



people spaces places

Sandwell Green Space Strategy

Biodiversity and Countryside Workshop Report

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Sandwell Green Space Strategy

Biodiversity and Countryside Workshops Report

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Appendix A – Copy of Presentation

1 Introduction

As part of the development of the development of the Sandwell Green Space Strategy a workshop was held with staff and partners with a biodiversity, countryside and natural environment focus.

This report is a record of the workshop event and the discussion and comments made by participants. As such the comments will inform the future strategy, but they do not necessarily reflect Sandwell Council's current and future position.

Date / time & location	7 February 2019 12.45am - 4pm Sandwell MBC staff and partners Venue: Sandwell Park Farm, Salters Lane, West Bromwich, B71 4BG
Content	Introductory presentation about works that has been carried out so far and then a series of exercises to explore the key issues, potential solutions and approaches that may be adopted through the Green Space Strategy.
Purpose	For attendees to gain an understanding of and inform the GSS.

2 Workshop Structure

There were 16 participants in attendance as well as facilitators from the Council and CFP. Officers represented the service areas of Parks Management, Sandwell Valley / Countryside, Planning and Historic Conservation, other representatives came from a variety of local Friends Groups, RSPB, the Wildlife Trust and the Canal and River Trust

The agenda for the session was as below.

Title	Description
Registration and coffee	Orientate participants
Introduction	Welcome and Introduction
Audit / Strategy Update	What it is and what we'd done so far. Focus on natural / semi-natural green space etc.
<u>Exercise 1</u>	Biodiversity & countryside in Sandwell – Value? Linked to the Sandwell Vision Functions? BAP species & habitats / Pollinator strategy / climate change adaptation / SUDs / health & wellbeing etc Future contribution? How is it managed?
<u>Exercise 2</u>	Green Corridors – extending the links? How can better networks of green corridors / GI be better developed in Sandwell Look at quantity analysis results Mapping – A1 plans
<u>Exercise 3</u>	New designations for SINCs & SLINCs New designations for LNRs How do we ensure that there is nature nearby? Look at shortage by Town / Ward
BREAK – check refreshments available	
<u>Exercise 4</u>	Issues
<u>Exercise 5</u>	Solutions
<u>Exercise 6</u>	Using an Impact – Implementation Matrix to Develop an action plan
Round up and Q&A	Summary Next steps and timescales

2.1 Exercise 1

Exercise 1 sought to draw out how green space contribute or could further contribute to the 10 ambitions of Sandwell Council. Attendees split into 2 groups to discuss this.

The table below shows each ambition and connections made to green spaces (combined results from 2 groups)

Number	Ambition	What Green Spaces can deliver
1	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.	Children are given equal opportunities through access to space to play, take part in sports, learn and have fun. Consider links between deprivation and green space quality.
2	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.	Better physical and mental health outcomes from getting outdoors. Health benefits of connection to nature. There is a wealth of evidence about the benefits of green space and mental / physical health.
3	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.	Green spaces can provide accessible routes to education and learning.
4	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.	Outdoor spaces can help people grow an understanding of nature which hopefully in turn will change their behaviour towards it. Green spaces can make an excellent learning environment.
5	Our communities are built on mutual respect and taking care of each other, supported by all the agencies that ensure we feel safe and protected in our homes and local neighbourhoods.	Consider opportunities for gaining the views of Sandwell's diverse communities to inform the development of the strategy. West Bromwich New Square shopping centre has high footfall and would be a good venue for public consultation.
6	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.	Consider traffic free / active travel routes. Consider the opportunities to deliver the 'Green Bridge' route linking West Bromwich to Great Barr

Number	Ambition	What Green Spaces can deliver
7	We now have many new homes to meet a full range of housing needs in attractive neighbourhoods and close to key transport routes.	Link the strategy to the national 25 Year Environment Plan. Link to the Natural Capital Investment Strategy (Black Country). Historic Landscape Assessment is being undertaken across the BC.
8	Our distinctive towns and neighbourhoods are successful centres of community life, leisure and entertainment where people increasingly choose to bring up their families.	There are many green spaces / landscapes (and buildings) in Sandwell of historical significance that contribute to local distinctiveness. The development control process is important in safeguarding and enhancing local character and distinctiveness (inc green spaces). Eco-record holds data about protected and priority species. The green space audit has good evidence and data to draw upon. Supplement with data from other sources.
9	Sandwell has become a location of choice for industries of the future where the local economy and high performing companies continue to grow.	The BC Core Strategy and Local Nature Partnership place emphasis on improving the image and attractiveness of the region.
10	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.	The strategy will need high level commitment (officers and members) if it is to be successful. The strategy will need a political champion. There are a number of partner organisations that can help deliver the green space strategy (many are here today & there are others). There is a high degree of uncertainty looking to the future – ensure the strategy is reviewed at regular intervals.

Generally, both groups felt that the Sandwell Vision did not fully recognise the value of the natural environment. Many participants reflected that the ambitions were people centred and relatively short term which didn't express the importance of caring for biodiversity and countryside.

In terms of those policies or initiatives which were mentioned as being of relevance to the Green Space Strategy;

- Planning Policy- Sandwell is committed to opening up watercourses
- Sustainable Drainage which is promoted to developers to prevent flooding and enhance biodiversity but often see engineered solutions delivered instead
- Birmingham and the Black Country Nature Improvement Area
- Angling and Water Safety Policy
- Geopark application
- Black Country Urban Forest
- 25 Year Environment Plan
- Natural Capital Investment Strategy (currently draft)

2.2 Exercise 2

Attendees were asked in groups to discuss how better networks of green corridors can better developed in Sandwell in reference to A1 plans showing current greenspaces. Comments included;

- There is a site which is included in the Local Plan for development but a participant would like to see it kept as open space as the area has greened over and is well used by people from Oldbury and Tipton as a link to Sheepwash Nature Reserve. It was stated that this is a 'hazardous' waste pool and next to that a piece of land which has been owned by a developer for an extended period but has yet to be developed.
- Lion Farm Playing Fields - developers are seeking permission to develop into a shopping centre and this is currently being reviewed through the planning process.
- Titford Pools - is going to have a relatively small area of it given over to a sustainable urban drainage (SUDS) solution, and this land will be transferred to Highways England.
- Portway Hill Open Space (5011) is a recent Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) designation. The Rowley hills are fragmented with some areas in private ownership. The Wildlife Trust owns a small site, other areas are in public ownership. Some landowners have aspirations to develop the spaces and consequently Article 4 directions has been applied to remove permitted development rights.

- Green Bridge – West Bromwich to Great Barr – funding was sought through the Big Lottery Living Landmarks People’s Millions Programme (but was unsuccessful). The concept however is still considered to be viable.
- For CRT priority areas include Galton Valley (includes a project with the Gurdwara to create a community garden).

It was felt that the direction of travel with regard to developing joined up greenspace planning was not in the right direction. There are areas which are accessible and green and used by the public but they are not improved or protected from development.

It was felt there was a need to consider;

- Protecting and greening other corridors which could contribute including train lines, tram lines, canals, roads and hedgerow already in place. Some of this work should be done by others such as National Rail.
- Look at large gardens in older areas which often have mature trees and make a real contribution in this area (Hampstead, Hansford).
- Think about green / ecological networks not corridors as this is too linear looking at current configuration.
- Look at micro maps of different habitats and think about corridors for species i.e. where is the wet meadow for the water voles.

2.3 Exercise 3

The groups were asked to consider the need for new designations for wildlife sites and how we ensure that there is nature nearby for all.

The designations that the groups were asked to consider were:

- Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC)
- Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINC)
- Local Nature Reserves (LNR)

Comments included:

- There is a need to be selective in order to maintain significance. Designations should be used to protect the most important sites and the designations need to be defensible otherwise this potentially jeopardises or weakens the process.
- New designations might be needed in some areas but we are not getting the most out of those we have. We have very little in the way of a baseline of what diversity is where and when this information is available it is not then kept up to date. There is a need for review once sites are designated.
- LNR designation is the highest statutory designation that is likely to be achieved in Sandwell. LNR designation does offer protection and none of the current LNRs have been subject to development threat. This provides additional protection through planning policy.
- Politicians understand the value of having designated spaces.
- Some towns have no LNR and there are areas which must meet the standard including Allerton Court (Mill Pool, Rydding Lane?) and a site off Hyde Road (by River Tame in Wednesbury?)
- The sites we have are not being monitored and given drone technology etc there must be better ways to do this and to communicate change politically and to the public
- There are lots of sites which might be worthy of designation but they are not surveyed and when they come up for development the developer is asked to survey the site but these surveys aren't compared with the observations of other.
- Current SINC and SLINC are only revisited every 8 years and this is long enough for a site not being managed to deteriorate and lose a special feature such as an orchid field.

- It is the most isolated sites that are most at risk
- There is a site next to an existing reserve which the RSPB would like to manage and provide access to for the public as it is. The site is currently closed to the public until the Environment Agency has restored the site after previous industrial use. The restoration will remove features which have been embedded. Sandwell are going to go ahead with restoration then assess any income generation potential- which RSPB suspect there is little and after the restoration special features will be lost.
- There would need to be political will to care for current sites and to designated more otherwise there is little point.

2.4 Exercise 4

The groups were asked to identify issues which prevent greenspaces delivering the full range of benefits or which might prevent delivery of a successful GSS.

Comments included;

- Failure to engage young people over 10 with nature..
- Need to ensure that all communities are engaged in discussions about green space and developing the green space strategy.
- Lack of quality baseline and monitoring- how can we make informed decisions.
- It's hard to be strategic when we are unsure about funding and when funding pots available are tied to localities not spent on priorities overall.
- Lack of ownership and interest from the public.
- Reductions in funding.
- Little priority given to these issues organisationally/ politically- they are always an 'add-on'.
- Planning conditions mean sites are restored to former condition which can destroy emergent ecological and geological features.
- Services around maintenance are being privatised and which there is time pressure maintenance of areas is done in the quickest way to the detriment of biodiversity.
- Failure to access money from the Community Infrastructure Levy
- Failure to see the bigger picture- school expansions happening with sustainable development which can be an education resource and long term economically sound decision.
- Disparate funding streams

- Maintenance of the urban forest planting is needed
- The urban forest is important for carbon capture – consider the wider value of the environment
- Addressing fly tipping is costly
- How is quality to be maintained against a backdrop of budget reductions?
- Consider the design of green space
- Management and Maintenance Plans need to be updated
- Uncertainty about the future – Brexit and the impact on EU legislation and funding streams
- Better connectivity between new developments is needed
- The Council vision needs to recognise the value of the natural environment
- A political champion for green spaces is needed
- Asset transfer to local communities may increase ownership and bring benefits
- Involve all communities in discussions about green spaces.
- The diversity of the borough is not represented at this workshop
- Community participation is very important.
- Look at how financial planning can look beyond the short term
- Consider how green space issues are reported through Council Committee structures. Standing agenda items?
- Capital projects have been delivered successfully. But what about revenue funding for maintenance?

2.5 Exercise 5

The groups were asked to identify solutions which would help address the issues raised and support delivery of a successful GSS.

Comments included;

- An 11th Sandwell Ambition to champion green space and biodiversity
- Making the council aware it could be a leader in this area and that it can be something to be proud of
- Establishing a strong baseline for Sandwell sites so we know what we have- don't need to do this alone can collaborate with Nature Improvement Area and learn from others- this has been done in Warwickshire
- Ecological network have started to be identified by the NIA- identify areas where there might be cooperative land owners and incentivise action
- Drive promotion of green space facilities, volunteering and events on Discover Sandwell
- Get a political or other champion to drive forward this agenda
- Have a strategy which is specific about ambition for areas, say what you would like to see happen then look to find funding or partner
- Support Friends Groups with a network as they do in Birmingham and they will be able to deliver much more
- Engage the public to take action in their own gardens- have information at council sites and events
- Focus on small projects at small sites which are more likely to find sources of funding
- Take forward changes to maintenance which benefit biodiversity and are popular, wildflowers, mown paths etc
- Have simple and prominent interpretation about wildlife so everyone can understand
- Grown understanding and action with the public on greenspaces and political will will follow

2.6 Exercise 6

The group were asked to arrange their solutions onto an impact- implementation matrix as a form of action planning classifying each proposal by the scale of impact and the ease of implementation.

	IMPLEMENTATION		
IMPACT	Easy	Medium	Hard
High	Get a political or other champion to drive forward this agenda Staff to support volunteers	Political champions (officers & members) Create a single organisation to support volunteers	Ecological network have started to be identified by the NIA- identify areas where there might be cooperative land owners and incentivise action An 11th Sandwell Ambition to champion greenspace and biodiversity Support Friends Groups with a network as they do in Birmingham and they will be able to deliver much more Demonstrate the links between green space and the Sandwell Vision / Ambitions. Provide solutions for each Ambition (Sandwell Vision) More strategic allocation of funding
Medium	Health funding Evidence about community participation (value and scale) Wider promotion of volunteer opportunities	Drive promotion of green space facilities, volunteering and events on Discover Sandwell	
Low	Engage the public to take action in their own gardens- have information at council sites and events		Sponsorship and corporate giving.

Appendix A

Sandwell Vision

Our vision for Sandwell



VISION 2030 SANDWELL



In 2030, Sandwell is a thriving, optimistic and resilient community.

It's where we call home and where we're proud to belong - where we choose to bring up our families, where we feel safe and cared for, enjoying good health, rewarding work, feeling connected and valued in our neighbourhoods and communities, confident in the future, and benefiting fully from a revitalised West Midlands.



Ambition 1

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.



Ambition 2

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.



Ambition 3

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.



Ambition 4

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.



Ambition 5

Our communities are built on mutual respect and taking care of each other, supported by all the agencies that ensure we feel safe and protected in our homes and local neighbourhoods.



Ambition 6

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.



Ambition 7

We now have many new homes to meet a full range of housing needs in attractive neighbourhoods and close to key transport routes.



Ambition 8

Our distinctive towns and neighbourhoods are successful centres of community life, leisure and entertainment where people increasingly choose to bring up their families.



Ambition 9

Sandwell has become a location of choice for industries of the future where the local economy and high performing companies continue to grow.



Ambition 10

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.

Appendix B

Copy of Presentation

(NB the data presented in the presentation is for information purposes only and represents early draft analysis and is subject to review and further change in the final strategy)

Sandwell Green Space Audit & Strategy

Biodiversity & Countryside Workshop

07 February 2019



Agenda

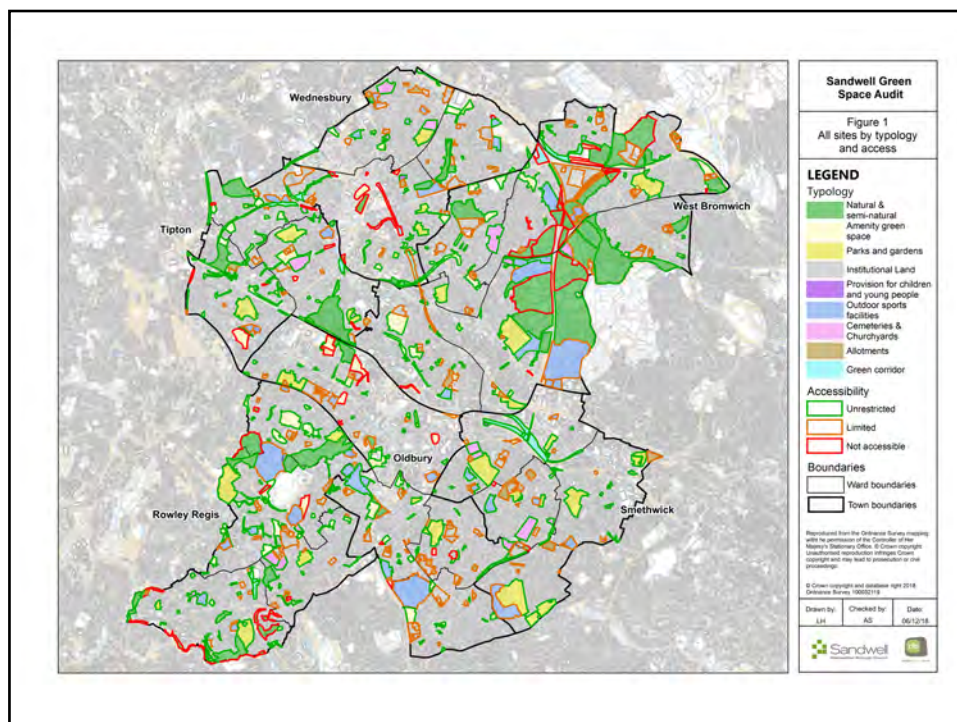
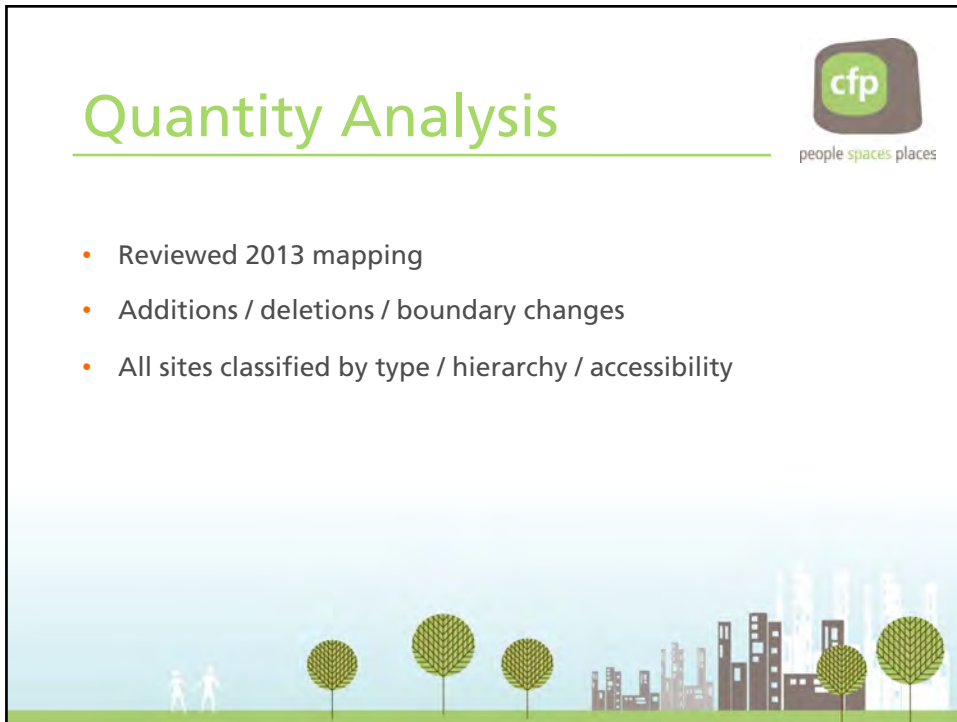
- Update on work to date
- Links to Sandwell Vision 2030
- Green Corridors
- SINCs / SLINCs / LNRs
- Issues & Solutions & Prioritisation
- Summary & close

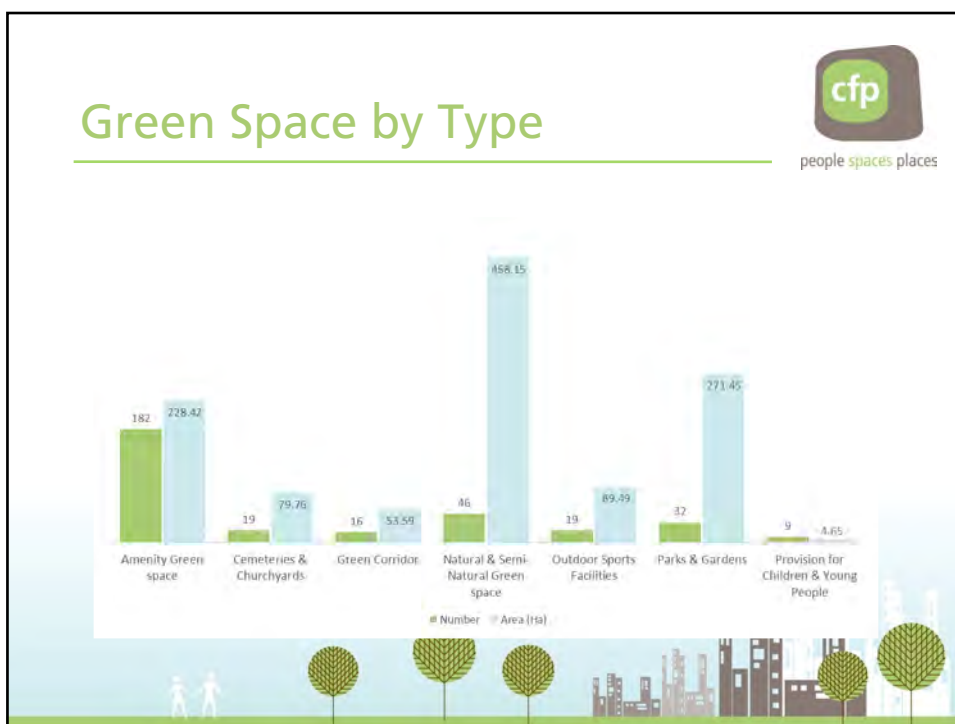
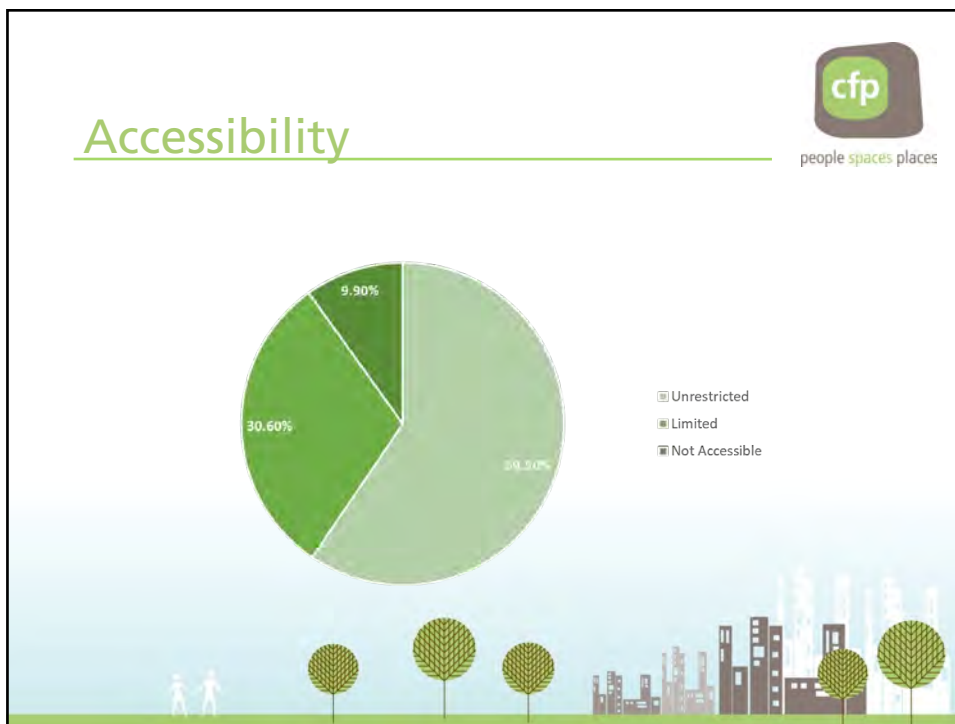


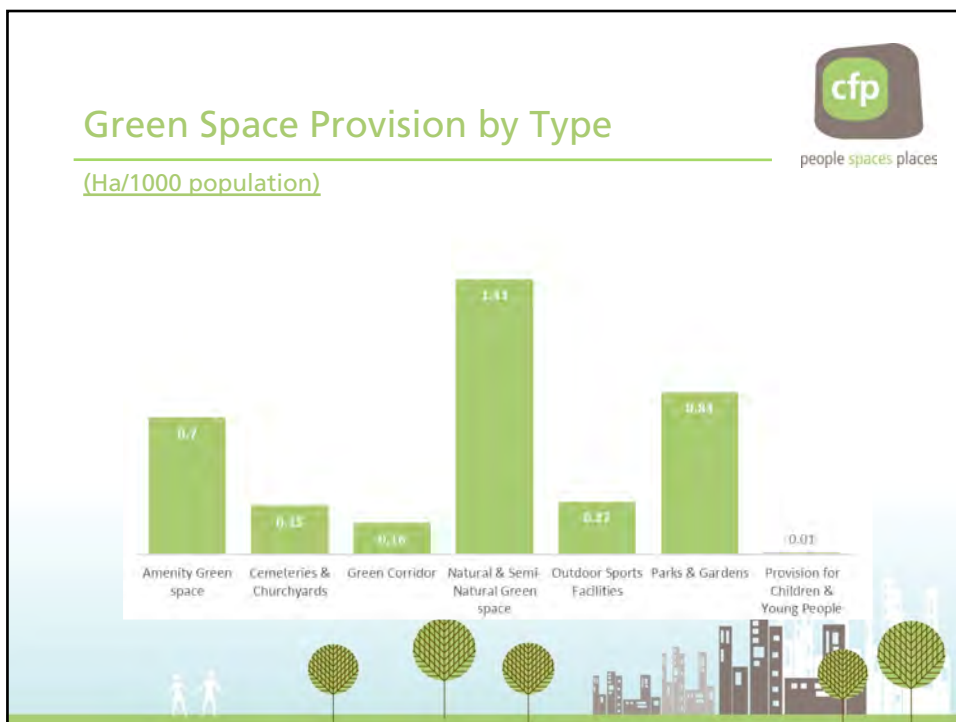
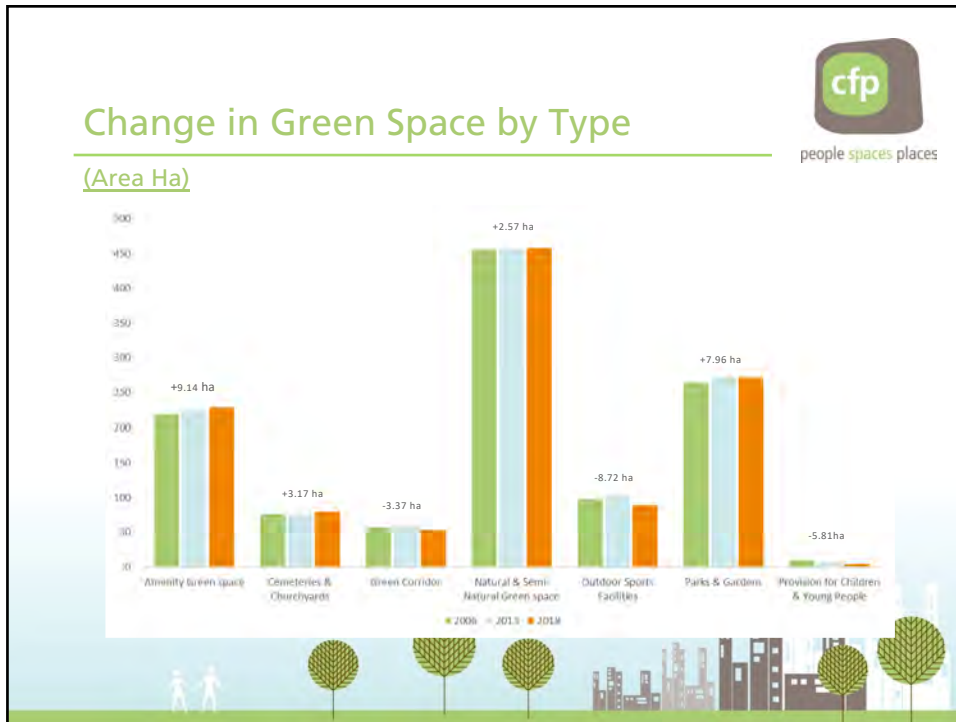
Quantity Analysis

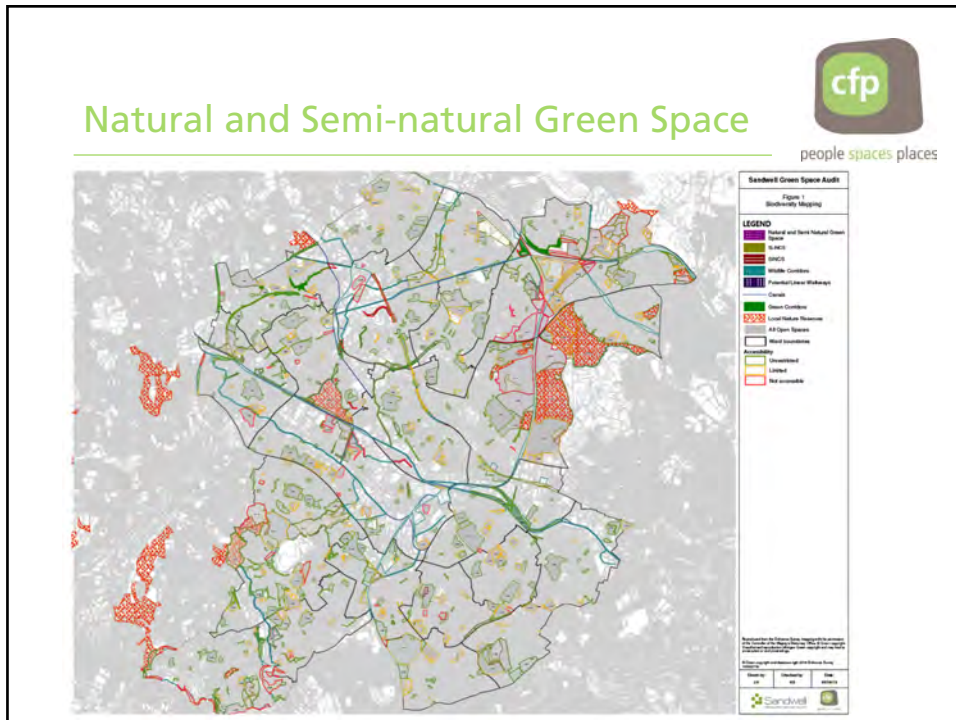


- Reviewed 2013 mapping
- Additions / deletions / boundary changes
- All sites classified by type / hierarchy / accessibility









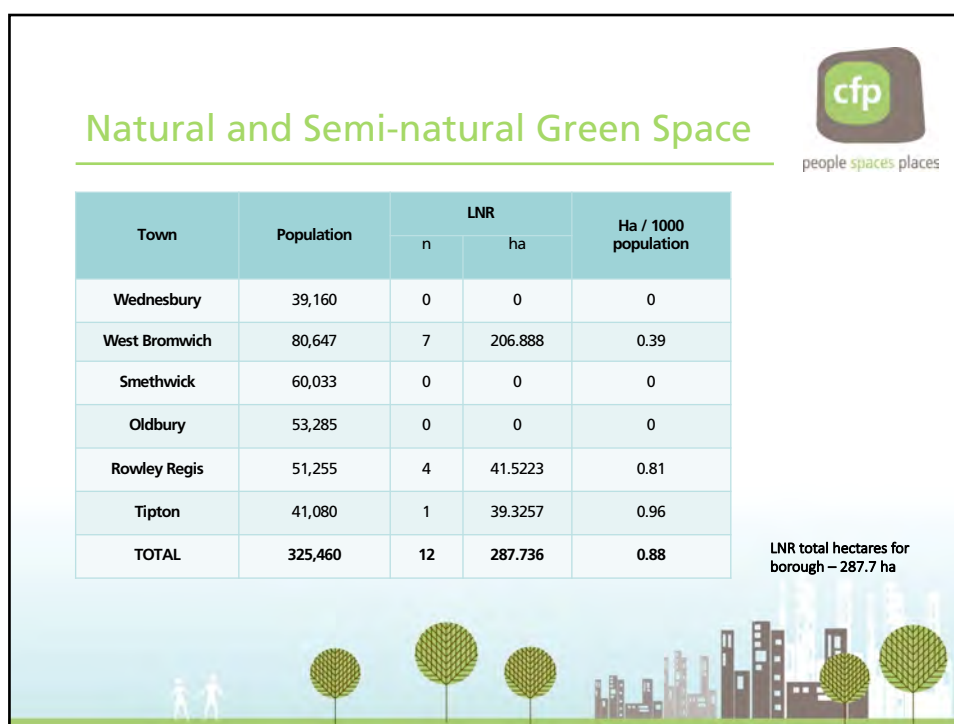
Natural and Semi-natural Green Space

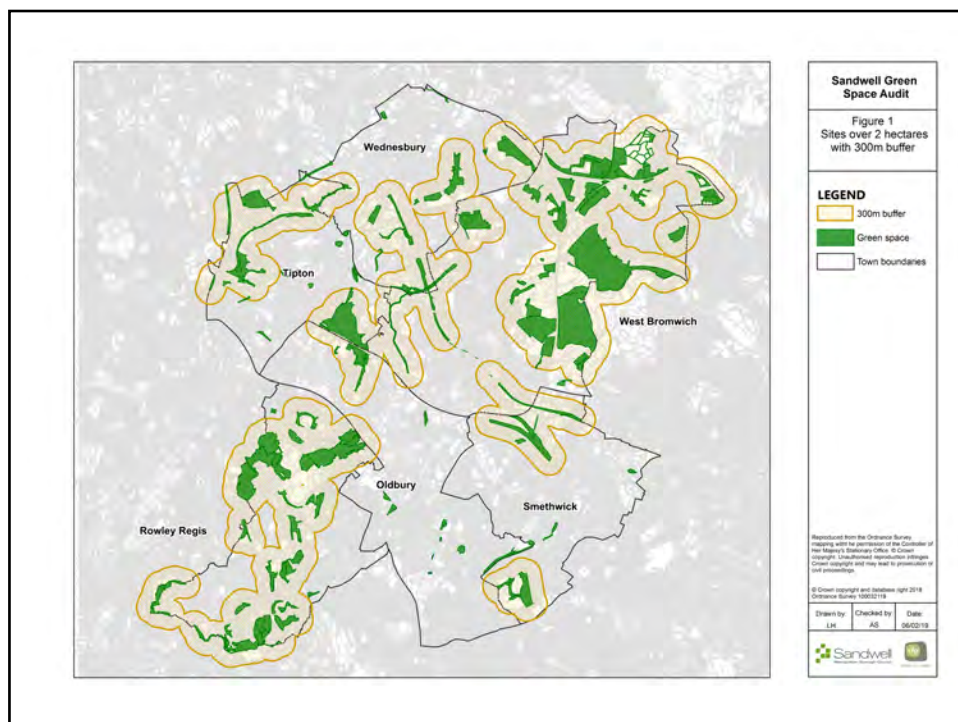


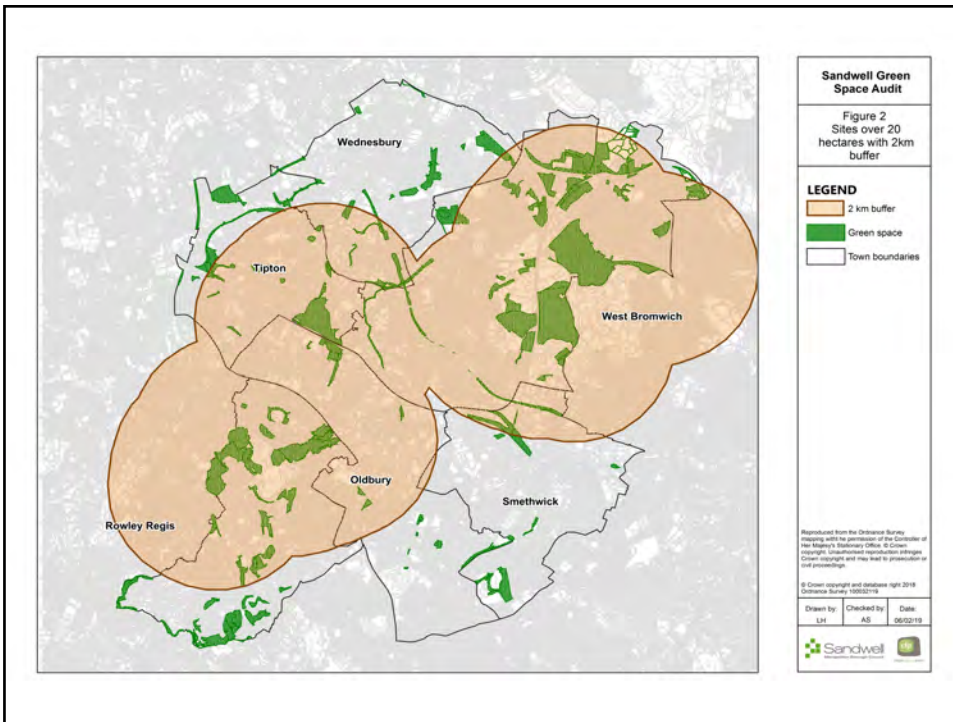
people spaces places

Town	SINC	SLINC	LNR	TOTAL
Wednesbury	3	7	0	10
West Bromwich	14	20	7	41
Smethwick	4	6	0	10
Oldbury	5	10	0	15
Rowley Regis	11	20	4	35
Tipton	3	9	1	13
TOTAL	40	72	12	124









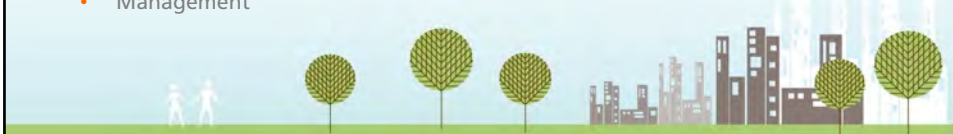
Quality Assessment




people spaces places

Quality assessment based upon the Green Flag Award criteria


- A Welcoming Place
- Healthy, Safe and Secure
- Clean and Well Maintained
- Environmental Management
- Biodiversity, Landscape and Heritage
- Community Involvement
- Marketing
- Management




Quality Assessment




- 220 spaces visited
- 210 spaces assessed – other not accessible

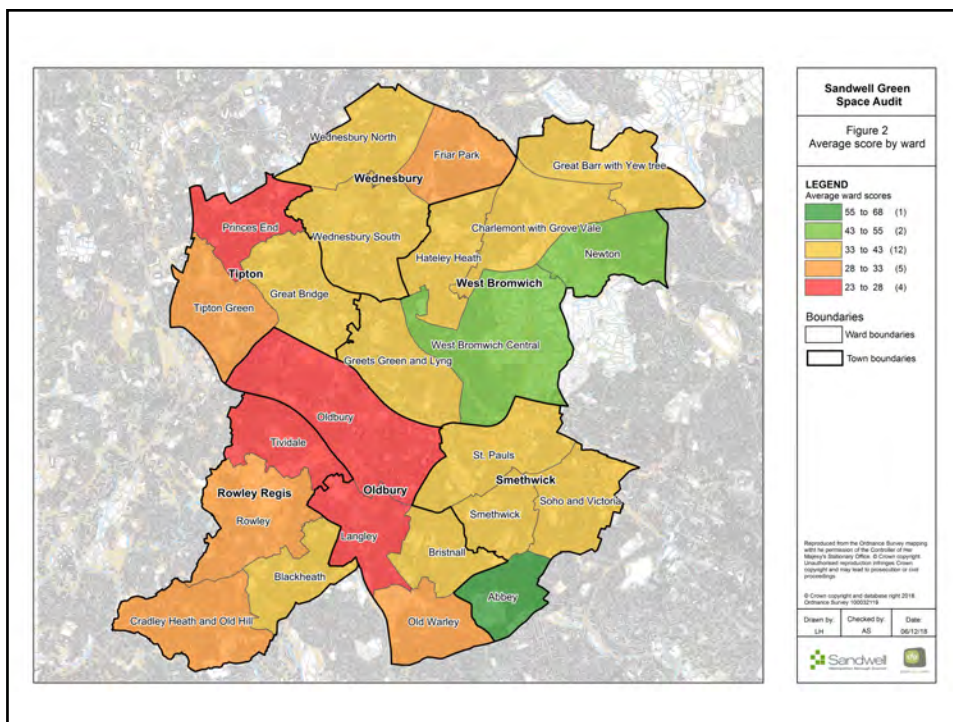


Quality Assessment



Town	No. of Sites	Range	Average 2018	Average 2013	Average 2006
Smethwick	27	8 – 69	42	42	40
West Bromwich	58	8 - 75	40	40	38
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
Sandwell Average	210	6 -75	34	38	34



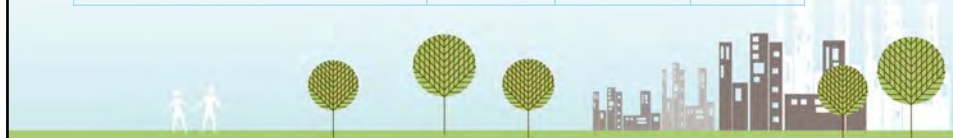


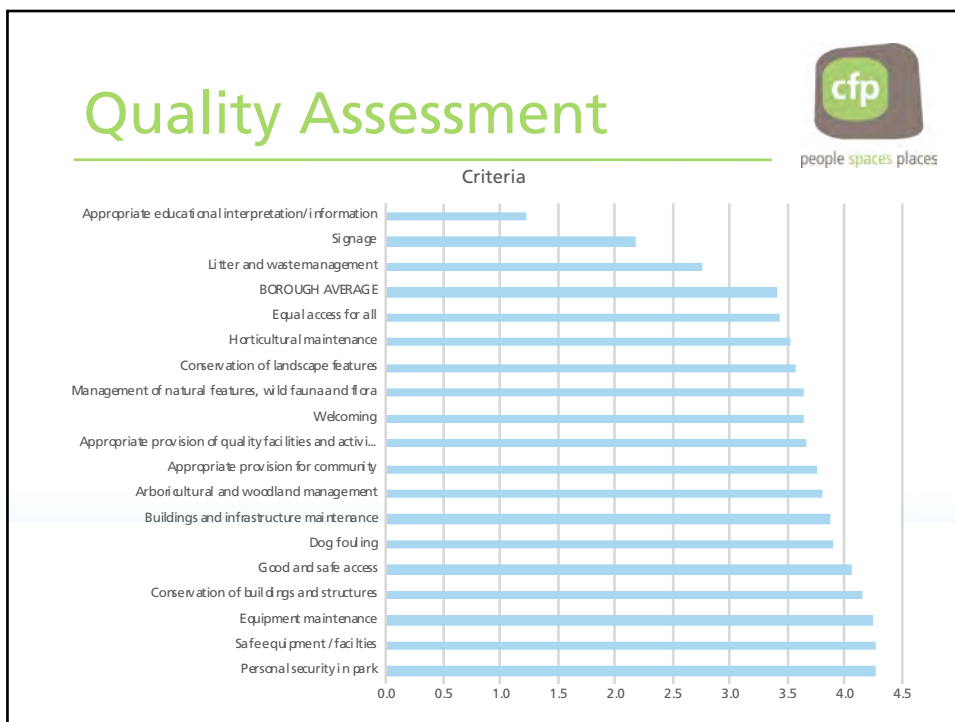
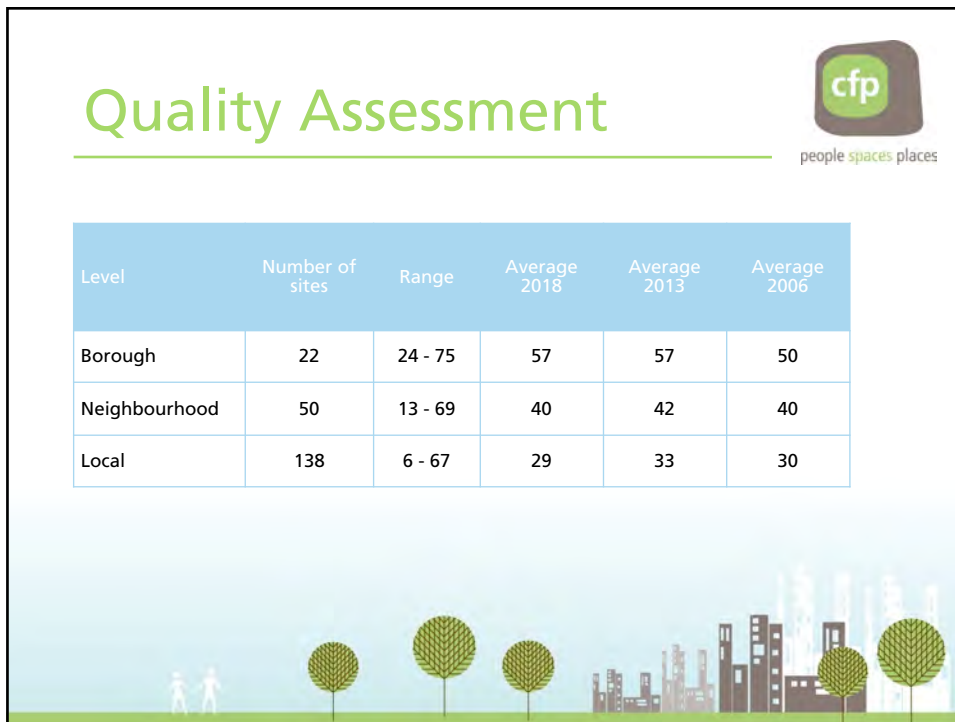
Quality Assessment

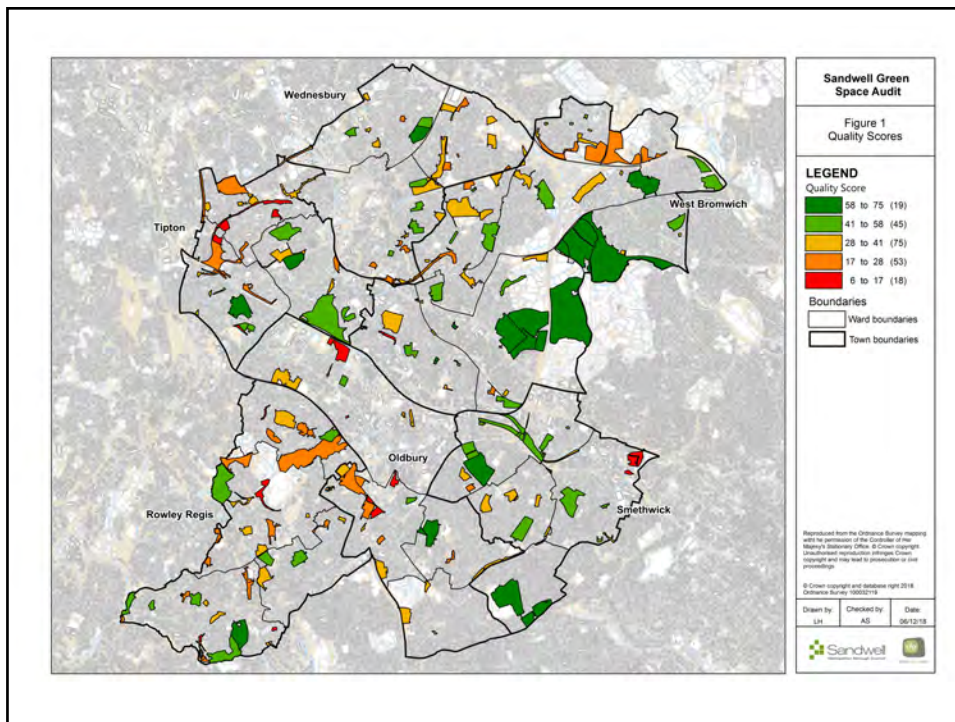


people spaces places

Green Space Type	No of Sites	Range	Average
	2018	2018	2018
Amenity Greenspace	84	6-60	29
Cemeteries & Churchyards	8	25-67	51
Green Corridor	15	13-57	28
Institutional Land	1	23	23
Natural & Semi-Natural Greenspace	43	7-71	32
Outdoor Sports Facilities	19	24-60	36
Parks & Gardens	32	13-75	51
Provision for Children & Young People	8	13-51	36
Total	210	6-75	34







Consultation Strategy



- Household Survey
- Community Group / User Group Survey
- Stakeholder Workshops
- Consultation with CYP
- Consultation on Draft Strategy





Consultation Strategy

Stakeholder Workshops (Feb – Mar 19)

- Staff & Partner Organisations
- Biodiversity & Countryside
- Income generation and funding
- Friends Forum & Community Groups (Drop-in)
- Health & Wellbeing




1 – Sandwell Vision 2030

Our vision for Sandwell




In 2030, Sandwell is a thriving, optimistic and resilient community.

It's where we call home and where we're proud to belong - where we choose to bring up our families, where we feel safe and cared for, enjoying good health, rewarding work, feeling connected and valued in our neighbourhoods and communities, confident in the future, and benefiting fully from a revitalised West Midlands.

- 10 Ambitions – Identify Links and opportunities

2 : Green Corridors



How should the green space strategy improve the current:

- Quantity
- Quality
- Accessibility



3 : Designations



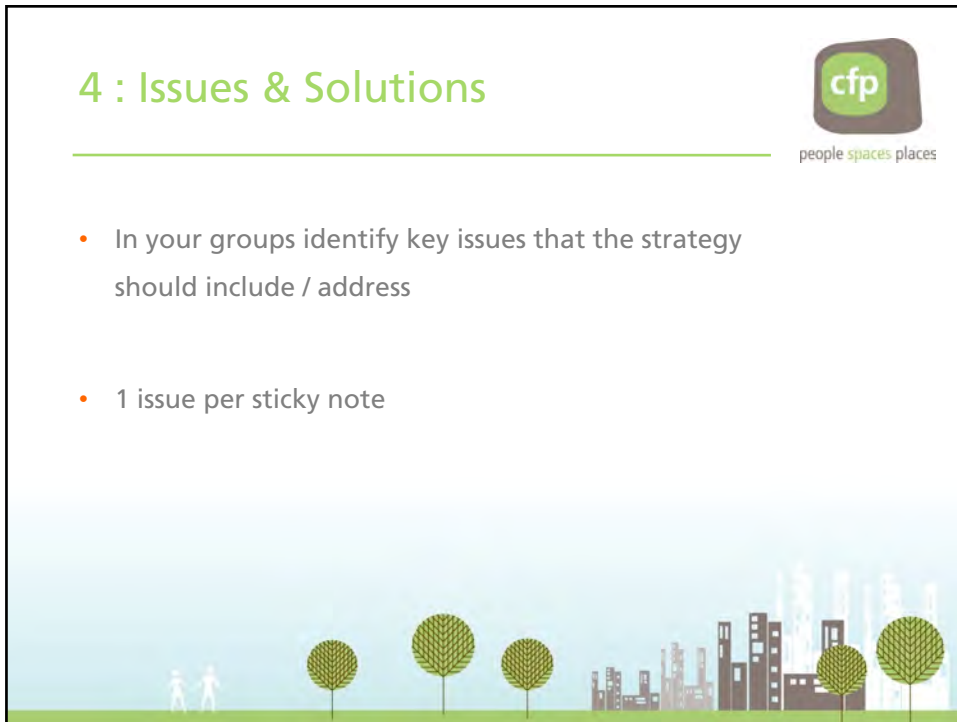
- New designations for SINC / SLINC?
- New LNRs?
- Addressing deficiencies?



4 : Issues & Solutions



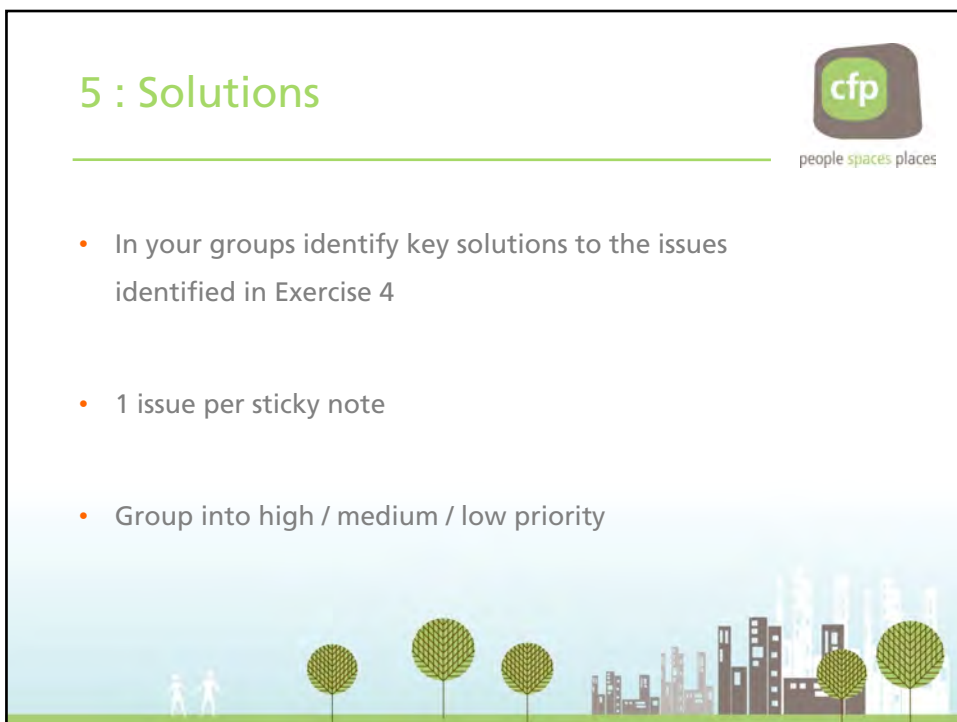
- In your groups identify key issues that the strategy should include / address
- 1 issue per sticky note



5 : Solutions



- In your groups identify key solutions to the issues identified in Exercise 4
- 1 issue per sticky note
- Group into high / medium / low priority

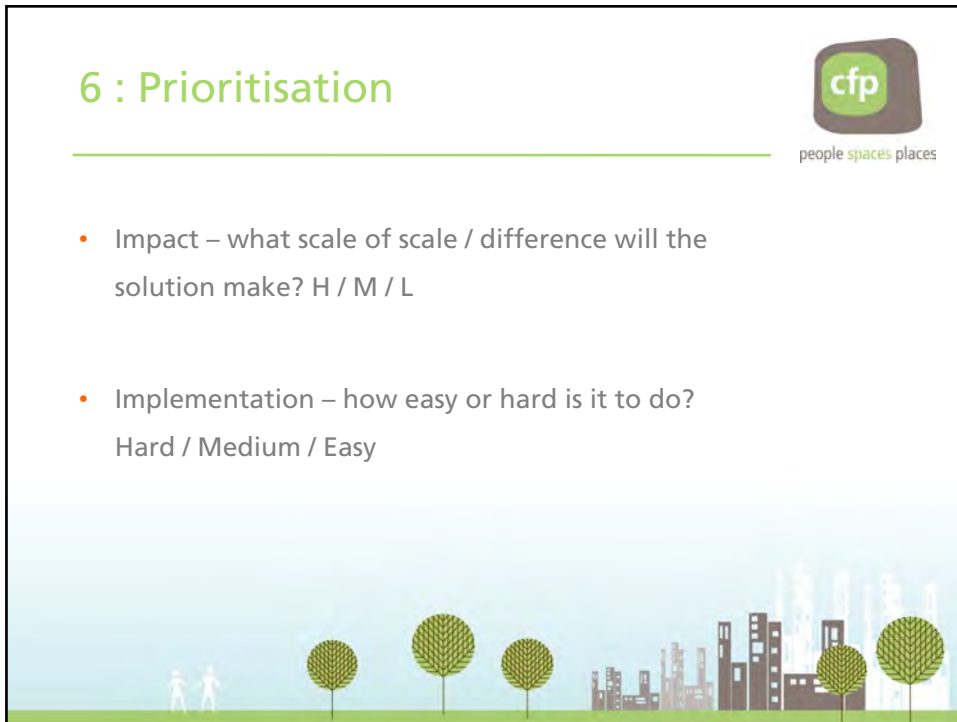


6 : Prioritisation



people spaces places

- Impact – what scale of scale / difference will the solution make? H / M / L
- Implementation – how easy or hard is it to do?
Hard / Medium / Easy



Summary



people spaces places

- Summary of work to date
- Sandwell Vision 2030
- Green Corridors
- Further designated spaces
- Issues / Solutions / Prioritisation



Next Steps



- Further workshops
- Community Drop-in session – 28/02/19
- Green Space Audit – April 2019
- Green Space Strategy (draft) - May 2019

