
- Significant capital investment through National Lottery Heritage Fund at Dartmouth Park, Lightwoods Park and West Smethwick Park;
- Delivery of the Play Pathfinders programme which invested £2.7 million in 29 play spaces;
- Provision of outdoor gyms in key parks and green space across the Borough;
- Improved green space quality from the 2006 baseline recorded in the 2006 Green Space Audit;
- Increase in the number of Green Flag Awards with 12 Awards gained in 2019;

¹⁰ Sandwell Trends <https://www.sandwelltrends.info>

- Greater community involvement with 18 allotment sites now being self-managed;
- An increase in the number of friends groups;
- Seven apprentices being employed in the Grounds Maintenance Service through a partnership with Rodbaston College;
- Provision of a greater range of visitor facilities at Sandwell Valley through partnership with commercial providers;
- Development of a parkrun at Sandwell Valley.

This has been achieved against a backdrop of reduced funding following the financial crisis in 2008, subsequent reduced maintenance support from central government and austerity measures which have resulted in revenue budget to being just 48% of the levels of 2010/11.

2.3 Green space and Sandwell

2.3.1 Quantity

Through this strategy we have updated the green space dataset. We have identified that there are 543 green spaces (over 0.2 hectares) which cover a total area of 2018 hectares; equivalent to 23.7% of the total land area of the Borough. Nearly two thirds of green space (59.5%; 323 sites) in Sandwell have unrestricted public access, whilst 166 sites nearly one third of green space recorded (30.6%, 166 sites) has some form of access restriction and these have been classified as having 'limited' access. A further one in ten spaces are not accessible (9.9%; 54 sites).

In terms of unrestricted green space, there are 323 green spaces covering just under 1200 hectares. Overall 13.9% of the total land area of the Borough is accessible green space. This is characterised by large expanses of semi-natural green space covering 458 hectares, with parks and gardens covering 264 hectares. A large number of Amenity Green Spaces cover a total area of 214 hectares, although these typically tend to be smaller spaces than semi-natural green space and parks and gardens. There are over 108 hectares of outdoor sports facilities across the Borough.

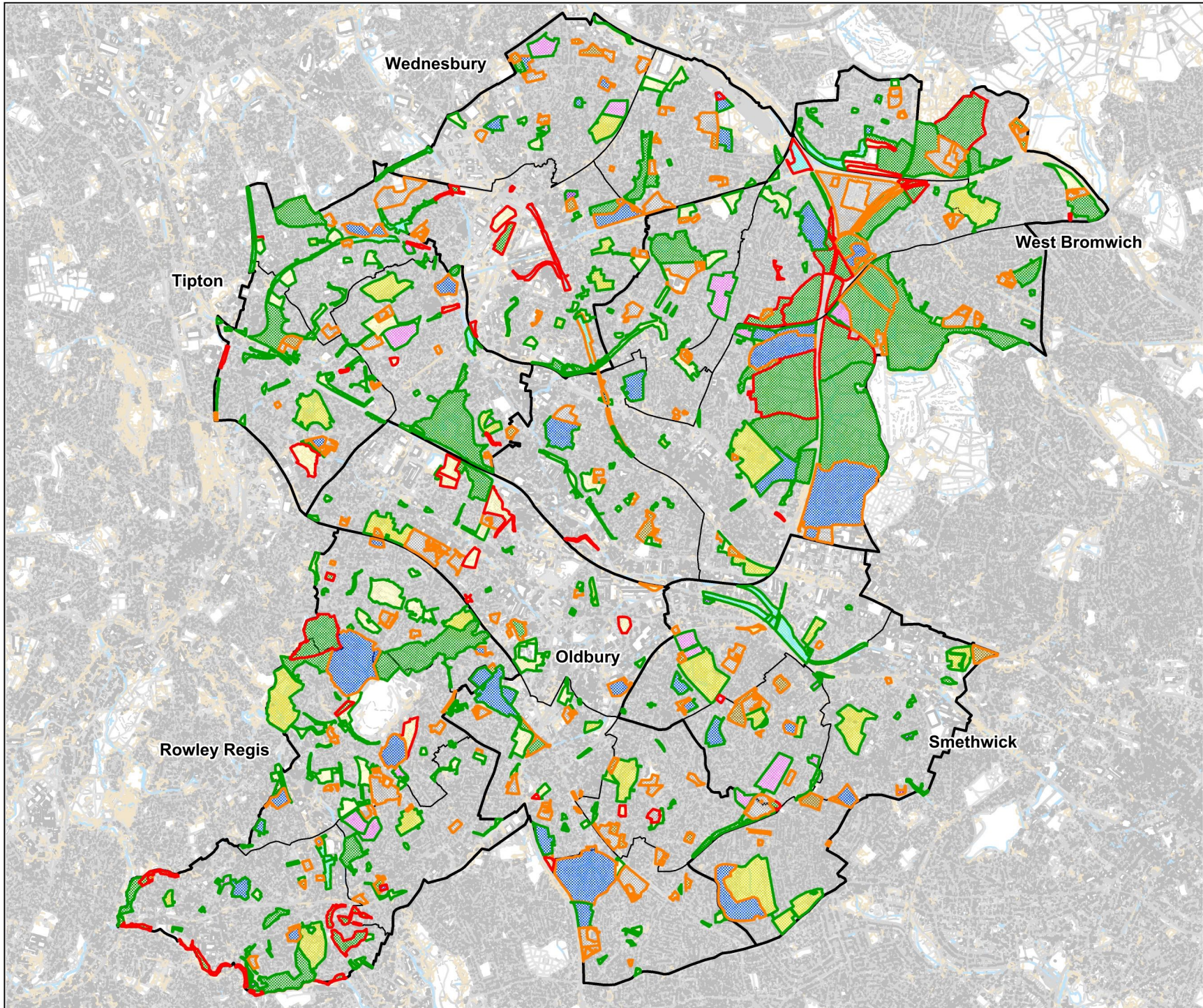
Figure 1 shows the classification of green space across the Borough based on green space type and the level of public access.

Based on a population of 325,460 (2017 Mid-Year Estimates), there is 3.63 hectares per 1,000 population of unrestricted green space. This is lower than the neighbouring boroughs of Dudley (4.51 hectares per 1000) and Walsall (4.72 hectares per 1000) and marginally higher than Wolverhampton (3.60 ha per 1,000 population).

Fields in Trust identified that there is on average 35.22 sqm per person of green space provision nationally, with Scotland having the highest per person figure and London the lowest. Sandwell currently provides 36.3 sqm per person, ranging from 21 sqm in Oldbury to 56.7 sqm in West Bromwich.

Sandwell Green Space Audit

Figure 1
All sites by typology and access



LEGEND

Typology

- Natural & semi-natural
- Amenity green space
- Institutional Land
- Parks & Gardens
- Provision for children and young people
- Cemeteries & Churchyards
- Green corridor
- Allotments
- Outdoor sports facilities

Accessibility

- Unrestricted
- Limited
- Not accessible

Boundaries

- Ward boundaries
- Town boundaries

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Against this measure the quantity of unrestricted green space has decreased over time, primarily as a result of population increase. With the population predicted to increase by a further 30,300 people by 2030 the future supply of unrestricted green space will reduce to 3.3 hectares per 1,000 population.

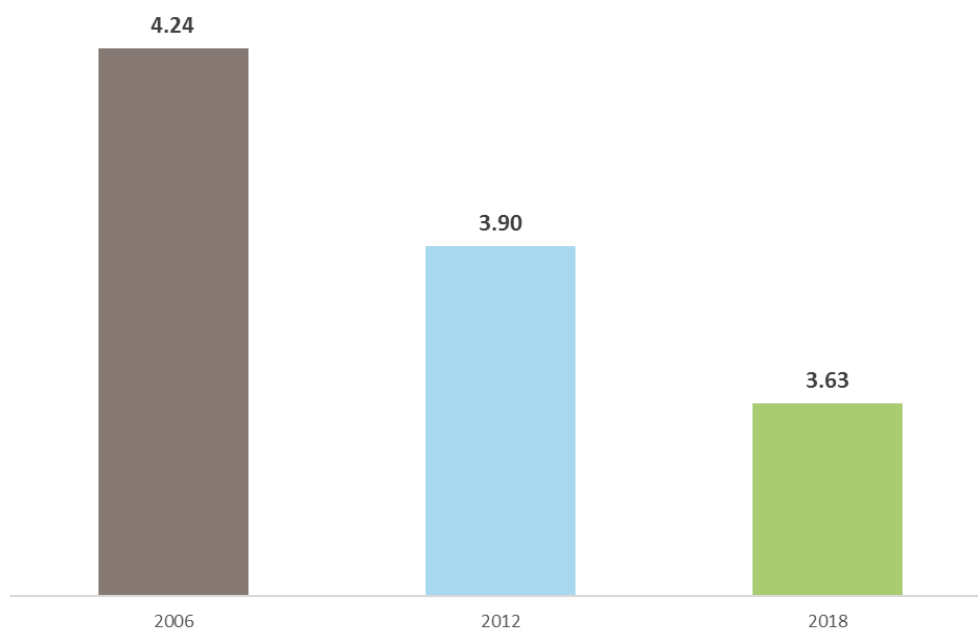


Chart 1 Unrestricted Green Space (ha / 1,000 population) over time

The supply of green space across the Borough is not uniform. At a town level the amount of unrestricted green space varies from 2.1 to 5.7 hectares per 1,000 population, with West Bromwich having the greatest amount of unrestricted green space and Oldbury the least. Smethwick, Wednesbury and Oldbury towns all have less green space than the Borough average. At a ward level there is even greater variation with a range of 0.9 to 12.9 hectares per 1,000 population. Residents of West Bromwich Central Ward enjoy nearly fifteen times more green space than Old Warley Ward.

Results from the Household Survey indicated that respondents from all towns felt that the quantity of Parks and Green Space was 'about right'. Respondents from Tipton considered that the provision of outdoor sports was 'about right' but across the five other towns, provision was considered to be too low. Residents of Wednesbury were generally positive about the level of allotment provision which contrasted with responses from the responses from other towns.

In terms of play provision, respondents from Smethwick and Wednesbury were satisfied with the level of provision, whilst respondents from the other four towns considered the quantity of provision to be too low.

There are 73 equipped play spaces across the Borough with at least one equipped play area in each ward, which was the target through the Sandwell Play Strategy (delivered through the Play Pathfinder programme). At a town level, each town has at least seven equipped play spaces. Mapping the accessibility of play spaces (based on 400m / 100m / 200m for the different classifications for play and youth facilities) most residential areas have good access to (formal) play space. It should be recognised that many other green spaces, whilst they may not contain formal equipped play, also provide spaces for informal play and recreation at a more local level. The findings from the Sandwell Go Play survey (2019) which gained responses from 668 children aged 9-10 years found that green spaces was well used by children for play and that there were high levels of satisfaction with the places that young people used.

Natural England has developed a national standard for nature nearby. This has been used to look at the provision of Accessible Natural Green Space in Sandwell. This ANGSt standard has a number of components which include accessibility criteria and a quantity standard. Against the accessibility standard, all residents should have access to a semi-natural greenspace of 2 hectares or larger within 300 metres of where they live. Against this measure around two thirds of the borough's population have good access. A second accessibility measure considers access to semi-natural green spaces over 20 hectares in size within 2 Km. Against this component, West Bromwich and parts of Oldbury, Tipton and Rowley Regis have good access. There are deficiencies in semi-natural green space in Wednesbury, Smethwick, southern part of Oldbury and the south and south west of Rowley Regis.

In Sandwell there are nine Local Nature Reserves, amounting to 0.89 hectares per 1000 population. An additional 35.80 hectares of designated Local Nature Reserves would be required to meet the quantity component of the ANGSt standard of 1.0 hectares per 1000 population.

The Public Parks Inquiry (House of Commons 2017) concluded that the distribution of parks is unequal across the country, with many deprived communities struggling to access the benefits that green spaces can provide. Analysis carried out as part of the Green Space Audit found that six wards (Wednesbury North, Friar Park, Greets Green & Lyng, Wednesbury South, Smethwick and Soho & Victoria) had the lowest quantities of unrestricted green space and experienced the highest levels of deprivation in the Borough.

2.3.2 Accessibility

Based on research carried out to develop the Sandwell Green Space Audits in 2013 and 2006, informed by national guidance (PPG17 and the Companion Guide and the London Plan), unrestricted sites were assigned a buffer based on their hierarchy. This was used to assess whether residents have sufficient access to green space within walking distance. Sites with Borough-wide significance were plotted with 1200m buffers from the site boundary, Neighbourhood sites at 600m and Local sites at 400m. Overall, relatively few areas of the borough have no access to unrestricted green space. Deficiencies tend to be found in parts of Wednesbury and smaller areas within Oldbury and West Bromwich. When all green spaces were mapped with a 400m buffer, the majority of the Borough had access to some green space at all levels. The analysis emphasised the importance of local level sites in providing access to residents, as well as the contributions of borough and neighbourhood sites, particularly Sandwell Valley Country Park.

More complex modelling has been carried out considering barriers to pedestrian routes (severance), which include road, rail and canal infrastructure. The figure below shows the areas of the Borough that currently do not have access to unrestricted green space within a reasonable travel distance (linked to hierarchy). This figure also considers the contribution of green space in neighbouring boroughs that may provide further access for Sandwell residents. Overall, there are some areas of deficiency in all towns. Where these deficiencies exist, consideration will be given to increasing the supply of unrestricted green spaces (through changes to accessibility levels or investment to increase the hierarchy, or through the creation of new green spaces as appropriate).

The accessibility analysis also identified the opportunity to create better networks of green space. There are a number of new Potential Linear Walkways, many of which were adjacent to existing green corridors, canals and wildlife corridors. While these will extend the range of the existing network, others which are not interconnected could still increase movement of wildlife and people, in areas such as Tipton and Wednesbury.

The Green Space Audit provides the baseline evidence to support and enhance green space across the Borough. Figure 2 shows the areas of potential green space deficiency across the Borough. Proposals for new housing development provide the opportunity to consider approaches to the creation of new space or to changes that improve the accessibility of existing green spaces. and potential housing development as set out in the Site Allocations Document. However, this document is being reviewed in line with the development of the Black Country Plan (BCP). The BCP will for the first time allocate sites for residential and employment use based on an updated evidence base. This could mean that some of the occupied employment sites currently allocated for residential use may be 'deallocated' and be allocated for employment use meaning that there may not be as many new housing development sites as originally anticipated in the former Black Country Core Strategy. The authority will ensure that the conflicting pressures to provide land for housing and employment will be balanced with the need to protect and enhance green spaces.

Sandwell Green Space Audit

Figure 2
Areas without access to Unrestricted Green Spaces




LEGEND

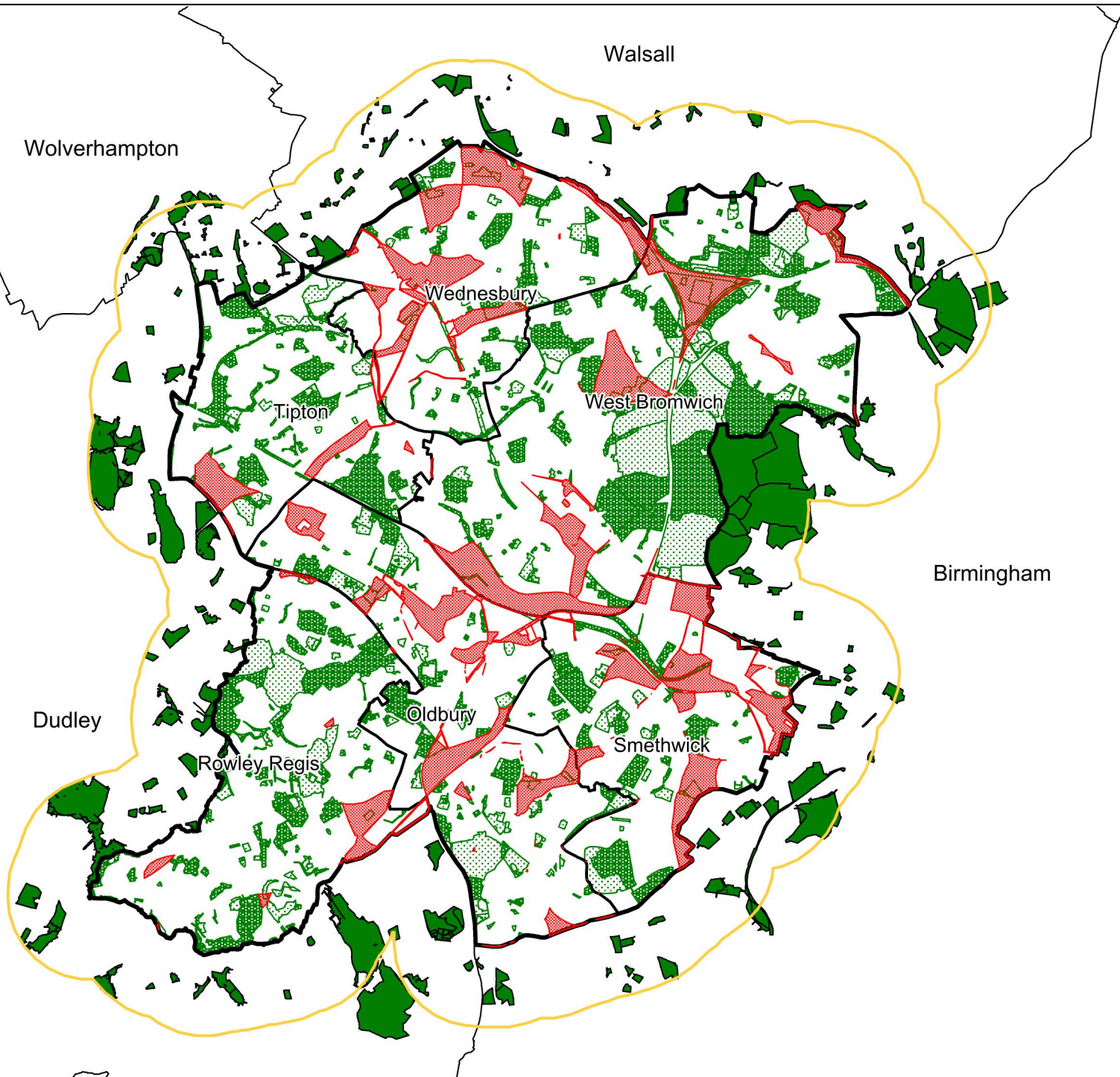
-  All Unrestricted Green Space
-  Other Green Spaces
-  Areas Without Access to Unrestricted Green Space

Buffer

-  1200m Buffer

Boundary

-  Town
-  Sandwell
-  West Midland Authority



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2.3.1 Quality

Site-based assessments have been carried out on a sample of 209 sites to understand green space quality against the Green Flag assessment criteria. Similar assessments were carried out in 2006 and 2013 and allow a comparison to be made over time.

The quality assessment found that the average quality score is 34, the same as in 2006, but a slight decrease overall from the 2013 average score of 38. The quality of local level green spaces appears to be the key factor impacting the average quality score. The quality of Local level spaces has fallen to 29 from 33 in 2013 and 30 in 2006. The quality of the larger, more significant Borough and Neighbourhood level spaces has been sustained over time. Borough level spaces, which include the key town parks and larger nature reserves, are of higher quality than in 2006 and have also increased in quality since 2013. Many of these sites have received capital investment (from a range of sources including lottery funding) and hold the Green Flag Award. Neighbourhood level spaces are of higher quality than in 2006 but are marginally lower than the average in 2013. Given the reduced scale of management and maintenance budgets this represents a significant achievement.

The highest scoring spaces tend to be Parks and Gardens; and Cemeteries and Churchyards; both achieving an average score of 51. Natural and Semi-natural Green Space achieves a lower average score of 32, but there are examples of high scoring sites in this category, notably Sandwell Valley, Sheepwash and Sots Hole.

There is considerable variation in quality score by town, with Smethwick receiving the highest average score in the 2006 (40), 2013 (42) and 2018 (42) audits. In 2018, Oldbury scored the lowest, following a reduction of seven points (now scoring 27). Overall, 63% of site scores decreased compared with the 2013 audit. Across the Borough, there was an even geographical spread of high and low scoring spaces, apart from the sites which form Sandwell Valley Country Park, which created a concentration of higher quality spaces in West Bromwich. Abbey ward (68) in Smethwick received the highest average score of all the wards, while Oldbury ward scored the lowest (23).

Town	No. of Sites	Range	Average 2018	Average 2013	Average 2006
Smethwick	27	8 – 69	42	42	40
West Bromwich	57	8 - 75	40	40	38
Sandwell Average	209	6 -75	34	38	34
Wednesbury	30	19 – 61	33	38	32
Rowley Regis	38	6 - 71	31	37	36
Tipton	33	9 - 67	30	33	27
Oldbury	24	8 - 61	27	34	29

Table 5 Quality Score by Town

The results have been compared with community perceptions from the Household Survey. Respondent scores for quality generally reflected those in the Quality Analysis, with Smethwick respondents the most likely to rate the overall quality of green spaces the highest.

When the quality scores are compared with levels of deprivation, we found that Wednesbury and Smethwick have the highest average levels of green space quality and highest overall deprivation. At Ward level, the picture remained mixed with the most deprived Wards sitting just within the lower half in terms of green space quality. Accounting for Health Deprivation and Disability alone, two of the three most deprived towns, Wednesbury and Smethwick, again had the highest average quality scores, however, Tipton had the highest levels of deprivation and below average quality green space. Four wards with high levels of health deprivation scored relatively highly with average green space quality. Conversely, there are six wards with relatively high levels of health domain that have lower than average green space quality. Overall, there is no clear link between deprivation and green space quality, but some wards experience higher levels of deprivation and lower levels of green space quality and this strategy proposes action to address this.

2.3.2 Value

A Value Assessment has been carried out based on a methodology used in the 2006 and 2013 green space audits. Sites have been scored based on the criteria in **Table 5** below and a score out of 100 calculated for use in the quality value matrix.

Reference	Factor	Reference	Criteria
A	Context	A1	Accessibility
		A2	Proximity
		A3	Quantity
B	Level and type of use	B1	Hierarchy
		B2	Level of use
		B3	Community Value
C	Wider benefits	C1	Ecological benefits
		C2	Education benefits
		C3	Social inclusion
		C4	Cultural and heritage benefits
D	Open Space Networks	D1	Strategic Open Space
		D2	Linear Open Space

Table 5 Value assessment criteria

Of the 209 sites assessed, the average value score was 33.2 out of 100, with 64 sites (30.6%) scoring above this figure. This is lower compared with the 2013 Value Assessment (37.0 based on 218 sites) but identical to the 2006 score (based on 230 sites). The mean value score increased from 37.0 to 38.2, with the Sandwell Valley Country Park sites scoring the highest.

Parks and Gardens (44.7) scored the highest, with Amenity Green Space (34.5) and Outdoor Sports Facilities (34.3) scoring below the Sandwell average (38.2). Meanwhile, Borough level sites received the highest average value score (57.2) followed by Neighbourhood level sites (41.3), with Local level sites falling below the average (34.1). Rowley Regis and Smethwick had the highest average score (39.9) while West Bromwich was also above average (38.8). Oldbury has both the lowest average quality and value scores.

The companion guide to PPG17 sets out a method for combining the quality assessment scores and value scores to allow local authorities to objectively identify actions for the future of their green spaces. The matrix below provides a method for determining the most appropriate action for each individual green space.

High Quality / Low Value	High Quality / High Value
<p>Site Options - Maintain the quality. Undertake further assessment on the value with the aim of enhancing its present primary purpose.</p> <p>Consider if it would be of high value if converted to other primary purpose. Change of use is only acceptable if the options above are not achievable.</p>	<p>Site Options - Maintain the quality. Protect the site through planning process.</p>
Low Quality / Low Value	Low Quality / High Value
<p>Site Options – Enhance the quality as long as it is also possible to enhance the value. Assess primary purpose as the site could be surplus to requirements in terms of its present primary purpose.</p>	<p>Site Options - Raise the site quality to meet the required standard. Protect the site through the planning process</p>

Table 6 Value Options

Of the 209 sites assessed, a third (31.1%) were classified as Low Quality / Low Value and the majority of which were Amenity Green Space (33). Most Low Quality / Low Value sites were located in Rowley Regis (16) or Oldbury (13) and West Bromwich (13).

Just over a quarter of sites (25.8%) were classified as Low Quality / High Value, with 26 Amenity Green Spaces and 19 Natural and Semi-natural Green Spaces and a more or less even spread throughout the Borough, with the exception of Smethwick which only had two of the 54 sites.

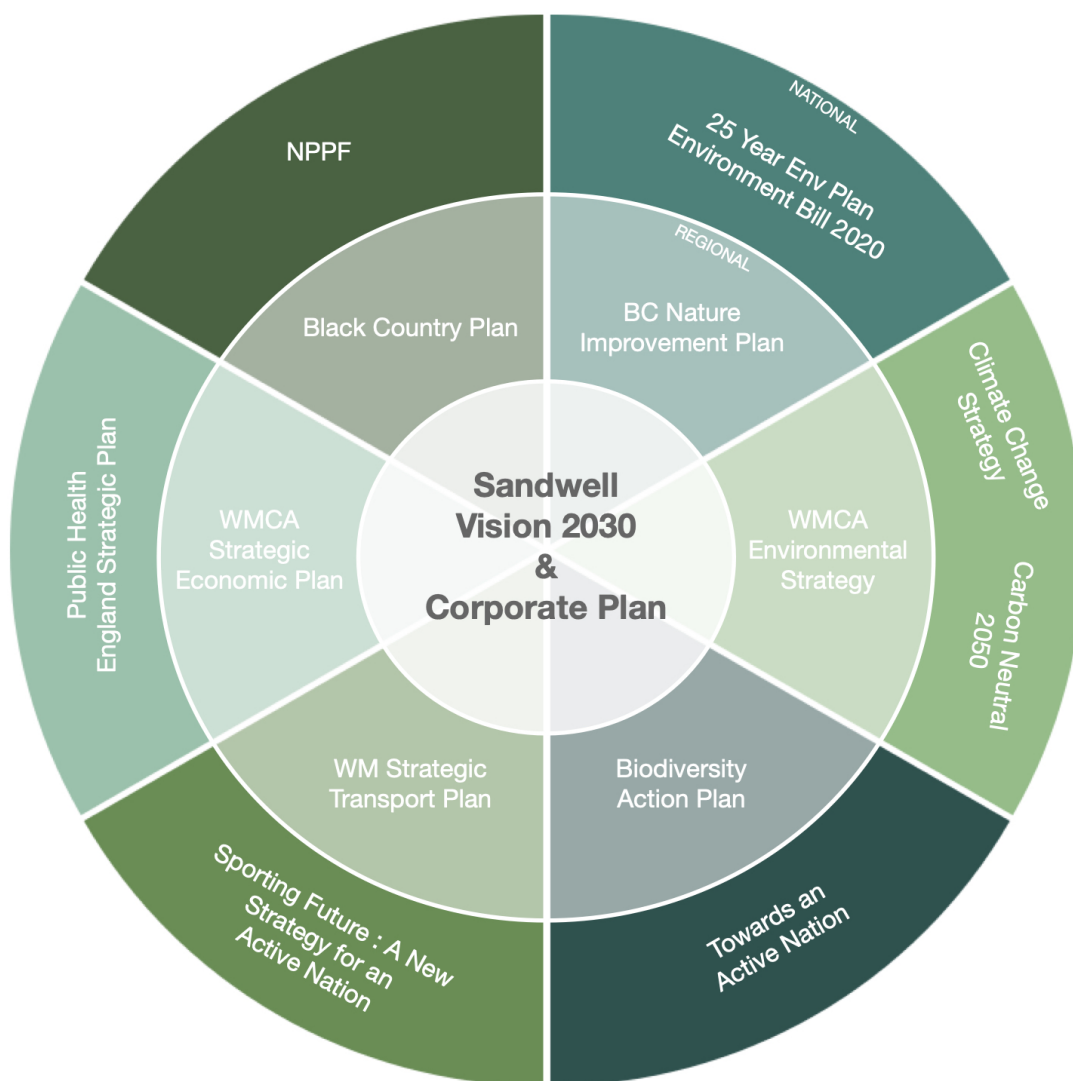
22.0% were High Quality / Low Value sites, with 11 Outdoor Sports Facilities and ten Natural and Semi-natural Green Spaces. 19 of the 46 sites were located in West Bromwich and 13 in Smethwick.

Only a fifth (21.0%) were classified as High Quality / High Value. The majority of these were Parks and Gardens (17). Of the 44 sites, the majority were in West Bromwich (15) and the least were in Oldbury (4) and Wednesbury (4).

When mapped, the analysis indicated that high quality, high value green spaces tend to be larger sites and conversely, low quality, low value green spaces tend to be smaller sites. However, there were exceptions. There are also a number of green spaces that are potentially of value as linear and green corridors that have lower than average value scores.

3 Drivers for change

The graphic below shows some of the key policies and strategies with respect to green spaces at a national, regional and Borough level. Key documents are summarised below.



3.1 National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework, Communities and Local Government, 2019

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 27 March 2012 and set out the government’s planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. During the development of this strategy, a consultation process on revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework was carried out and the revised NPPF was published in July 2018 and further updated in 2019.

The NPPF retains the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development', which is defined by five principles as set out in the UK Sustainable Development Strategy:

- living within the planet's environmental limits;
- ensuring a strong, healthy and just society;
- achieving a sustainable economy;
- promoting good governance;
- and using sound science.

The NPPF states that that planning policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating assessed needs in a way that makes use of previously developed or 'brownfield' sites brought back into effective use, whilst recognising that undeveloped land can perform many functions such as wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, carbon storage or food production.

Areas of land designated as part of the Green Belt, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, National Parks and other protected sites will not be overridden by the presumption. The NPPF recognises the "intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside", whether designated or otherwise.

The published NPPF (2019) offers protection for open space and paragraph 97 states that:

"Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
- b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or

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

The NPPF (section 96) also places a strong emphasis on the need for local authorities to undertake local needs assessments for open space, sport and recreation to ensure that there is adequate sports provision.

Communities are able to designate land as Local Green Space through local and neighbourhood plans subject to specific criteria being met.

Sport England: Towards an Active Nation, Strategy 2016-2021

In December 2015 the Government published Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation. The strategy sets a bold and ambitious direction for sport policy and looks beyond simple participation to how sport changes lives and becomes a force for social good. At its heart are five outcomes: physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, individual development, social and community development and economic development.

This strategy sets out how Sport England will put this policy into practice. The key changes they are making are:

- focusing more money and resources on tackling inactivity because this is where the gains for the individual and for society are greatest.
- investing more in children and young people from the age of five to build positive attitudes to sport and activity as the foundations of an active life.
- helping sport to keep pace with the digital expectations of customers.
- working nationally and encouraging stronger local collaboration to deliver a more joined-up experience of sport and activity for customers.
- working with the sector to encourage innovation and share best practice particularly through applying the principles and practical learning of behaviour change.

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

The 25 Year Environment Plan sets out the UK government's ambition to improve the environment based on the key objective in the 2010 White Paper : The Natural Choice "to be the first generation to leave the natural environment of England in a better state than it inherited".

The Environment Plan recognises the value of natural capital approaches that considers the value of ecosystems and elements of nature that either directly or indirectly bring value to people and the country at large. The Plan states that by considering natural capital approaches "we are more likely to take better and more efficient decisions that can support environmental enhancement and help deliver benefits such as reduced long-term flood risk, increases in wildlife, and a boost to long-term prosperity".

The Plan sets out a number of goals:

- Clean air;
- Clean and plentiful water;
- Thriving plants and wildlife;
- Reduced risk of harm from environmental hazards such as flooding and drought;
- Using resources from nature more sustainably and efficiently;
- Enhanced beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment.
- And then goes on to state that pressures on the environment will be managed by:
 - Mitigating and adapting to climate change;
 - Minimising waste;
 - Managing exposure to chemicals;
 - Enhancing biosecurity.

Since the publication of the Environment Plan there has been an increase focus on climate change and the UK government has committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2050. The Environment Bill is expected to pass through Parliament later in 2020.

3.2 Regional and Local Policy

3.2.1 Black Country Plan

The 2011 Black Country Core Strategy is currently under review, with an updated strategy to be implemented in 2023, covering the period up to 2038. The emerging Black Country Plan will contain land policies covering a range of issues including jobs, inward investment opportunities and the economy, regeneration, transport infrastructure, centres, shopping and retail, the Black Country's Green Belt, new housing growth, environmental protection and infrastructure. The Black Country Plan will also set out how much development growth will take place over a 15 years period across the Black Country sub-region, where the growth will occur and how this new development and growth will be delivered sustainably across the Black Country. It will also contain policies to ensure that the Black Country's natural environment and valued townscapes are protected and enhanced over the lifespan of the Core Strategy up.

3.2.2 Sandwell Allocations and Delivery Development Planning Document (SAD)

This document contains policies that seek to ensure the natural environment within Sandwell is protected and enhanced. The SAD is currently under review and will be replaced with the Sandwell Development Plan following the adoption of the Black Country Plan. The Council will need to balance protection of green space with ambitious targets for housing and employment land. It is understood that projected targets for housing and employment land cannot current be met due to lack of supply.

The Sandwell Green Space Audit provides up to date information about the supply of green space within Sandwell that forms the evidence base for planning policy and service delivery decisions. Dudley and Walsall are currently carrying out similar green space / open space audits.

Sandwell Council develops policies that guide the potential future use of land and its accessibility. As part of development and land use, comes the need to protect certain areas of land that are important for nature and biodiversity, as well as leisure and connectivity. Canals form an important network for nature and biodiversity and all canals within Sandwell are either wildlife corridors and/or SLINCs.

The accessibility of land is also important and can be achieved by a number of route types and modes of travel, which are covered mainly by policies included in the Black Country Core Strategy which is currently being reviewed and will be replaced by the Black Country Plan. One aspect of the transport system which is not covered in particular, although it forms a significant part of the active and sustainable travel network, is the canal network. The network should be viewed in terms of land development, biodiversity, travel, wellbeing, leisure, heritage, tourism, economic and other environmental contexts. It is necessary, therefore, that these will be covered in relation to Sandwell in a supplementary planning document (SPD) on canals.

The Sandwell Green Space Audit provides up to date information about the supply of green space within Sandwell that forms the evidence base for planning policy and service delivery decisions

3.2.3 Movement for Growth: The West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan (2016)

The West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan was set out by the WMCA in 2016, detailing the long-term guide for improving transport in the West Midlands over the following 20 years.. The plan highlights five challenges for the transport system:

- Economic growth: will be supported by providing better links for business, trade and employment.
- Population Growth: Better transport links will benefit new communities and housing development and meet the increased demand for travel.
- Environment and public health: reducing noise pollution, as well as emissions.
- Public health: improving air quality through active travel choices

- Social well-being: improving quality of life by increasing access to amenities and other life enhancing opportunities.

This Green Space Strategy supports the aspirations to improve access to greenspace, encouraging more active travel to reduce health inequalities and reduce carbon emissions.

3.2.4 Birmingham and the Black Country Biodiversity Action Plan 2010 (BAP)

This Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) has been prepared by the Birmingham and Black Country Biodiversity Partnership which has as its vision;

“A diverse and natural Birmingham and Black Country, where we are connected to our wildlife and landscape; healthy, sustainable communities and local livelihoods, working with nature and securing its future”.

This BAP aims to realise this vision whilst recognizing the existing challenges facing Birmingham and the Black Country, such as habitat fragmentation, increased urbanisation, financial pressures and climate change. The Partnership’s objectives which underlie the BAP are to;

- maintain and increase the biodiversity of key sites and landscapes through appropriate protection and management;
- restore degraded habitats and key species populations by restoring key areas;
- link key areas with ecological corridors to reconnect wildlife populations and make them less vulnerable;
- promote and support the use of the natural environment to mitigate against, and adapt to, the effects of climate change;
- enable the sustainable use of the natural environment to benefit health and wellbeing of residents, workers and visitors as well as improving the local economy.

The BAP sets out key priorities and targets based on habitats, species and spatial priorities, and proposes to deliver these through a Framework for Action.

3.2.5 Birmingham and Black Country Nature Improvement Area Ecological Strategy 2017 – 2022; Wildlife Trust for Birmingham & Black Country

The Birmingham and Black Country Nature Improvement Area (NIA) is the region's Living Landscape, and an ecological strategy has been prepared based on analysis of data and evidence collected over 17 years.

The ecological network of Birmingham and the Black Country has been mapped and categorised. The Strategy proposes the following actions:

1. Protect Core Ecological Areas through pro-active engagement with the planning of development, advocacy, supporting land-owners to manage land sympathetically and encouraging sustainable land-use.
2. Enhance Ecological Linking Areas by restoring habitats and improving existing sites.
3. Create new sites in Ecological Opportunity Areas that together form networks of sites that allow wildlife to move through the most developed parts of the conurbation.

3.3 Sandwell Vision 2030

In 2030 Sandwell is a thriving, optimistic and resilient community

Sandwell 2030 Ambitions	Ambition objectives	Green Space Strategy Links
People		
<p>Ambition 1</p> <p>Sandwell is a community where our families have high aspirations and where we pride ourselves on equality of opportunity and on our adaptability and resilience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve children’s life chances; • Have high expectations of children to achieve; and • Raise aspirations in schools and at home. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are given equal opportunities through access to space to play, be active, take part in sport, learn and have fun; • All residents will have access to high quality green space close to where they live; • All residents will have access to a green space within 400 metres of where they live.
<p>Ambition 2</p> <p>Sandwell is a place where we live healthy lives and live them for longer, and where those of us who are vulnerable feel respected and cared for.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All be taking more responsibility for improving our own health and the health of our families; • have excellent co-ordination between social care and the NHS; • have a strong approach – with all partner organisations – to prevent ill health and improve long-term health and wellbeing • be doing well in protecting our most vulnerable adults and children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green spaces will be safe and accessible local community facilities; • Green spaces will provide accessible and local facilities for people and families to be physically active; • Green spaces provide ‘breathing spaces’ that support good mental health; • Programmes will be delivered to increase levels of physical activity for people and families to participate in sport and to be physically active; • Active travel routes through green spaces contribute to healthier communities.

Sandwell 2030 Ambitions	Ambition objectives	Green Space Strategy Links
<p>Ambition 3</p> <p>Our workforce and young people are skilled and talented, geared up to respond to changing business needs and to win rewarding jobs in a growing economy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make sure people have the right mix of skills to equip them for the future job market; • provide the right training – including the right balance of high-quality vocational training, apprenticeships and academic provision; • nurture links between education and business to fully understand what the job market needs and tailor it accordingly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green spaces will be used as local and accessible venues for people and children to develop mental and physical attributes that enhance employability; • Green spaces will support the delivery of accredited sport and fitness programmes; • The Council will offer Apprenticeships and Traineeships in grounds maintenance to develop skills and experience for the future; • The Council will work with local businesses to improve green spaces.
<p>Ambition 4</p> <p>Our children benefit from the best start in life and a high quality education throughout their school careers with outstanding support from their teachers and families.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high-quality primary and secondary education will be attracting and keeping young families in Sandwell; • we will be expecting more for our children; • the quality of teaching will be much better; • technical and vocational education will have dramatically improved, with strong co-operation between schools and colleges • parents will be more involved and schools will be excellent at developing skills to prepare children for life and raising their aspirations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green spaces will be promoted as excellent venues for learning outside the classroom; • Green spaces will be promoted as places for community learning; • Programmes of formal and community learning will contribute to raised educational attainment.
<p>Ambition 5</p> <p>Our communities are built on mutual respect and taking care of each other, supported by all the agencies that ensure we</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continuing our effective working with the police and partner organisations; • building stronger community links; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green spaces provide accessible and safe venues that lead to greater community cohesion; • Green spaces provide spaces where local communities can work

Sandwell 2030 Ambitions	Ambition objectives	Green Space Strategy Links
feel safe and protected in our homes and local neighbourhoods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> preventing crime and anti-social behaviour dealing effectively with domestic violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and modern slavery. 	<p>together to improve their local environment;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well valued and well used green spaces make a positive contribution to neighbourhoods and reduce anti-social behaviour.
Place		
<p>Ambition 6</p> <p>We have excellent and affordable public transport that connects us to all local centres and to jobs in Birmingham, Wolverhampton, the airport and the wider West Midlands.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The new West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) aims to improve links both within the region and into the national network via HS2. By 2030, Sandwell will be reaping the rewards from better transport links across the region and growth in Birmingham, the rest of the Black Country and beyond. We'll also be making the most of the new Metro line, which includes linking Dudley Port station with Wolverhampton via Wednesbury. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Green spaces provides excellent active travel routes to schools and neighbourhood facilities; Green and blue corridors provide traffic free routes.
<p>Ambition 7</p> <p>We now have many new homes to meet a full range of housing needs in attractive neighbourhoods and close to key transport routes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will identify major development opportunities along public transport routes and develop plans with the community and developers to make this happen Around 8,500 new homes will be built on sites with rapid transport connections into Birmingham, including the Dudley Port line, Metro and Jewellery line (Worcester to Birmingham). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New development offers opportunities to create new green space to address deficiencies; New development offers opportunities to enhance existing green space; High quality green space contributes to attractive and sustainable communities; High quality green space enhances land and property values.

Sandwell 2030 Ambitions	Ambition objectives	Green Space Strategy Links
<p>Ambition 8</p> <p>Our distinctive towns and neighbourhoods are successful centres of community life, leisure and entertainment where people increasingly choose to bring up their families.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our six towns will be more vibrant, focusing on their individual strengths, strong heritage and community; • Sandwell's industrial heritage will have been given new life, creating local pride and jobs; • The great work already achieved in parks and green spaces will be kept up, and we will have made the most of our canals to link these aspects of community life; • Families will be choosing to move into and stay in Sandwell and be proud of their town. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality green spaces improve environmental quality and can help attract new residents, new businesses and tourism / day visitors. • Heritage parks and green spaces contribute to local distinctiveness and make neighbourhoods more attractive.
<p>Ambition 9</p> <p>Sandwell has become a location of choice for industries of the future where the local economy and high performing companies continue to grow.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 2030, Sandwell will have geared up to attract the industries of the future to locate, expand or do business in the borough; • This means making sure the best companies have the land, trained workforce and necessary infrastructure to grow and prosper; • Sandwell's economy will be resilient and flexible, able to respond and evolve because all the basics will be in place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality green spaces can help attract inward investment; • High quality green spaces contribute to healthier and happier workforces.
<p>Ambition 10</p> <p>Sandwell now has a national reputation for getting things done, where all local partners are focused on what really matters in people's lives and communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nationally recognised for getting things done by everyone working together; • A place known for trying out new things and taking measured risks – adopting new ideas from businesses, voluntary and community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sandwell's green spaces win national awards (Green Flag Award / People's Choice Award) and improve the reputation of the area and Council; • Sandwell's green spaces attract external funding from national funding bodies;

Sandwell 2030 Ambitions	Ambition objectives	Green Space Strategy Links
	organisations, schools and colleges, and local people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sandwell’s green spaces provide opportunities for local people to come together and deliver environmental improvements.

3.3.1 Consultation and community aspirations

The Sandwell Green Space Strategy has been informed by a number of consultation processes with a range of audiences and stakeholders, including:

- A Household Survey for completion by residents. This was distributed by post to a random sample of 10,000 households stratified by Town. The survey was also offered online. A total of 1315 responses were received between 25 February and 17 March 2019;
- Go Play Survey – A survey of children aged 9-10 years, which included questions about use of green space as well as broader questions about leisure and play opportunities. A total of 688 responses were received;
- A Community Group Survey to community-based organisations with an interest in parks and green space in Sandwell with ten responses;
- A series of 4 stakeholder workshops based around: staff and partners, biodiversity, income generation and funding opportunities, health and wellbeing;
- A drop-in consultation session at West Bromwich Town Hall for friends groups, residents associations, sports groups and ward members representing local residents.

Use of Green Space

The consultation results indicated that green space in Sandwell is well used. The vast majority (96.4%) of respondents to the Household Survey said they visited green space in Sandwell, with over two thirds (67.9%) of respondents visiting at least weekly; an increase compared with the previous survey (in 2013) when 51.7% visited at least weekly. Moreover, a fifth (21.6%) of children who responded to the Go Play Survey said they would go outside to play or hang out with friends most days. Sandwell Valley Country Park was the most frequently used space cited by 19.1% of Household Survey respondents.

Green Space Provision

Most respondents thought there was the right quantity of parks and green spaces. However, over half of respondents thought there was too little outdoor sports facilities, provision for play and allotments.

Respondents to the Household Survey also identified a lack of outdoor sports facilities. The provision of green gyms and safe spaces for exercise could help address this while better quality green space could be used to provide sports activities and classes. However, better networking and coordination from providers is needed, as well as better promotion.

Whilst adult respondents to the Household Survey suggested there was insufficient play provision, nearly two thirds (64.5%) of children responding to the Go Play Survey suggested that they could play in some or all of the places that they wanted to. Over 9 in 10 children suggested they could do all or some of the play activities that they liked.

Access to green space and barriers to use

Throughout the stakeholder workshops the need to improve connectivity and access to green spaces was identified to encourage greater use, more active travel contributing to reducing congestion and pollution, and improving the health and wellbeing of residents through increased physical activity.

The consultation results also indicated that access to local green space is important, with three quarters (75.3%) of respondents to the Household Survey travelling for less than ten minutes by foot to their most used green space. Local access to green space is particularly important for children and young people and the Go Play Survey found that busy roads and a lack of safe crossing points are a significant barrier to accessing green space and other neighbourhood facilities.

Issues around anti-social behaviour and perceptions of safety appear to remain significant barriers to the use of green space. Anti-social behaviour was the most frequently cited barrier to using green space in the recent Household Survey, reported by 27.4% of respondents (up from 22.5% in 2013). Not feeling safe was cited by over

one in four respondents (cited by 25% in 2019 slightly lower than the 26.5% reported in 2013).

Through the Go Play Survey children reported high levels of safety when playing out. Nearly nine out of ten (87.5%) children indicated they felt very safe or safe and 59.5% of respondents indicated they were allowed to play out without adults accompanying them. The vast majority of children indicated that adults were generally accepting of them play out, but over one in ten (10.3%) indicated that some adults associated children playing out with anti-social behaviour.

Workshop participants suggested that developing community initiatives was a priority and would increase resident's sense of ownership, making them feel safer while visiting Sandwell's green spaces and reducing anti-social behaviour. Successfully developing and sustaining greater community involvement and requires building skills, ongoing support and promotion. However, new approaches such as improving the volunteer base or forming business partnerships through community initiatives were considered to be cost effective and could increase social value.

Workshop participants suggested that green space in Sandwell should also be more inclusive in terms of disabled access, with for example more benches and resting spots. This is important as the most common barrier to use reported cited by non-users of green space (through the Household Survey) was age, illness and disability.

Satisfaction and quality

The consultation results indicated that the quality of green space is high, with an average quality score from Household Survey respondents of 7.3 out of ten. However, only 39.0% of respondents thought the quality of green space had improved over the last three years compared with 60.0% of Survey respondents in 2013. Results from the Community Group Survey also indicated conditions had been declining, with four of the ten groups stating that the condition of their site had declined between 2013 and 2018 due to a lack of maintenance, including tree or path management, lack of ranger presence, anti-social behaviour and a halt to regular meetings with the Council. The

three groups who felt that the quality of their sites had improved stated this was due to their achievements.

In contrast, younger people seemed more satisfied and felt there was more to do in Sandwell, with more than nine in ten children (92.0%) who responded to the Go Play Survey said the places they like to play in were great or good.

Future improvements

Overall, raising the quality of green spaces in Sandwell remains a priority. Staff, Household Survey respondents and Community Groups all identified the removal of graffiti, litter and fly tipping as a priority for future maintenance. Other important areas identified through the consultation included: tree maintenance, control of dogs and dog fouling, and path maintenance.

Respondents to the Household Survey were asked what improvements might make them want to visit the green space they used most frequently more often or stay longer. The most popular suggestions included more refreshment facilities (13.1%) and more facilities such as toilets and community spaces (10.3%). However, workshop participants highlighted that there have been issues previously with finding funding to maintain capital investments, with improved financial management identified as a key theme throughout the workshops and surveys.

Participants called for more stable funding, including greater external funding from sources such as the National Lottery (most popular with the Community Groups and Household Survey respondents), planning, business sponsorships, commercial use and increased fees. However, while there are opportunities for increased commercial use, there is currently no overall plan and opportunities are limited by inadequate infrastructure to support medium / large scale events. Increasing fees also received very little support from the Friends Groups and Household Survey respondents (with only 55.6% of respondents supporting it) and the feeling was this should be a last resort.

Future management and recommendations for the Green Space Strategy

Throughout the workshops, there were also calls for improved green space management and an agreed strategic direction. Better facility maintenance, improved security and health and safety were identified as key areas for future management.

The Biodiversity workshop found there was support for designations which would offer more protection for green space and in particular those areas of high nature conservation value and for greater understanding of the current designations. There also needed to be more support, such as a political champion, funding and more staff to advise and support volunteers.

The key role that Friends Groups play in raising funds, site management, raising the profile of a site and lobbying was recognised throughout the consultation. Some groups were interested in taking on a greater role in future management, if there was support from the Council. In particular, groups indicated that they would like to receive more advice, as well as more effective engagement with the wider community and regular involvement with the Council.

4 Where do we want to go?

4.1 The future of parks and green spaces - Aims and Objective

Green Space Ambition statement:

Sandwell is a place where everyone has access to high quality green spaces that contribute to creating a sense of place, to the quality of life and the environment, and improves health and wellbeing.

The following section sets out analysis and recommendations based on the research carried out for the Green Space Audit and considers this alongside the extensive consultation, both quantitative and qualitative that has been carried out with a range of stakeholders. The analysis and recommendations are set out under a number of themes:

- Strategic Approach
- Environment
- Place
- Health and Wellbeing
- Community

Recommendations are then carried through to the action plan in section 5.5 and linked to the 10 existing ambitions set out in the Sandwell 2030 Vision.

4.2 Analysis and Recommendations

4.2.1 Strategic Approach

Parks and Green Spaces within Sandwell are highly valued and well-used local and regional facilities. Research to inform the development of this strategy found that nearly nine out of ten respondents (87.9%) considered green spaces contributed to improved health and wellbeing. Furthermore, 96.4% of respondents to the household survey indicated that they visited green spaces, with 67.9% visiting at least weekly. Comparing

the data against the previous green space audits in 2006 and 2013 we know that reported levels of use have increased significantly, consistent with national trends.

However, there are barriers to accessing and using green spaces in Sandwell and the Household Survey found that the biggest barriers for all respondents were antisocial behaviour and lack of time, while barriers for non-users were associated with perceptions of safety and age/illness/disability. From more detailed qualitative consultation with a range of stakeholders, staff and community representatives, there is a sense that the marketing and promotion of parks and green spaces could be improved to raise awareness of the range of spaces available, their distribution, and range of facilities on offer. The Council will develop an overall marketing plan for parks and green spaces in Sandwell that seeks to provide clear and easy to access information about the benefits of parks and green spaces, how to access them and the facilities available. The marketing plan will also consider events and activities and how the spaces can be enjoyed by more people. This enhanced marketing and promotion will be developed in the context of a new initiative to champion culture, sport and leisure across the Borough, supported by a new Events and Programme Team (launching as Events @ Sandwell).

Parks and green spaces are multi-functional assets that contribute significant environmental, economic and social benefits. At a local level, green spaces provide public space that is freely accessible and brings people together; they also contribute to improved community cohesion and health and wellbeing. High quality parks and green spaces contribute to many of the ambitions underpinning the Sandwell 2030 Vision and other cross-cutting agendas. From national research and local consultation there is a hierarchy of provision where quality of green space is most important factor, followed by accessibility of green space and then the overall quantity. Sandwell Council recognises that delivering high quality parks and green spaces, that make positive contributions to local neighbourhoods across the borough requires the co-ordination and co-operation of a number of Council service areas. There is also a significant role in involving external partner and service delivery organisations and in harnessing the skills and enthusiasm of Sandwell's diverse communities that also play an important role. Ensuring that parks and green spaces within Sandwell achieve their potential and

make a positive contribution will require leadership at a political and senior officer level. It is proposed that the Council appoints a Parks and Green Space Champion at Cabinet level who is responsible for co-ordination and directing the implementation of this strategy.

In terms of delivering this strategy and monitoring its implementation it is proposed that a Green Space Strategy Delivery Board is established which brings together services areas from across the Council and that this Board should formally report to the Political Champion and Cabinet member on a quarterly basis. Membership of the Strategy Delivery Board should include Parks, Sandwell Valley, Corporate Property, Housing, Planning, Public Health, Grounds Maintenance, Sport and Leisure, Landscape Architect Service area, Highway, Children's Play and Youth Service, Cemeteries and Crematoria Service, Town Teams and representative from the voluntary sector.

The 2010 Green Space Strategy was adopted following a review and restructure of services areas delivering parks management and grounds maintenance operations. A single "Green Budget" was created, which was held by the inhouse Grounds Maintenance Service rather than a parks management 'client'. However, since this time there have been significant changes to the Council structure and to the level of staffing and financial resources available. The speed and scale of change has meant that current structures and budgets are no longer aligned. This Green Space Strategy recommends that a review of organisational structures and the alignment of budgets is carried out as a priority measure to facilitate the implementation of the wider recommendations in this document.

Reduced staffing and financial resources has meant that a number of policies and strategies relating to parks and green spaces have now come to the end of their timeframe or have expired. Changing legislative frameworks, legal precedents, standards, guidance and codes of practice, alongside other factors now mean that many of these policies and strategies require reviewing and updating.

In particular, Council byelaws relating to parks and green spaces are out of date and do not cover some newer activities (such as use of unmanned aerial vehicles / drones and barbecues) and limit some activities such as cycling and active travel that are now

seen as activities that should be promoted. These byelaws should be reviewed and updated.

External factors such as changes to legislation, health and safety, codes of practice, climate change, increased visitor expectations, increased use and population increase mean that the budgetary review process should consider these pressures.

Sandwell Council has been very effective in securing over £30m of investment for parks and green spaces over the last 15 years. This has resulted in investment in 27 play spaces across the borough, investment in the Town Parks to bring them up to the national Green Flag Award standard, alongside further investment in heritage assets. This investment has been focused on key themes, such as play and youth provision, improvement to outdoor sports facilities and changing rooms, and on important green spaces infrastructure across the borough and has made a measurable difference. However, many parks and green spaces and facilities have not received investment or received the investment 10-15 (or more) years ago and are now in need of renewal or replacement as they approach the end of their expected life. The Council will review these green infrastructure assets and develop a short, medium to long term investment strategy to ensure that resources are used most effectively. This investment strategy will consider needs identified through the Green Space Audit and Strategy as well as the Playing Pitch Strategy and Sport and Active Recreation Strategy. The Investment Strategy will also be informed by preparation for the Commonwealth Games and the legacy outcomes from the hosting of this international event.

Levels of funding for parks and green spaces have reduced significantly over the last ten years across the country. The State of UK Parks¹¹ research found that 92% of park managers reported cuts to their revenue budgets over the past three years and that 95% expected budgets to be cut further over the following three years. The Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) identified that funding for neighbourhood services such as parks and open spaces fell by 27% in England, Wales and Scotland

¹¹ HLF (2016) State of UK Parks

over a nine-year period (2009/10-2017/18). Revenue funding for parks and green spaces at Sandwell Council has been significantly reduced and is now less than half (48%) the level of 2010/11 as a result of the impact of austerity and spending cuts. Overall, the scale of reduction in Sandwell has been greater than the national average, although some other authorities, notably Newcastle-upon-Tyne have suffered even greater cuts.

As a consequence, income streams for parks and green spaces need to be reviewed and additional sources of funding explored to complement and offset reduced levels of core funding. These additional sources of funding could include developer contributions and planning gain (to be reviewed through the Supplementary Planning Document process), more commercial use of parks (including partnerships with the private and third sector), external funding (capital and revenue grants), fundraising by community groups, sponsorship by local businesses and charges (for specific facilities or services). Volunteer participation can also play an important role in helping to look after and generate greater community ownership. However, volunteer participation is most effective where this activity is seen as adding value and additionality rather than replacing essential maintenance works.

Income generation within parks and green spaces has become a more significant source of income to support green spaces services, both nationally and within Sandwell. However, to develop this further the authority will consider the need for investment in infrastructure and additional facilities to support greater commercial activity and this will form a strand of the Investment Strategy described above. Nationally, particularly within London, there has been some concern over the scale of commercialisation within some parks and the amount of green space given over to delivery of commercial events and activities. Objections also include the amount of time that areas of parkland are lost (particularly for set up and take down), potential damage to the site and the disconnect between the event and the financial return to the local green space and the community. On this latter point Sandwell Council will review the processes that are in place with respect to commercial activity and wider income generation and use of this income to improve spaces and develop wider service improvements.

Sandwell Valley Country Park is a major regional attraction and receives in excess of 500,000 annual person visits. The Country Park contributes significantly to the tourism and visitor offer of the Borough and is a good example of the Council working with private sector partners. There are opportunities for further developing the offer at Sandwell Valley and the Council will develop a long term business plan for Sandwell Valley that ensures the country park meets the needs of current and future visitors and that greater financial sustainability can be achieved.

A Cultural Prospectus for Sandwell covering events, tourism and leisure has recently been developed and adopted. The implementation of this Green Space Strategy, and the development of any subsequent action plans will reflect the proposals set out within the Cultural Prospectus.

Recommendations – Strategic Approach

1. Appoint a political champion for parks and green spaces.
2. Establish a Green Space Strategy Delivery Board.
3. Review the organisational structures relating to green space services and how budgets are managed / aligned, taking into account the impact of legislative changes.
4. Review existing greenspace policies and underpinning strategies in line with this revised Green Space Strategy.
5. Develop a medium to long term investment strategy for internal and external funding relating to parks and green spaces.
6. Review financial management arrangements to ensure that there are clear incentives for services areas to achieve greater income generation.
7. Develop a business plan for Sandwell Valley (& Dartmouth Park) to improve the visitor offer and to achieve greater financial sustainability.
8. Ensure that the proposals within the agreed Cultural Prospectus around events, tourism and leisure are reflected in the proposed actions plans for the implementation of the Green Space Strategy.

Recommendations – Strategic Approach

9. Develop an overall marketing plan for parks and green spaces in Sandwell that seeks to encourage use by all sections of the community.

4.2.2 *Environment*

Sandwell Borough has significant amounts of green spaces, which make up nearly 24% of the total land area. Whilst not all this green space has public access there are over 300 spaces making up nearly 1200 hectares (14% of the total land area) that have unrestricted access. Natural and Semi-natural Green Space makes up nearly 40% of the supply (by area) of unrestricted green space and is important in terms of contributing to landscape character and biodiversity.

During the development of this strategy a series of workshops were delivered to explore key themes and issues. One of the key messages emerging from the Biodiversity and Countryside Workshop was that the Sandwell Vision (and ambitions) did not recognise the abundance and variety of Natural and Semi-natural Green Space, the many habitat types across the borough and the importance of biodiversity. The Borough and its green spaces are significant in terms of the locally and nationally important species that are supported. Green Spaces in Sandwell when considered with the provision in neighbouring Black Country Boroughs and Birmingham form significant green and blue infrastructure assets.

At a national level, the State of Nature 2019¹² report has recently been published which includes some worrying headlines, with more species seeing population decreases than increases, 36 species becoming extinct since 1970 and 13% of species in Great Britain now threatened with extinction. Sandwell Council works with the neighbouring boroughs on joint spatial planning through the Black Country Plan (formerly Black Country Core Strategy) and the Birmingham and Black Country Local Nature

¹² The National Biodiversity Network (2019) - State of Nature 2019

Partnership, which is one of 48 government approved partnerships set-up to embed the value of the natural environment in local policy decisions for the benefit of nature, people and the economy. Sandwell Council will continue to play an active role in these sub-regional partnerships and will ensure that the emerging priorities are reflected in more detailed aims and objectives developed through the delivery of the Sandwell Vision 2030. The Environment Bill 2020 also introduced the requirement for the development of Local Nature Recovery Strategies across England. Local Nature Recovery Strategies are intended to help local authorities and other public bodies identify priorities and opportunities for conserving and enhancing nature. These tools will also support strategic planning for housing and infrastructure and help direct net gain investment so that it has the greatest benefit for local wildlife and people. A partnership approach will be required within Sandwell, working across local authority boundaries to develop a Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Sandwell Council will consider the emerging work at a sub-regional level around natural capital accounting which seeks to measure and quantify the value of ecosystem services in financial terms. Where natural capital accounts have been developed the evidence suggests that the benefits returned are significantly greater than the costs. Research in Birmingham suggest that there is a multiplier effect of 24 times. Sandwell Council will consider developing a natural capital account for greenspaces in Sandwell to understand the full value that they contribute to the Borough.

At a national level there is increasing emphasis on protecting and enhancing biodiversity through development. Biodiversity Net Gain is an approach to development that leaves biodiversity in a better state than before. It relies on the implementation of a mitigation hierarchy to avoid, mitigate or compensate for biodiversity losses. The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs consulted on the proposed policy in 2019 and Biodiversity Net Gain is a core element within the Environment Bill 2020. Once the Bill is adopted into UK law, Biodiversity Net Gain will be integrated into the planning system.

Another key driver at national and international level is climate change. During the development of this strategy the UK Government has committed the UK to become

the first major economy to pass a net zero emissions law that would cover all greenhouse gases by 2050. Net zero means any emissions would be balanced by schemes to offset an equivalent amount of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere, such as planting trees or using technology like carbon capture and storage. This ambition comes at a time when there is increased public awareness of global environmental issues including plastic pollution, climate change and threats to biodiversity and nature. At a more local level, Birmingham is planning on introducing a clean air zone covering the centre of the city from 2020. Parts of Sandwell Borough currently exceed the legal standards for NO₂ and other emissions. The Council has an Air Quality Management Plan and Action Plans that seek to improve air quality in the Borough. The role of parks and green spaces in improving air quality, filtering pollution, and mitigating against adverse environmental factors is understood. Sandwell Council will further consider a co-ordinated approach to these issues and will develop policies through an environmental or climate change strategy. This will be addressed by policies in the Black Country Plan in the first instance, and any subsequent supplementary planning documents or guidance will need to reflect these emerging strategic policies.

The Council will seek to protect green space through the planning process consistent with the Black Country Plan (Black Country Core Strategy) and the National Planning Policy Framework. However, this strategy accepts the need to balance protection of green space with the need to meet targets for housing and employment land. The Green Space Audit work carried out in 2018 provides the authority with up to date information about the quantity, quality and accessibility of green space and this forms part of the evidence base for planning policy. The authority will adopt a local standard for the quantity of green space, taking into account predicted population growth, to inform decisions about deficiencies and potential surpluses in provision. The green space audit found that there is significant variation in the quantity of green space provision across the borough. There is significant variation at a town level and the level of variation at a ward level is even greater. The Council will seek to improve areas of green space deficiency through improving access to spaces that currently have limited access or no public access and through the planning process where development offers the opportunity to create new green space. The Council recognises that

development offers the opportunity for placemaking and the provision of parks and green spaces and wider blue and green infrastructure is central to this. As a general principle, the Council will, where possible seek to address those areas of green space deficiency that are greatest in scale, or where levels of health inequality or deprivation are the greatest.

Oldbury Town has the lowest levels of provision of all Sandwell and Old Warley ward has the lowest provision by ward with just 0.86 ha / 1,000 population (Borough average 3.63). The Council has looked at the current use and condition of Brandhall Golf Course and club house and have found that usage has reduced significantly, the facility is in a 'poor condition' and is estimated to cost around £3 million to improve. The Council has started consultation on the future of the golf course and proposes development for housing with new accessible green space to create a new accessible urban park for the local community .

The Green Space Audit considers both the quality and value of parks and green spaces, and the quality value assessment classified 66 spaces as low quality and low value. An assessment should be carried out to consider if the value can be increased by changing the primary purpose or improving the site in other ways. An action plan will be developed to provide a planned approach to addressing these low quality low value spaces.

The Council has reviewed the future supply of cemetery land and the demand for burial space and has identified the need to provide new burial space in West Bromwich and Rowley Regis. As part of the review of low quality low value green spaces consideration will be given to, but not limited to, the appropriateness of creating new burial space on existing low quality low value green space. Where, this cannot be achieved, consideration will be given to identifying other surplus green space provision that could be changed for burial use.

Similarly, it is understood that there may be high demand for allotment and community gardening sites within Sandwell Borough. The Council will review the Green Space Audit data, carry out an assessment of future demand and then develop a strategic plan to address future demand.

The Sandwell Vision and Black Country Plan¹³ sets out the need to build approximately 1,400 homes per year (up to 2039) within Sandwell to accommodate the anticipated population growth. Such development could offer the opportunity to create new green space in areas of deficiency. Where development occurs in areas where the supply of green space is sufficient to meet current needs, and the increase in population associated with that development, financial (developer) contributions will be sought where possible to improve the quality of existing spaces and increase the carrying capacity. Where development may impact upon biodiversity and that impact cannot be adequately mitigated within the development site, the Council will ensure that developers implement biodiversity offsetting schemes that contribute to enhancement or creation of new spaces with high biodiversity value. Impact upon biodiversity is one of the many planning considerations that is taken into account when assessing a planning application and when assessed alongside all of the other relevant planning considerations, officers could determine that the proposal should be refused planning permission. The forthcoming Environment Bill 2020 will pass this principle into a statutory requirement to deliver Biodiversity Net Gain through development.

The Green Space Audit data provides a significant part of the evidence base to protect green space and to prioritise improvements. The Council will continue to update the mapping dataset that underpins the audit. In order to ensure that data about the quality of green spaces is up to date will carry out further quality assessments as necessary.

The National Pollinator Strategy was launched in 2014 to encourage collaboration between government and other organisations to protect the future of bees and other pollinating insects. National and local campaigns have subsequently developed to encourage reduced mowing to allow grasses and other plants to flower and there is increasing public awareness and support for such approaches. The Council will review its approaches to grounds maintenance operations and will consider where less intensive interventions or other changes can be adopted to improve biodiversity. The

¹³ Peter Brett Associates (2017) – Black Country and South Staffordshire SHMA

Council will work with local communities to raise awareness of the value of such approaches and make changes (in line with good practice¹⁴) where appropriate.

Sandwell was a key partner in the delivery of the Millennium Forest initiative which aimed to plant or manage nearly 1,000 hectares of woodland across the sub-region by the year 2000. The project was delivered by the Black Country Environmental Partnership comprising; Sandwell Council and the other three Black Country boroughs, and the Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country, The Conservation Volunteers (TCV), Groundwork West Midlands and the National Urban Forestry Unit. The project was funded by the Millennium Commission and was the most ambitious urban forestry project in the UK. The project was successful in terms of managing areas of existing woodland, creating extensive areas of new planting and a range of events and activities were delivered engaging local communities. Responsibility for the Millennium Forest is now shared between Groundwork Black Country and the landowners, each of whom entered into a 99-year deed of dedication, a legal agreement with the Millennium Commission. To ensure that the legacy of this project continues, a review should be carried out to develop a long term plan for future maintenance. This is important since the inputs required will vary over time and the maintenance operations differ from standard annual maintenance cycles.

The Millennium Forest programme was successful in increasing the amount of tree cover in the Black Country. However, the UK still has less tree cover than many other European nations with just 9% of the UK given over to trees and woodland¹⁵. The initiative was also very successful in involving local communities in tree planting and creating new woodland. Increasing public awareness about the environment and climate change now offers an opportunity to involve Sandwell's community in new initiatives to create new woodland. Nationally, the Woodland Trust has launched a campaign to encourage one million people to plant a tree as part of the Big Climate Fightback. This strategy recommends that Sandwell supports this ambition with a

¹⁴ CABE Space (2006) Making Contracts Work for Wildlife : How to Encourage Biodiversity in Urban Parks

¹⁵ National Biodiversity Network (2019) – State of Nature

proposal that every child in Sandwell plants a tree through a project that involves local schools and community groups. This programme will provide a good opportunity to involve the next generations in taking positive action about the environment. It could also help signpost schools to the work delivered by the two outdoor education centres in the borough and other schemes such as Forest Schools.

Recommendations - Environment

10. Ensure that biodiversity and wider environmental issues are recognised within the Sandwell Vision.
11. Sandwell Council is developing a Climate Change Strategy to enable a co-ordinated approach to global, national and local environmental issues (including air quality).
12. Create a working group to establish the natural capital of parks and greenspaces in Sandwell.
13. Through the planning process seek to protect designated green space provision across the borough.
14. Continue to work at a sub-regional level with respect to green space planning and development.
15. Adopt local quantity standards for green space provision which seek to protect green space and balance this with the need to deliver housing and employment land.
16. Seek to address deficiencies in the quantity, quality and accessibility of green spaces through the development and management process.
17. The Green Space Audit classified spaces as low or high quality and low or high value. Develop an action plan for low quality / low value green spaces.
18. Further develop plans for new cemeteries & crematoria to meet the needs of the bereaved families.
19. Review the future demand for allotments and community garden sites and develop a strategic plan to meet these needs.

Recommendations - Environment

20. Review the Planning Obligations SPD in order to set out what planning obligations will be sought to make planning applications acceptable
21. Repeat the quality assessment as necessary in order to measure progress and maintain a robust evidence base.
22. Actively seek and engage in opportunities to protect and increase the biodiversity within the borough.
23. Improve and extend green corridors to support biodiversity.
24. Review grounds maintenance opportunities to support biodiversity and to create more semi-natural green space.
25. Develop a strategic approach to managing the Black Country / Millennium Forest.
26. Deliver “A tree for every child” programme and support the Forest Schools programme.

4.2.3 Place

Parks and green spaces within Sandwell are important recreational and environmental assets. Sandwell Valley Country Park is the most visited attraction in the borough and draws visitors from across the borough and the wider region. The Borough also has a range of other heritage parks that have benefitted from funding through Heritage Lottery Fund that are important destination spaces. Improving the cultural and tourism offer of the Borough is a key driver that will support the Sandwell Vision. The Council will ensure that the role of parks and green spaces is recognised, and that potential is realised.

Good quality green spaces make a positive contribution to local neighbourhoods and help create successful centres of community life where people choose to bring up their families (Sandwell Vision – Ambition 8). The Green Space Audit has found that the quality of green spaces in the Borough has increased from the first audit carried out in

2006. The quality of larger (Borough and Neighbourhood) spaces has been sustained over time, against a background of significantly reduced revenue budgets. The Council is committed to ensuring that key green spaces are maintained to a high standard and will continue to achieve the Green Flag Award for town parks and other selected green spaces as a benchmark against a national quality framework. There are currently twelve green spaces that achieve this standard within Sandwell (including parks and gardens, natural and semi-natural green space, and cemeteries and crematoria). The Council will seek to sustain the level of Green Flag Awards (current eleven Council owned sites) and achieve the Green Flag Award for West Smethwick Park following the completion of its restoration project. Other neighbourhood-level green spaces will continue to be managed to a standard equivalent to the Green Flag Award standard and local level spaces will be maintained to a safe standard. This is in line with the standards proposed in the 2010 Green Space Strategy.

The Council will also support community based organisations and allotment associations that play a significant role in managing green space to achieve the Green Flag Community Award.

Good practice suggests that the development of a Management and Maintenance Plan is the most effective way to improve and sustain green space quality. The Council will continue to review and update Management and Maintenance Plans for key green spaces on an annual basis and will roll out Management and Maintenance Plans to cover additional green spaces as resources allow. Management planning processes will also be used to ensure that green spaces are accessible and that barriers are addressed to ensure that parks and green space are accessible to disabled people and function as inclusive community facilities.

The Green Space Audit, stakeholder consultation and the Household Survey identified some issues relating to the delivery of ground maintenance operations across the borough. In particular, litter and waste management has been identified as an area that should be reviewed with the aim of setting and achieving minimum standards. We know from feedback from parks users, and via national research, that clean and well maintained parks and green spaces are typically better used and valued more highly. Higher levels of use can help displace and deter anti-social behaviour, making a

positive contribution to neighbourhoods and individuals. The Council will review the contractual arrangements relating to litter and waste management since this is currently split across a number of contracts which can hamper consistent service delivery.

Many parks and green spaces also contain built facilities and other infrastructure. As a consequence of historic maintenance arrangements (following the introduction of Compulsory Competitive Tendering in the 1980s, Best Value in the 1990s and subsequent changes) and the restructuring of service areas, there is now a need to review the approach to the planned preventative maintenance of buildings and structures within parks and green spaces. An action plan will be developed to address this.

Implementing changes to litter and waste management and a review of planned preventative maintenance will help sustain and increase the quality of parks and green spaces. However, there are a number of spaces in the Borough (across all Towns) that have been identified as low quality. Poor quality green spaces are typically less well used, are subject to anti-social behaviour and deliver fewer benefits than high quality spaces.

The Council will develop site improvement plans for high value low quality green spaces and also low quality spaces in areas with the least amount of green space and where the levels of health inequality are the highest.

From the Household Survey, we understand that the greatest barriers to using parks and green spaces relate to anti-social behaviour and perceptions of personal safety. These barriers appear to be more significant than recorded in the 2013 Household Survey. Budget reductions have meant that the dedicated Urban Park Warden service function ceased in 2007/08 replaced by a wider town centre and neighbourhood Warden service and in 2017/18 the service moved to an Environmental Protection Service. Qualitative consultation would suggest that this has had an impact on the ability of the Council to respond to and manage incidents of anti-social behaviour and reduced the ability to carry out infrastructure inspection regimes in parks and green spaces. Police and council teams are targeting the nuisance being caused by off-road

motorbikes and are warning riders of the dangers to themselves and others as part of the Safer 6 initiative. The Council will continue to work with the Police and other partners to address anti-social behaviour in parks and green spaces as part of a wider neighbourhood approach to community safety. The Council will promote its own reporting mechanisms for residents alongside the numbers for Crime Stoppers and the West Midlands Police.

Green space in Sandwell is typically well used by children and young people. There is a large forest school and forest play movement in Sandwell with over 50% of primary schools having a qualified forest school leader. In addition the Council also delivers a holiday forest play programme across the borough which is free to access by community children. The recent Go Play survey found that around one in five (21.6%) of children aged 9-10 would go outside to play or meet with friends most days. Around two thirds (64.5%) suggested that they could play in some or all of the places that they wanted to. Sandwell Council current provides 73 play spaces with equipped play across the Borough. These play spaces provide dedicated play equipment and other facilities for children and young people (such as ball courts and wheeled sports facilities). The Household Survey found that a slight majority of respondents (53.1%) considered there to be too little provision for play (compared to 41.6% who considered the amount of provision to be about right). The results from the Go Play Survey would suggest that children are more positive about the current levels of provision than adults. On balance, Sandwell Council will not seek to significantly increase the number of equipped play spaces due to the ongoing inspection, repair and maintenance costs associated with such provision. The Council will however, seek to ensure that green space generally contains a range of features and facilities, including natural elements that appeal to a range of users including children and young people. The Council will continue to work with external partners (such as Groundwork West Midlands through projects including Kick the Dust) to deliver positive engagement with children and young people around green spaces.

Children and young people typically have restrictions on how far they can travel and which spaces they can access. Through the Green Space Strategy, the Council will seek to ensure that all residents have access to a green space within 400m wherever

possible (equivalent to ten minutes walking time). The Council will also seek to ensure that pedestrian and cycle routes provide good access for children and young people to safely access green space in their neighbourhoods. Sandwell Play Sufficiency Assessment is a research programme that the Council is undertaking across Sandwell documenting children's lived experiences to inform future play policy.

Recommendations – Place

27. Ensure that the contribution offered by parks and green spaces to the cultural and tourism offer is recognised and harnessed.
28. Continue to achieve the Green Flag Award for key parks and greenspaces across the Borough.
29. Review and update management plans for all key parks and gardens, review asset information for all other sites and link to standard maintenance protocol / site improvement plans.
30. Use the green space site management planning process to create more accessible and inclusive green spaces and facilities.
31. Review standards and ensure appropriate litter management is delivered across all parks and greenspaces.
32. Review planned preventative management for facilities in parks and green spaces.
33. Develop a planned approach to raising the quality of the lowest quality spaces (with a focus on high value low quality spaces and low quality green spaces in wards with the least amount of provision; and wards with the poorest health outcomes).
34. Adopt a neighbourhood approach to addressing anti-social behaviour in parks and green spaces.
35. Work in partnership with the Safer 6 (community safety) campaign and engage with specific projects.
36. Ensure that children and young people have good access to green spaces which meets their needs, close to where they live.

Recommendations – Place

37. Work with Highways, Transportation, Planning and Public Health to improve key pedestrian and cycle routes for children and young people to allow them to safely access green spaces.
38. Ensure that green spaces are multi-functional, which encourage informal sports and play and is inclusive and meet the needs of a wide range of audiences.

4.2.4 Health and Wellbeing

The urban park movement has long associations with the desire to improve public health with key milestones being the 1833 Select Committee for Public Walks and the 1848 Public Health Act which were formative in the ambition for cities to create public parks. This was set against overcrowded urban environments, concern over moral values, unsanitary living conditions and widespread disease and loss of traditional recreational opportunities. There is now a compelling body of evidence on the value of parks and green spaces in improving physical health and mental wellbeing and in bringing people together to improve community cohesion.

As a nation we are now around 20% less active than in 1961 (Public Health England) and if current trends continue we will be 35% less active by 2030¹⁶. Physical Inactivity is now the fourth largest cause of disease and disability in the UK and contributes to one in six deaths. Within Sandwell there is significant health inequality. Approximately one third of the borough's residents are inactive compared to a quarter of the population nationally. People living in deprived areas are twice as likely to be physically inactive as those living in more prosperous areas. People in lower socio-economic groups are less likely to make healthy lifestyle choices, such as taking regular exercise and regularly eating fresh fruit and vegetables. In addition, the proportion of children in

¹⁶ Sandwell Trends (2019) Overview of Physical Activity (<https://www.sandwelltrends.info/physical-activity/>)

the borough classified as obese or overweight is higher than the national average and overall the authority area ranks within the top ten nationally for child obesity.

Increasing physical activity levels and the resulting health, social and economic benefits will contribute significantly to the achievement of the Vision 2030 and the ten ambitions. Being physically active and having a healthy weight will have a positive impact on self-esteem, community resilience and inclusive economic growth.

Parks and green spaces provide the opportunity for traffic-free routes to move around and access neighbourhood facilities. However, there is more that can be done to harness the full potential. The Council will seek to create better links between green spaces through linking green corridors and linear walkways. The strategy will place greatest emphasis on developing new links where there are the highest levels of air pollution and potentially the highest levels of health inequality. Such improvements will contribute to the Black County Local Transport Plan and the ambition to provide excellent and affordable transport.

The Council has recently adopted a revised Playing Pitch Strategy. The scope of this Strategy looks at pitch sports across the borough and includes those on Council owned green space. This Green Space Strategy recognises the importance of the Playing Pitch Strategy and supports the implementation of the recommendations.

The Sport and Active Recreation Strategy is currently being produced, this strategy will identify a series of key priorities that are aligned with the Green Space Strategy which recognises the benefits of getting more people active in the Boroughs green spaces.

The Council and its partners will develop programmes that increase sport and physical activity in parks and green spaces to improve the health and wellbeing of local people. Programmes will be targeted on those areas where there is greatest need based on current levels of participation and health outcomes. A recent pilot project using the 'Couch to 5k' model at West Smethwick Park has been delivered by Sandwell Leisure Trust and has proved very successful. Levels of sign up and ongoing participation exceeded expectations and many participants have expressed interest in continued participation. A number of participants have agreed to be trained as community

facilitators to support and encourage others in their community to engage with the programme.

The Council recognises that investment in sports facilities, pitches and infrastructure is required to sustain and grow participation in pitch sports. The Sandwell Playing Pitch Strategy has recently been updated and covers football, cricket, rugby, artificial turf pitches, tennis courts, bowling greens, netball courts, athletics tracks and golf courses. This Green Space Strategy recognises the contribution that pitch and court sports make to physical activity and health and wellbeing and does not seek to replicate the recommendations within this document.

The Commonwealth Games which will be held in Birmingham and the Black Country in 2022, will help raise the profile of Sandwell and the region. The Commonwealth Games will seek to increase participation in physical activity and sport and a legacy plan will be developed to sustain this increased interest and participation. This Green Space Strategy recommends that the role of parks and green spaces is considered in developing this legacy plan.

Parks and green spaces have the potential to play a significant role in contributing to improved health and wellbeing and in delivering preventative solutions. The House of Commons Public Parks Inquiry (2017) recommended that Councils “*publish strategic plans, which recognise the value of parks beyond leisure and recreation and set out how they will be managed to maximise their contribution to wider local authority agendas, such as promoting healthy lifestyles, tackling social exclusion and managing flood risk*”. The report goes on to state that central government should issue “*clear guidance to local authorities that they should work collaboratively with Health and Wellbeing Boards, and other relevant bodies where appropriate, to prepare and publish joint parks and green space strategies*”. This strategy considers the health and wellbeing benefits of parks and identifies some opportunities to ensure that green space is placed at the centre of decision making. Earlier in this document it was proposed that a political champion for parks was established to play an important leadership and co-ordination role. Here, the Council proposes that there should be a parks and green spaces champion on the local Health and Wellbeing Board to ensure

that similar leadership and co-ordination is shown with respect to green space and health and wellbeing within Sandwell.

Recommendations - Health and Wellbeing

39. Appoint a champion for parks and green spaces on the Health and Wellbeing Board.
40. Create improved green infrastructure to support active travel through Sandwell Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (SCWIP).
41. Develop additional programmes of Sport and Physical activity in parks and green spaces to improve the health and wellbeing of target groups.
42. Support the implementation of relevant actions from the Physical Activity and Sport strategy once formally adopted by the Council.
43. Develop an action plan for the Commonwealth Games legacy that increases participation / use of parks and green spaces.
44. Support the implementation of the recommendations within the Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS).

4.2.5 Community

Sandwell Council recognises the value that its residents add to services within parks and green spaces. There are now 25 friends groups and other community groups working with the Council to improve and maintain green spaces across the Borough. Across these groups there are over 200 volunteers. There are also seventeen allotment sites managed by volunteers with a over 50 people involved in the allotment committee managing these sites. The scale of involvement is quite significant with volunteers at Lightwoods Park contributing 2,000 hours annually, equivalent to over £14,000 in volunteer contributions. Warley Woods Community Trust manage Warley Woods and golf course and a review of the benefits generated there shows the value of the contributions to be in the region of £50,000 annually. However, there are no

overall figures that are available showing the total contribution each year across the borough. The Council will review the opportunities to offer a wider range of volunteer opportunities within parks and green spaces that allow a more flexible approach to volunteer participation. This could include corporate volunteering, family volunteering and micro-volunteering opportunities that offer flexible and one-off volunteer opportunities.

The Volunteer Survey carried out as part of the development of this strategy found that groups were supported by the Council who provided advice, attended group meetings and support to apply for external funding. Many of the groups wished to see a higher level of support to allow the groups to be more successful and particularly to assist them with applying for grant funding.

The Sandwell Green Spaces Forum provides a way of bringing the groups together for networking, support and skill sharing through a peer-to-peer network. Consultation has identified the desire to see the network strengthened and expanded and there are likely to be opportunities to seek funding to support this process. The Council will review the staff resources to support individual friends groups and the support available to develop the capacity and resilience of the Green Spaces Forum.

Nearly half (seventeen out of forty) of Council allotment sites are managed by allotment associations and this partnership has proved effective in community-based organisations running the allotments for the benefit of plot holders. . In recent years there has been an increased interest in community food production where local people come together to grow food on a collective basis. This differs from traditional allotment gardening where one individual or family is solely responsible for a plot and is a more flexible form of local food production that suits modern lifestyles and demands as part of a wider community group. The approach brings benefits in terms of sharing skills and costs and can provide access to a greater range of fresh vegetables and produce at low cost. The Council will work with allotment associations and other community groups to develop initial pilot projects around community food production and then evaluate the results of these pilot projects.

Sandwell Council has seen significant reductions in revenue budgets, which, as set out earlier in this document are just 48% of the level that they were in 2010/11. This has resulted in reduced staffing resources to support friends and community groups as well as reductions in maintenance standards. The Council will continue to work with friends groups to provide advice about the availability of external funding and to support applications for projects that seek to improve green spaces or support the development of the community group. In doing so the Council will recognise the additionality that friends and voluntary group, bring rather than as a replacement for core funding.

There are other partnership, that can be developed. An example is the Hateley Heath and Stone Cross Big Local Partnership initiative which is developing a local area masterplan focusing on six green spaces in this neighbourhood. Sandwell Council supports this initiative and will work with the partnership, and others, to plan and deliver improvements that contribute to the local masterplan and the needs identified through the Sandwell Green Space Audit.

The Council will also work with a range of partners to develop and extend the range of facilities and events and activity programmes in parks and green spaces. This will include the community and voluntary sector and also commercial partners that may wish to invest in parks and green spaces to provide additional visitor attractions that are appropriate to the setting. This is a model that has worked successfully at Sandwell Valley Country Park whereby private sector partners run bike hire, mini-golf and high ropes attractions. The Council will review the feasibility of adopting similar partnership approaches at other parks and green spaces. The Council will consider community asset transfer where this may be appropriate and offer a sustainable long term solution.

Recommendations - Community

45. Continue to promote and support community based organisations that are working to improve Sandwell's parks and green spaces.
46. Seek to build capacity to develop and strengthen the Sandwell Green Spaces Forum (GSF).

Recommendations - Community

47. Seek to increase the number and range of volunteer roles within parks and green spaces across the borough.
48. Develop pilot projects focused on community food production and community gardening.
49. Work with partners, businesses and community groups to identify additional funding sources for parks and green spaces
50. Adopt a partnership approach with community, voluntary and commercial partners to develop enhanced facilities (including commercial entities) and to consider community asset transfer where this may offer an appropriate long term solution
51. Support the Big Local Partnerships to develop a masterplan for their local green spaces and deliver the identified improvements.
52. Adopt a partnership approach with community, voluntary and commercial partners to enhance the events and activity programmes within parks and green spaces.

5 How are we going to get there?

5.1 A Partnership Approach

This Green Space Strategy is an overarching strategy for green space across the borough and the implementation of the strategy will involve a number of different service areas, external partners, and the participation of Sandwell's communities.

5.2 Resources

External funding or funding from internal service partners will be required to delivery some elements of this green space strategy. Other resources will be sought through the development plan process as appropriate or through the adoption process of newly developed recreational green space sites.

Staff and financial resources are a fraction of their previous levels both within Sandwell and nationally and other public services now have much more limited resources. The Council will continue to take a prudent view when considering capital investment and will ensure that decisions approving investment are underpinned by an understanding of the revenue requirements to sustain that investment and service delivery.

5.3 Issues, constraints and opportunities

Green spaces are multi-functional and provide a range of benefits for the Borough, acting as local community venues, as places for sport and activity leading to improved health and wellbeing, bring environmental benefits in terms of mitigating climate change, as well as improving the attractiveness of the borough as a place to live work and invest. As such green spaces contribute significantly to the Sandwell Vision 2030 and directly to many of the ambitions. In order to realise these benefits, a co-ordinated approach will need to be taken and the Parks and Grounds Maintenance Service will need to lead a new Green Space Strategy Delivery Board supported by the appointment of a political champion. A champion on the Health and Wellbeing Board will ensure that the link between public health and green spaces in Sandwell is made and that there continues to be synergy between these two areas.

Increased concern at a global and local level about environmental issues and a renewed emphasis on environmental issues provides an opportunity to re-examine the contribution of green spaces within Sandwell.

The action plan below sets out the recommendations identified in this strategy, links those to the Sandwell Vision (and ambitions), identifies the lead organisation and those that will support the delivery, along with the proposed timescales.

5.4 Risk Management

The action plan associated with each recommendation will be risk managed and RAG ratings will be identified and quarterly reviewed. The main corporate risk has been identified below

Risk Identification. Risk Title and Description	Risk Assessment	Current/Residual Score	Risk Assessment	Score
Green Space Strategy 2020-30 (specific action) Failure to secure sufficient resources that will enable the directorate to develop and deliver on the action plans associated with the recommendation of the GSS	A. Probability score	4	A. Probability score	3
	B. Reduction in output score	3	B. Reduction in output score	3
	C. Financial score	4	C. Financial score	2
	D. Reputational score	4	D. Reputational score	3
	E. Impact score (Higher of B,C,D)	4	E. Impact score (Higher of B,C,D)	3
	Overall Score (AxE)	12	Overall Score (AxE)	6

Risk Mitigation and Control. Current Actions / Mitigating Controls In Place	Assurance On Effectiveness Of Current Controls	Gaps Identified in Controls / Assurance	Further Mitigating Controls / Actions Required	Responsibility For Action	Critical Success Factor / KPI	Progress Review / Monitoring Arrangement	Key Dates For Completion
Establish and maintain a Strategic Green Space Strategy Delivery Board to target successful outputs and outcomes presented in the GSS	Robust SMART action planning and project management	None at this stage	None at this stage	Director for Neighbourhoods and Community Services,	Identified within the GSS Recommendation Action Plan	Quarterly with annual reviews	May 2021 and thereafter yearly up to 2030

<p>Board is supported and overseen by a political champion for GS and a GS champion on the HWB board</p>	<p>ent activity that is actively and regularly performance managed and monitored</p>			<p>Business / Service Manager Parks and Green Spaces</p>			
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5.5 Green Space Strategy Action Plan 2020-2030

Ref	Recommendation	Links to Sandwell Vision 2030	Lead Organisation	Delivery Partners	Resources	Time scale	Performance Measure
Theme : A Strategic Approach							
1.	Appoint a political champion for parks and green spaces.	8, 10	Director of Housing & Communities	-	Staff time	Y1	Political Champion appointed.
2.	Establish a Green Space Strategy Delivery Board.	8, 10	Director of Housing & Communities	-	Staff time	Y1	Group established. No. of meetings (target x4 pa). No of recommendations achieved.
3.	Review the organisational structures relating to green space services and how budgets are managed / aligned, taking into account the impact of legislative changes.	8	Director of Housing & Communities	Finance Team	Staff time / additional funding	Y2	Green Budget re-aligned. GS management budget revised.

Ref	Recommendation	Links to Sandwell Vision 2030	Lead Organisation	Delivery Partners	Resources	Time scale	Performance Measure
4.	Review existing greenspace policies and underpinning strategies in line with this revised Green Space Strategy.	8, 10	Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC)	Strategic Asset Management, Tree Section, H&S Team, Play Service, external partners as appropriate	Staff time	Y2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised policies and strategies to include: • Play Policy and Strategy • Outdoor Water Safety Policy • Youth Outdoor Recreational Facilities • Urban Tree Policy • Pesticide Policy • Environmental Policy • Waterfowl / Canada Geese Policy • Fishing Policy • Bye laws • Playing Pitch Strategy • Green Space Adoption policy

Ref	Recommendation	Links to Sandwell Vision 2030	Lead Organisation	Delivery Partners	Resources	Time scale	Performance Measure
5.	Develop a medium to long term investment strategy for internal and external funding relating to parks and green spaces.	8, 10	Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC)	Planning Strategic Asset Management & PMA	Staff time	Y3	Parks and Green Space Improvement Strategy revised and adopted. Value of external funding secured. Additional internal funding secured.
6.	Review financial management arrangements to ensure that there are clear incentives for services areas to achieve greater income generation	8, 10	Director of Housing & Communities	Commercial Services, Strategic Asset Management	Staff time / Revenue	Y1 & ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual review of: • Reducing the cost of services we deliver incl. improved procurement of goods • Creating and using surplus capacity to increase our offer • Introducing new charges for services previously not charged or provided • Increasing existing charges (depending on the market situation without being counter-productive) Improving and reviewing our pricing structure to maximise income. <p>Retaining additional income within the service area to deliver GSS 2020-2030</p>

Ref	Recommendation	Links to Sandwell Vision 2030	Lead Organisation	Delivery Partners	Resources	Time scale	Performance Measure
7.	Develop a business plan for Sandwell Valley (& Dartmouth Park) to improve the visitor offer and to achieve greater financial sustainability.	8, 10	Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC)	Parks & Grounds Maintenance	Staff time / Revenue	Y2	Business plan for Sandwell Valley (& Dartmouth Park) developed and adopted. New activities and income streams introduced. Value of income generation. Target of cost neutrality by Y5.
8.	Ensure that the proposals within the agreed Cultural Prospectus around events, tourism and leisure are reflected in the proposed actions plans for the implementation of the Green Space Strategy.	2, 8, 10	TLC & Sport & Leisure & Parks	Town Teams, PH	Staff time	Y3	Increased community and commercial events within Parks and Green Spaces, generating income or are self-financing. No. of events delivered annually.
9.	Develop an overall marketing plan for parks and green spaces in Sandwell that seeks to encourage use by all sections of the community.	2, 8, 10	Tourism, Culture & Leisure	Parks & Grounds Maintenance & Sport & Leisure	Staff time	Y3	Improvements to Discover Sandwell website with better information about facilities and activities in green spaces. Increased use of website. Increased use of green space (annual visitor numbers). More

Ref	Recommendation	Links to Sandwell Vision 2030	Lead Organisation	Delivery Partners	Resources	Time scale	Performance Measure
							diverse range of audiences using green space.
Theme : Environment							
10.	Ensure that biodiversity and wider environmental issues are recognised within the Sandwell Vision.	8, 10	Director of Housing & Communities & Director for Regeneration and Economy	Planning, Parks & TCL & Grounds Maintenance	Staff time / Revenue and Capital funding	Y1	Recognised within the Corporate Plan.
11.	Sandwell Council is developing a Climate Change Strategy to enable a co-ordinated approach to global, national and local environmental issues (including air quality).	10	Director of Neighbourhoods	Director of Housing & Communities & Director for Regeneration and Economy	Staff time	Y1 / Y2	Approved Environment / Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy and Action Plan. Inclusion of relevant policies within the Black Country Plan.

Ref	Recommendation	Links to Sandwell Vision 2030	Lead Organisation	Delivery Partners	Resources	Time scale	Performance Measure
12.	Create a working group to establish the natural capital of parks and greenspaces in Sandwell.	8	Director of Housing & Communities & Director of Public Health	Planning, Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC), Finance, Public Health, Environmental Health	Staff time	Y5	Natural capital account established. Value of Sandwell green spaces identified. Report promoted and disseminated.
13.	Through the planning process seek to protect designated green space provision across the borough.	2, 7, 8	Planning Policy	Planning Development Control, Parks & Grounds Maintenance, Urban Design Building Services	Staff time	Y1 & ongoing	Quantity of unrestricted green space (reported annually). Areas of designated green space (SINCs / SLINCs / LNRs) Areas of designated green space lost. Monitor this in line with the Black Country Biodiversity Action plan and according to the baseline recorded through the Green Space Audit.
14.	Continue to work at a sub-regional level with respect to	2, 7, 8	Planning Policy	Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC)	Staff time	Y1 & ongoing	Attendance at: Black Country Plan co-ordination meetings; Black Country Local Nature Partnership meetings; Biodiversity

Ref	Recommendation	Links to Sandwell Vision 2030	Lead Organisation	Delivery Partners	Resources	Time scale	Performance Measure
	green space planning and development.						Action Plan meetings; others to be identified.
15.	Adopt local quantity standards for green space provision which seek to protect green space and balance this with the need to deliver housing and employment land.	2, 7, 8	Planning Policy	Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC)	Staff time	Y1	Local standard adopted.
16.	Seek to address deficiencies in the quantity, quality and accessibility of green spaces through the development and management process.	2, 8	Planning Policy	Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC)	Staff time / Revenue and Capital funding	Y1 and ongoing	Action plan developed with key performance indicators, funding sought via Parks and Green Space Improvement strategy and types of Planning Obligations that will be sought set out in the reviewed SPD – All actions delivered, implemented and monitored according to action plan

Ref	Recommendation	Links to Sandwell Vision 2030	Lead Organisation	Delivery Partners	Resources	Time scale	Performance Measure
							Implement community use agreements to increase accessibility of limited access spaces.
17.	The Green Space Audit classified spaces as low or high quality and low or high value. Develop an action plan for low quality / low value green spaces.	8	Parks & Grounds Maintenance	Tourism, Culture & Leisure	Staff time / Revenue and Capital funding	Y1	Action plan developed and option appraisals completed for LQ /LV sites. No. of sites that can be reclassified as High Value or High Quality.
18.	Further develop plans for new cemeteries & crematoria to meet the needs of the bereaved families.	2,8,10	Bereavement Services & Planning	Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC)	Staff time / Revenue and Capital funding	Y3	Option appraisal completed and action plan developed ensuring the needs are met, new sites approved
19.	Review the future demand for allotments and community garden sites and develop a strategic plan to meet these needs.	2, 8	Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC)	Allotment Associations, Planning, Public Health	Staff time	Y2	Revised Allotment Strategy

Ref	Recommendation	Links to Sandwell Vision 2030	Lead Organisation	Delivery Partners	Resources	Time scale	Performance Measure
20.	Review the Planning Obligations SPD in order to set out what planning obligations will be sought to make planning applications acceptable.	7,8,10	Planning Policy	Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC), Urban Design Building Services	Staff time	Y1	Revised development plan process approved; revised recreational green space adoption policy approved; review and adopt a Planning Obligations SPD, which sets out what planning obligations will be sought to make planning applications acceptable in planning terms. Ensure new developments create a Biodiversity Net Gain.
21.	Repeat the quality assessment as necessary in order to measure progress and maintain a robust evidence base.	8, 10	Planning Policy	Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC)	Staff time / Revenue	as necessary	Reviewed Quality / Value assessment report
22.	Actively seek and engage in opportunities to protect and increase the biodiversity within the borough	8,10	Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC)	The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and Black Country,	Staff time / Revenue and Capital funding	Y1	(see point 12) Action plan developed (baseline for Improvement strategy)

Ref	Recommendation	Links to Sandwell Vision 2030	Lead Organisation	Delivery Partners	Resources	Time scale	Performance Measure
				Canal & Rivers Trust			
23.	Improve and extend green corridors to support biodiversity.	6, 8	Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC) & Planning	Birmingham and Black Country The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and Black Country, Canal & Rivers Trust	Staff time / Revenue and Capital funding	Y3	(see point 12) Action plan developed (baseline for Improvement strategy)
24.	Review grounds maintenance opportunities to support biodiversity and to create more semi-natural green space.	8	Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC) & Planning	Parks & Grounds Maintenance	Staff time / Revenue	Y3	Action plan developed and approved. Area of land improved for biodiversity
25.	Develop a strategic approach to managing the Black Country / Millennium Forest.	8	Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC) Planning,	Legal Woodland Trust	Staff time / Revenue	Y5	Woodland management strategy developed. No of hectares under appropriate management.

Ref	Recommendation	Links to Sandwell Vision 2030	Lead Organisation	Delivery Partners	Resources	Time scale	Performance Measure
			Corporate Property				
26.	Deliver “A tree for every child” programme and support the Forest Schools programme.	1, 4, 8	Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC)	Woodland Trust	Staff time / Revenue and Capital funding	Y1/Y2/Y3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No of trees planted No of hectares planted No of participants Management plan & future maintenance cost adopted No of participants in Forest Schools
Theme : Place							
27.	Ensure that the contribution offered by parks and green spaces to the cultural and	2, 7, 8, 10	Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC)	Communication Team	Staff time	Y5	Implementation of Sandwell Valley Business Plan Implementation of Tourism Strategy

Ref	Recommendation	Links to Sandwell Vision 2030	Lead Organisation	Delivery Partners	Resources	Time scale	Performance Measure
	tourism offer is recognised and harnessed.						Increased customer satisfaction rating for parks and greenspace (established baseline audit 2018)
28.	Continue to achieve the Green Flag Award for key parks and greenspaces across the Borough.	8, 10	Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC) & Cemeteries and Crematoria	Bereavement Services, WWCT	Staff time / Revenue and Capital funding	Y1 & ongoing	Retain existing number of Green Flag awards (12) Achieve the Green Flag Award for West Smethwick Park
29.	Review and update management plans for all key parks and gardens, review asset information for all other sites and link to standard maintenance protocol / site improvement plans	8, 10	Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC)	Strategic Asset Management	Staff time	Y3	Revised management plans for key parks and green spaces (Green Flag Award) Develop site improvement plans Established maintenance protocol Comprehensive GS asset information
30.	Use the management planning process to create more accessible and inclusive green spaces and facilities.	8, 10	Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC)	Planning	Staff time / Revenue and Capital funding	Y3 and ongoing	Identified opportunities during development of management plans, implementation of capital projects, option appraisals for sites and through implementation of Tourism

Ref	Recommendation	Links to Sandwell Vision 2030	Lead Organisation	Delivery Partners	Resources	Time scale	Performance Measure
							strategy and other management planning processes
31.	Review standards and ensure appropriate litter management is delivered across all parks and greenspaces.	1, 8, 10	Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC), Grounds Maintenance	Commercial Services - Serco	Staff time / Revenue	Y1	Reviewed Serco litter management contract
32.	Review planned preventative management for facilities in parks and green spaces.	8, 10	Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC), Asset Management & PMA Maintenance	Parks & Grounds Maintenance	Staff time	Y3	Planned preventative facility management protocol established
33.	Develop a planned approach to raising the quality of the lowest quality spaces (with a focus on high value low quality spaces	1, 2, 7, 8, 10	Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC)	Planning Policy, Public Health, Grounds Maintenance	Staff time / Revenue and Capital funding	Y2	Action plan developed and approved, implementation reviewed annually.

Ref	Recommendation	Links to Sandwell Vision 2030	Lead Organisation	Delivery Partners	Resources	Time scale	Performance Measure
	and low quality green spaces in wards with the least amount of provision; and wards with the poorest health outcomes).						
34.	Adopt a neighbourhood approach to addressing anti-social behaviour in parks and green spaces.	5, 8	Environmental Protection Service (Neighbourhood Wardens / Community Safety), Youth Service, Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC)	West Midlands Police, Town Teams, Third sector organisations	Staff time / Revenue	Y1 and ongoing	Establish a working group. Establish protocol and remit, develop action plan, re-instate ASB database, improved safety rating for parks and green space (from the Green Space Audit 2018 baseline).
35.	Work in partnership with the Safer 6 (community safety)	5, 8	Environmental Protection Service (Neighbourhood	Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure	Staff time	Y1 and	improved safety rating for parks and green space (GS audit 2018 baseline)

Ref	Recommendation	Links to Sandwell Vision 2030	Lead Organisation	Delivery Partners	Resources	Time scale	Performance Measure
	campaign and engage with specific projects.		Wardens / Community Safety)	(TLC), West Midlands Police		ongoing	
36.	Ensure that children and young people have good access to green spaces which meets their needs, close to where they live.	1, 2, 4, 8	Planning Policy	Go Play Sandwell, Youth Service, Parks & Grounds Maintenance	Staff time / Revenue and Capital funding	Y1 and ongoing	Establish standards and identify solutions for deficiencies
37.	Work with Highways, Transportation, Planning and Public Health to improve key pedestrian and cycle routes for children and young people to allow them to safely access green spaces.	1, 2, 4, 5, 8	Transportation Planning	Go Play Sandwell, Parks & Grounds Maintenance, Transportation Planning, Cycling in Sandwell, Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC),	Staff time / Revenue and Capital funding	Y1 and ongoing	improved safe access rating by young children (Go Play survey 2019 baseline), review satisfaction rating at next GS audit survey (Household Survey). Establish number of accidents linked to green space access.. Establish links with Sandwell Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (SCWIP).

Ref	Recommendation	Links to Sandwell Vision 2030	Lead Organisation	Delivery Partners	Resources	Time scale	Performance Measure
38.	Ensure that green spaces are multi-functional, which encourage informal sports and play and is inclusive and meet the needs of a wide range of audiences.	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8	Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC)	Community partners	Staff time / Revenue and Capital funding	Y5	Review existing provision and develop plan to improve the build infrastructure and activities attraction in each town in line with developed strategies (see recommendation 5). User feedback through future Household Surveys / Go Play Surveys.
Theme : Health & Wellbeing							
39.	Appoint a champion for parks and green spaces on the Health and Wellbeing Board.	2, 8, 10	Director of Housing & Communities	Public Health	Staff time	Y1	Champion for parks and green spaces appointed on the H&W Board
40.	Create improved green infrastructure to support active travel through Sandwell Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (SCWIP)	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8	Transportation Planning	Public Health, Highways, Canal and Rivers Trust, Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC)	Staff time / Revenue and Capital funding	Y3	increased length of off road green cycling routes, increased pedestrian use P&G to access public transport

Ref	Recommendation	Links to Sandwell Vision 2030	Lead Organisation	Delivery Partners	Resources	Time scale	Performance Measure
41.	Develop additional programmes of Sport and Physical activity in parks and green spaces to improve the health and wellbeing of target groups.	1, 2, 4, 5, 8	Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC)	Public Health, Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC), Sport & Leisure Play Service, Move More Sandwell	Staff Time / Revenue	Y2	Annual review of activity plan
42.	Support the implementation of relevant actions from the Physical Activity and Sport strategy once formally adopted by the Council.	1, 2, 8	Sport & Leisure	Public Health, Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC), Sport & Leisure, Move More Sandwell	-	Y1	To be reviewed once adopted by Cabinet
43.	Develop an action plan for the Commonwealth Games legacy	1, 2, 8	Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC)	Sport & Leisure Commonwealth Project Team Public Health,	Staff Time / Revenue	Y3	Implementation of developed action plan

Ref	Recommendation	Links to Sandwell Vision 2030	Lead Organisation	Delivery Partners	Resources	Time scale	Performance Measure
	that increases participation / use of parks and green spaces.			Move More Sandwell			
44.	Support the implementation of the recommendations within the Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS).	1, 2, 8	Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC) & Sport and Leisure	Sport England, Planning, National Governing Bodies (NGBs)	Staff time / Revenue and Capital funding	Y1 & ongoing	The existing supply of sports facilities where it is needed for meeting current or future needs is protected Existing outdoor sports facilities are enhanced through improving quality and management of sites New outdoor sports facilities where there is current or future demand are created
Theme : Community							
45.	Continue to promote and support community based organisations that are working to improve Sandwell's parks and green spaces.	1, 3, 5, 8	Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC)	Town Teams Public Health External Partners incl. Big Local Partners	Staff Time / Revenue	Y1	Work with VCISO, Groundwork BC, Housing resident groups and similar organisations to increase engagement with community based organisations

Ref	Recommendation	Links to Sandwell Vision 2030	Lead Organisation	Delivery Partners	Resources	Time scale	Performance Measure
46.	Seek to build capacity to develop and strengthen the Sandwell Green Spaces Forum (GSF).	1, 3, 5, 8	Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC)	Town Teams, Bereavement Service	Staff Time / Revenue	Y1 and ongoing	Quarterly GSF meeting, secure funding for external support, develop action plan with FG & GSF partners
47.	Seek to increase the number and range of volunteer roles within parks and green spaces across the borough.	1, 3, 5, 8	Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC)	Town Teams, Bereavement Service	Staff Time / Revenue	Y3	Revised Community Participation strategy and Volunteering Policy
48.	Develop pilot projects focused on community food production and community gardening.	1, 2, 4, 8	Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC)	Allotment Associations Public Health	Staff time / Revenue and Capital funding	Y5	Develop in line with the allotment strategy with Allotment associations, the GSF and other suitable partners
49.	Work with partners, businesses and community groups to identify additional funding sources for parks and green spaces.	1, 2, 4, 5, 8	Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC)	Public Health, Sport & Leisure, Tourism, Culture & Leisure	Staff Time	Y3 and ongoing	Investigate in line with the Improvement strategy (Ref 6) future funding opportunities

Ref	Recommendation	Links to Sandwell Vision 2030	Lead Organisation	Delivery Partners	Resources	Time scale	Performance Measure
50.	Adopt a partnership approach with community, voluntary and commercial partners to develop enhanced facilities (including commercial entities) and to consider community asset transfer where this may offer an appropriate long term solution.	1, 2, 4, 5, 8	Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC)	Town Teams Events Team Sport & Leisure Legal Service Asset Management & Property Service Maintenance	Staff time / Revenue and Capital funding	Y5	Review Events and Activity strategy with the view to enhance further to offer within P&G, Initiate active programme to secure external partners to enhance facilities – through a joint GS Partnership strategy.
51.	Support the Big Local Partnerships to develop a masterplan for their local green spaces and deliver the identified improvements.	1, 2, 4, 5, 8	Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TCL), & HHSCBL	Town Teams	Staff time / Revenue and Capital funding	Y1	Developed masterplan implemented.
52.	Adopt a partnership approach with community, voluntary and commercial partners to enhance the events and activity		Parks & Tourism, Culture & Leisure (TLC)	Events Team	Staff time / Revenue	Y1	Establish an Events Policy and Strategy. Increase the number of events supporting the health and wellbeing agenda. Increase the number of events and activities for children and young people.

Ref	Recommendation	Links to Sandwell Vision 2030	Lead Organisation	Delivery Partners	Resources	Time scale	Performance Measure
	programmes within parks and green spaces.						

6 When will we know we've arrived?

6.1 Key Performance Measures

Key performance measures have been identified against the recommendation in the action plan.

The Council will collate monitoring and performance data against these measures on an ongoing basis.

6.2 Monitoring and review

The implementation of the Green Space Strategy should be monitored on an annual basis by the Green Space Strategy Delivery Board. The action plan should be updated and revised as part of this process.

6.3 Evaluation

The effectiveness of the Green Space Strategy should be reviewed every five years to ensure that the analysis and recommendations remain valid and appropriate. The strategy is proposed to cover a ten year period to 2030 and should therefore be updated in 2029/30.