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Chapter two: Recreation and Open Space Strategy

Technical guidance

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Part 1:

➤ Recreation and Open Space Strategy

1. Introduction and Purpose

The Leisure Strategy

- 1.1 Central Bedfordshire Council appointed Neil Allen Associates to produce four of the five elements which comprise the Leisure Strategy. Chapter 4: the Physical Activity Strategy has being produced in-house. The chapter headings are:
 - Chapter 1: Leisure Facilities Strategy
 - Chapter 2: Recreation & Open Space Strategy
 - Chapter 3: Playing Pitch Strategy
 - Chapter 4: Physical Activity Strategy
 - Overarching Leisure Strategy
- 1.2 In accordance with Government guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of the Leisure Strategy have each assessed the current provision of identified leisure facilities across Central Bedfordshire in 2012/13, and further evaluated the respective leisure requirements which result from the planned growth in Central Bedfordshire's population. These chapters comprise the Planning policy guidance. Chapter 4, the Physical Activity Strategy addresses the opportunities for physical activity across Central Bedfordshire and will be supported by a programme of activity delivery.
- 1.3 The Leisure Strategy planning guidance will support the securing of new and improved facility provision via the development management process, identify needs and priorities, address inequalities of provision, inform investment priorities of Central Bedfordshire Council, and seek to ensure that residents of Central Bedfordshire have access to a range of recreation and sporting facilities.
- 1.4 The Leisure Strategy will support Central Bedfordshire Council's responsibility for public health by ensuring sustainable, high quality sport and physical activity infrastructure and opportunities are provided to enable residents to live active lives, prevent ill health, improve overall health & wellbeing, and reduce care costs. The strategy also seeks to ensure that the number of adults taking part in sport and physical activity remains above the national average.

Planning Status

- 1.5 Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of the Leisure Strategy have been prepared in accordance with the procedures required for adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) but will initially be adopted as Technical Guidance for Development Management purposes.

- 1.6 Chapters 1, 2 and 3 provide facility standards and future facility requirements to be met through the planning process and will form material evidence and policy to inform the Council's emerging Development Strategy. On adoption of the Development Strategy the Council will look to formally adopt the Leisure Strategy Chapters 1, 2 and 3 as a Supplementary Planning Document which will attract more weight in decisions reached on planning applications.
- 1.7 Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of the Leisure Strategy are derived from Policy 22 'Leisure and Open Space Provision' in the pre submission Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire 2013, which identifies general requirements for recreation and leisure provision. The detailed assessment will provide the evidence base and facility requirements to support Policy 22.
- 1.8 Chapter 4: the Physical Activity Strategy will detail Central Bedfordshire Council's strategic approach to the promotion and delivery of physical activity programmes, but does not form part of the Technical Guidance.

Chapter 2: Recreation and Open Space Strategy

- 1.9 Chapter 2: the Recreation and Open Space Strategy sets out both the evidence base and the strategic direction for the provision of recreation and open spaces facilities in Central Bedfordshire. It has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and draws upon the principals of the former Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17) and its Companion Guide (September 2002), which remains the most up to date policy guidance on the preparation of open space and recreation assessments.

Scope

- 1.10 This Recreation and Open Space Strategy encompasses facilities within nine different typologies of open space (outlined in detail in part 2). These typologies are based upon those set out in PPG17, but have been specifically developed for Central Bedfordshire to reflect the types of open space that are currently available in the area and the functions that these spaces have.
- 1.11 This document sets out the key findings and strategic requirements resulting from the assessment for each of the open space types considered. Provision and key findings for each settlement are summarised in Appendix A: Parish Schedules, and maps prepared as part of this assessment can be found in Appendix B. The document is accompanied by a Geographical Information System (GIS) layer detailing all the site information.

Purpose and Functions of Chapter 2: Recreation and Open Space Strategy

- 1.12 The primary purpose and function of Chapter 2 is as Technical Guidance which will expand upon and provided guidance on the application of Policy 22 'Leisure and Open Space Provision' in the pre submission Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire 2013.
- 1.13 It provides the evidence base and policy standards/facility requirements to secure new or improved recreational open space provision as a result of new housing development. It

will apply to both new on-site facilities provided within a new housing development site, and developer contributions secured to provide / improve off-site facilities which are required to mitigate the additional demand placed upon them by development.

- 1.14 In addition, the facility assessment and identification of need in this Chapter can be used by facility providers such as town and parish councils, countryside organisations, etc. as evidence to assist them in securing external funding to improve/deliver the facilities within their ownership.

Recreation Assessment

- 1.15 This assessment considers the **recreational function of open space only**. Open space is however, recognised as being part of the wider green infrastructure (GI) network and the principles of this strategy should be integrated with wider policies on biodiversity, minerals planning, climate change and landscape scale conservation.

Reclaimed Sites

- 1.16 While it is recognised that in addition to the types of open space covered in this report, sites reclaimed following minerals and waste extraction also have a role in providing public space although none are currently accessible. These sites and the potential role they may play in the provision of public open space are explored in Appendix G.

Sustainable Drainage Systems

- 1.17 The emerging Central Bedfordshire Council SuDS Approval and Adoption Guide will provide design guidance determining where and in what circumstances it will be appropriate to include a SuDS feature within the typologies of open space detailed in this strategy. The adoption section of this document also provides additional safety information on the provision of SuDS provided in conjunction with children's play facilities.

Planning Obligations / Community Infrastructure Levy

- 1.18 When the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is adopted by Central Bedfordshire Council the use of planning obligations in agreements entered into under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 will be reduced, and the council will only be able to pool contributions from five planning agreements.
- 1.19 CIL is a charge on new development based on the size and type of new development, which can be used by the council towards infrastructure priorities. The Leisure Strategy will provide the evidence and priorities to support the securing and use of CIL and should be read in conjunction with the Council's CIL policy.
- 1.20 In response to CIL, the Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is currently being reviewed. The SPD sets out the council's approach to seeking obligations to address infrastructure needs. The Leisure Strategy will provide the evidence and priorities to support the SPD and should be read in conjunction with the Council's Planning Obligations Strategy.

The Role of Central Bedfordshire Council

- 1.21 Central Bedfordshire Council's primary role in the provision of recreational open space facilities is via the provision and application of planning policy to secure new or improved provision / contributions from new development in line with the requirements set out in this document.
- 1.22 The facility requirements identified in Chapter 2 are not intended to be provided directly by Central Bedfordshire Council. Central Bedfordshire Council's role in the provision of recreation open space facilities is twofold, firstly, via its ownership and ongoing development of some countryside sites and children's play areas, and secondly via the securing of new or improved provision / contributions from new development in line with the requirements set out in this document.
- 1.23 The majority of recreation open space facilities are not owned or managed by Central Bedfordshire Council, consequently the responsibility for delivery of the identified needs remain with the facility owners.
- 1.24 Central Bedfordshire Council will assist asset owners with guidance on strategy requirements, external funding and the planning process where there is an identified need for the improvement / creation of projects within their ownership.
- 1.25 While the Council is unlikely to directly provide open space facilities detailed in Chapter 2, this document will be the key reference point for decision making relating to both existing and future recreation open space facility requirements. To that end, the Council will ensure that investment (s106/CIL/external sources) is targeted where it is needed and where it can have maximum benefit in accordance with the requirements of the strategy.

Aims and Objectives

- 1.26 The principle aim of this document is to provide evidence to support the provision of facilities which ensure that residents of Central Bedfordshire have access to sufficient, well located and good quality recreational open spaces, both now and as the population increases both naturally and as a result of housing growth.

The key aims and objectives of the study are to:

- evaluate the adequacy of open space provision (in terms of accessibility, quantity and quality) to meet current needs in each settlement
- evidence and provide Planning policy which ensures planned growth makes appropriate open space provision to meet future needs
- develop local standards of provision in terms of accessibility, quantity and quality
- ensure that recreation and open spaces meet the needs of all sectors of the population
- maximise the contribution of open spaces to wider agendas, particularly the health agenda considering Central Bedfordshire Council's new responsibility for public health, sustainable transport and economic priorities

- promote the provision of open spaces that are of high quality
- where relevant, guide the investment strategies of Central Bedfordshire Council for facilities in its ownership
- provide evidence to support other facility providers in delivering new or improved facilities
- support good management and value for money

2. Methodology

Planning Policy Guidance

2.1 As outlined in Section One, this study has been undertaken in accordance with the priorities of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It draws upon the guidance set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17) and its Companion Guide; while this is no longer adopted planning policy it does provide the most up to date guidance on the preparation of open space assessments.

2.2 The PPG17 Companion Guide indicates that the four guiding principles in undertaking a local assessment are:

- understanding that local needs will vary according to socio-demographic and cultural characteristics
- recognising that the provision of good quality and effective open space relies on effective planning but also on creative design, landscape management and maintenance
- considering that delivering high quality and sustainable open spaces may depend much more on improving and enhancing existing open space rather than new provision
- taking into account that the value of open space will be greater when local needs are met. It is essential to consider the wider benefits that sites generate for people, wildlife and the environment

2.3 The methodology for this assessment builds upon the above principles and has been tailored to the character and nature of Central Bedfordshire. The resulting assessment and strategy;

- identifies and reports the views of residents and key stakeholders in relation to open space provision in Central Bedfordshire
- outlines the current provision of each type of open space in Central Bedfordshire
- sets local standards for the provision of open space
- reports the implications of the local standards across Central Bedfordshire
- outlines the priorities for the future delivery of each type of open space to meet current and future need, taking into account the impact of the proposed population growth

Assessment Methodology

2.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) highlights the importance of establishing a detailed needs and evidence base for recreation and open space facilities. Using the guidance set out in the Companion Guide to PPG17 (now succeeded by the NPPF), a five step process has been followed in the preparation of this assessment, specifically:

- Step 1 – Identifying local needs
- Step 2 – Auditing local provision
- Step 3 – Setting benchmarks / standards for provision
- Step 4 – Applying provision standards
- Step 5 – Developing Priorities and informing policies

The same steps have been followed for each type of open space considered within the scope of this document.

Open Space Site Typologies

- 2.5 The nine site typologies assessed in this document and their definitions are set out in Table 2.1. The typologies used are based upon the typology of open spaces proposed by the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce (UGSTF) in the PPG17 Companion Guide and adapted to represent the types and functions of recreational open space that are found in Central Bedfordshire. This adaptation is in line with the Companion Guide, which suggests the use of the typology included in the document, or a variation of it. The typologies used were finalised following an extensive programme of consultation, which provided a good understanding of how Central Bedfordshire residents currently use open space.
- 2.6 In accordance with PPG17 guidance, the definition of each typology is based upon the primary purpose of the open space and recreational facility. It is important to note that although many sites are multifaceted, offering a range of facilities and different open space functions; sites have been classified by their primary purpose. Where there is a definitive facility within a larger site (for example, a play area or sports pitch within a park) this site has been subdivided to ensure that the various opportunities offered are all considered. This also ensures that facilities only contribute towards the assessment of their own site-type.
- 2.7 The categorisation of these different open space typologies assumes that there is a hierarchy of open space and that residents expect to be able to access different types of open space. The close proximity of a Countryside Recreation site for example does not negate the requirement for allotments or play provision in a given area. There is however, an interrelationship between some types of open space and residents are willing to travel different distances to reach different spaces. Such decisions are likely to be impacted by many factors, including the size of the site and the facilities available, as well as the perceived quality of the amenity.
- 2.8 These issues are recognised and will be considered where relevant in the typology specific sections.

Table 2.1 – Types of Open Space within Central Bedfordshire

Typology	Description and Examples
Countryside Recreation sites	Large countryside-type sites set aside for a variety of recreational activities, offering a range of formal and informal facilities and activities. They may not fit within formal definitions of country parks, but offer residents the opportunity to experience, appreciate and enjoy the countryside. These are destination sites, to which residents expect to travel (usually by car), which provide a range of facilities.
Urban Parks and Gardens	Public parks in an urban setting that provide a variety of facilities e.g. play area, toilets, tennis courts etc; as well as opportunities for informal recreation. Sites often provide formal community activities / events.
Large Formal Recreation Areas	Large green sites which are easily accessible by local people. These sites generally contain opportunities for formal recreation e.g. children’s play, formal or casual outdoor sports. The majority of these sites are approximately 1ha in size or above.
Informal Recreation Areas	Large green spaces that are natural in character. These sites generally offer informal recreational opportunities such as walking and relaxation and allow visitors to experience the natural environment. As well as offering recreational opportunities, many sites in this category are also important for biodiversity and ecology.
Small Amenity Spaces	Small, local spaces which may enhance the local area and provide some opportunities for casual recreation use e.g. dog walking, as well as landscaping. These sites usually have few or no formal functions.
Children’s Play Spaces	Equipped play areas for children e.g. swings, slides and climbing frames This includes facilities currently referred to as LEAPs and LEAPS. Further detail will be provided in the relevant sections.
Facilities for Young People	Facilities designed to meet the needs of young people such as youth shelters, skate parks and Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs). This includes facilities currently referred to as children’s play area LEAPs and NEAPS. Further detail is provided in the relevant sections.
Allotments	Site designated for people who wish to grow their own produce.
Cemeteries & Churchyards	Cemeteries and churchyards including disused churchyards and other burial grounds.

2.9 As set out above, further guidance is provided in the typology specific sections about how the above categorisations relate to the terms currently being used by Central Bedfordshire Council. The remainder of this section provides further detail on each stage of the five step process followed during the preparation of this assessment.

Step 1 - Identifying Local Needs

2.10 The purpose of Step 1: Identifying Local Need, is to understand local attitudes to existing provision and local expectations for additional or improved provision. These expectations are then used to inform the creation of local standards and the identification of priorities (Step 3).

2.11 The following key tasks were undertaken to provide an understanding of local needs in Central Bedfordshire:

- **Desk based strategic review and policy evaluation** – this included analysis of all available Parish and Neighbourhood Plans, Green Infrastructure Plans (at both district and community level) as well as wider strategic documents (outlined in Section 3). These documents report the findings of significant consultation at a local level and set out key local priorities.
- **Town and Parish Council consultation** – Town and Parish Councils are key providers of open space and as such, have a sound understanding of demand for provision in their area. A questionnaire requesting opinions and information on the perceived adequacy of provision, together with key priorities for improvement and future provision was sent to each Town and Parish Council.
- **Telephone consultation** with a geographically and demographically representative stratified sample of 1000 residents, a detailed telephone survey was undertaken with local residents to ensure that views of the local population were central to the assessment methodology. It sought views on the current provision in terms of quality, quantity and accessibility, together with aspirations for future recreation and open spaces. The number of interviews completed means that the survey is representative of the views of the overall population to a confidence level of +/- 3%. This means that if 60% of the survey respondents answer in a certain way, we can be 97% confident that the response would be between 55% and 65% if the whole of the population had been surveyed. The survey was undertaken by Public Perspectives, a specialist in research and community engagement. The full report of results, including the survey methodology, is included within Appendix C.
- **Consultations with key stakeholders** – early consultation with external stakeholders established visions and aspirations for the Central Bedfordshire area, as well as providing an understanding of work that is currently underway.
- **Consultations with Central Bedfordshire Council officers** were undertaken in order to understand the context in which recreation and open space facilities are provided, as well as to understand delivery priorities and links to other wider agendas.

2.12 The information provided through each of the above activities was combined with data collected in Step 2: Auditing Local Provision, and used to inform the direction of the recommended local standards (Step 3).

Step 2 - Auditing Local Provision

2.13 Step 2: Auditing Local Provision involves the identification of all open spaces in Central Bedfordshire and their categorisation within the nine typologies outlined in Table 2.1.

In order to achieve this, the following work was undertaken:

- Analysis of existing information
- Consultation to verify the identified sites and identify any missing sites
- Site assessments
- GIS mapping

2.14 These processes are outlined below;

- **Analysis of existing information** - Prior to the commencement of this assessment, significant work regarding open space provision had been undertaken by the legacy local authorities. Mid Bedfordshire District Council produced the Recreational Open Space Strategy SPD (ROSS) 2004, together with the Open Space, Sports and Recreation Needs Assessment 2008 (PPG17) (Ashley Godfrey Associates 2008). South Bedfordshire District Council produced the draft Luton and South Bedfordshire Green Space Strategy (2010). Both of these documents contained detailed records of existing sites as well as assessments of the quality of provision. The information on existing sites in these documents was compiled to produce an overall record of provision in Central Bedfordshire. The classification of each site was reviewed in order to ensure consistency in approach. In addition a review of other data sources including aerial photography, Town and Parish Council websites and Central Bedfordshire Council records of new provision (including planning applications etc.) were utilised to build a comprehensive picture of current provision.
- **Consultation** - Town and Parish Councils were consulted to help establish an accurate baseline picture of existing sites. This included the distribution of maps illustrating sites identified in the district studies (referenced above). Responding Parish and Town Councils fed back suggested changes / additions and deletions in their area therefore ensuring a more complete picture of supply and demand.
- **Site assessments** - Following the above phases of desk based research, visits were carried out to new sites to verify the typology and the existence of the site, and to evaluate the quality of provision. Sites were evaluated against a matrix enabling comparisons between sites in the same typology and across typologies. The matrix was based on that used in the Mid Bedfordshire PPG17 Assessment (and for that reason, to ensure consistency, sites in South Bedfordshire were also re assessed). Sites were rated against different criteria according to the typology in which they are categorised. Key areas for consideration included:
 - care, cleanliness and maintenance
 - quality of equipment and facilities
 - access to the site
 - wider benefits
 - play value for children's play sites

As well as enabling a cross check of the sites identified, the site assessment process provided an overall quality and accessibility score for each site in addition to ratings for each individual factor. These scores have been translated into percentage scores, enabling ease of comparison. Percentage scores take into account only relevant criteria. For example, where there is no signage, but this would not be expected at a site, it is not taken into account within the overall percentage score.

These quality assessments are used to understand issues with current provision and to inform decisions relating to key priorities for improvement (Stages 3 and 4).

GIS Mapping

2.15 All sites have been recorded on a GIS layer, providing a live record of existing provision, which can be monitored and updated to reflect changes to the stock of provision. The GIS has also been used for analysis purposes (Stage 4).

While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the audit, it must be noted that the omission of a site does not necessarily mean that it is not considered to be green space and that policies relating to green space are not applicable. Updating the audit will be an ongoing process and the audit will be constantly refined in response to changes in the open space stock.

Step 3 – Setting Standards for Provision

2.16 Open space policy guidance recognises the importance and impact that open spaces can have on the character and attractiveness of an area. Equally, it understands that the expectations and aspirations people have regarding those space can vary significantly from one area to another. As a result, it concludes that open space priorities are most appropriately defined locally, to address local conditions and needs, rather than in response to national or area-wide criteria.

2.17 In order to establish the adequacy of open space provision and to determine future requirements, guidance requires that local authorities develop locally derived standards including;

- a quantitative component
- a qualitative component
- an accessibility component

2.18 Step 3 of the preparation of this assessment therefore uses the information collated in Step 1 (Assessment of Local Needs) and Step 2 (Audit of Existing Provision) to set local standards for open space in Central Bedfordshire.

2.19 There is no formulaic approach for the creation of standards relating to open space (as use of open space is largely supply led rather than demand led), however the use of information collated during the first two phases of work ensures that standards set are directly representative of specific needs in Central Bedfordshire. They are set giving consideration to the amount, quality and distribution of existing open spaces (Step 2) and how this meets local needs (outlined in Step 1). They set out the requirement for additional / improved provision, based upon the aspirations of the local community and the visions of key stakeholders.

2.20 For each type of open space, standards have been created and applied using an accessibility-led approach, meaning that accessibility is the primary determinant of the adequacy of provision in ensuring local need is met.

2.21 The key phases of the approach to setting standards and the information used are therefore broadly as follows;

- Results from the household survey relating to distances that residents are willing to travel were statistically analysed (including calculation of the mode (most common response) mean (average) and quartile analysis (to understand the spread of responses). This provides an understanding of the distance that residents expect to travel to reach each type of open space and the mode of transport that people are most likely to use, and is statistically robust.
- These findings were considered in the context of other consultations (internal / external stakeholders), issues arising from the household survey (views on amount and quality of provision / issues arising from analysis of the user profile) and issues raised in existing policy documents (for example Green Infrastructure Assessments and Parish Plans) to identify where priorities lie (for example high quality strategic spaces, very local access etc).
- The above information was used to set an appropriate accessibility standard. Based upon this standard, catchment areas were mapped for each open space using the GIS system. This enables the identification of areas where aspirations relating to accessibility are not met. Distances were determined using robust research by the NPFA in numerous areas. Straight line distances are reduced by 40% to allow for the fact that routes to open spaces are not straight-line distances but more complex. Where drive time distances are used, these are calculated to take into account the road network and the speed limits on the road (using a specific drive time software package).
- Again drawing upon the findings of the local needs assessment (including areas where aspirations for new provision are identified) as well as the accessibility standards, quantity standards can then be set. The quantity standards have been calculated to reflect the amount of provision that is needed to ensure that all residents are within the distance set by the accessibility standard for each type of open space. They are based upon the assumption that a gap in accessibility will be filled by a new site of average size (average in terms of current stock of facilities in Central Bedfordshire). The use of the average size of sites in Central Bedfordshire is believed to provide a consistent way of determining facility requirements across each typology. It also reflects the fact that consultation relating to the adequacy of existing provision has been undertaken based upon the current stock of facilities, rather than theoretical guidance. The use of the average size enables the calculation of facility requirements for all typologies, including those where no national standards exist.
- Quality standards are set drawing upon the aspirations expressed through local consultation (notably the household survey, discussions with internal and external stakeholders and existing local and strategic documents).

2.22 To summarise, using the above methodology, standards have therefore been set in the following format:

Accessibility standards – set as a distance threshold for each typology, these are based on residents' expectations regarding the length of time they expect to travel, and the expected mode of transport, to each site typology. This enables the identification of locations that are lacking in provision and supports decision making in relation to new facilities. Without good access, the provision of high quality open space is of limited public value. Given that accessibility standards are set in the form of distance thresholds (i.e. the maximum distance that typical users can reasonably be expected to travel to each type of

provision using different modes of transport), application of these standards provides an understanding of the areas where residents do not have appropriate access to facilities. Distances were determined using robust research by the NPFA in numerous areas. Straight line distances are reduced by 40% to allow for the fact that routes to open spaces are not straight-line distances but more complex. Where drive time standards are used, these are calculated taking into account the local road network and the speed limits.

- **Accessibility** is twofold however, and analysis of the qualitative information enables the identification of any site specific concerns relating to accessibility. This includes issues such as signage, cost and equal access for all. Other issues may impact upon accessibility (for example site sensitivity (sites with specific landscape, biodiversity or ecology components may be accessible, however, in order to preserve their unique conditions, access and usage may have to be limited or controlled). Specific issues will be considered where relevant in the typology specific sections.
- **Quantity standards** – ha per 1000 population. This provides an understanding of the current amount of open space and can be used to determine the amount of additional provision that is needed when population growth projections are factored in.
- **Quality standards** – to guide the quality of new and existing open spaces. This enables the identification of sites which currently require improvement, or may require improvement in the future. The quality standard provides a benchmark for current and future provision.

2.23 Guidance will be provided on the application and appropriate use of the local standards in Section 5 as well as the principles that will be applied for the calculation of requirements from new developments which are derived from the standards and the principles outlined in this strategy document.

Stage 4 – Applying Local Standards

2.24 The application of the local standards drives the key priorities for the future provision of recreation and open space facilities. It is the application of standards that enables full analysis of how the quantity, quality and accessibility of existing provision meets current and projected future needs.

2.25 The standards are applied to both the existing situation, and to the projected future situation using population forecasting, including the identified growth areas. The application of standards can be used to determine the requirements for new and improved open space arising through population growth.

2.26 This report considers the issues that arise from the application of local standards both at the current time and in future years, both geographically (placemaking area), at a settlement hierarchy level and individually in each settlement.

It considers;

- Areas where the accessibility standard is not met
- Areas where quantity is below the target level
- Sites that do not meet target quality standards

Step 5 – Developing Strategy and Informing Policies

2.27 The strategy for the future delivery of open spaces is based upon the standards that have been set (Step 3) and the application of these standards (Step 4). These standards and the resulting strategy therefore reflect the aspirations of residents of Central Bedfordshire.

2.28 Building upon the issues raised in the assessment phase, this document sets out the key priorities both in general terms across Central Bedfordshire and also at a settlement specific level. These priorities are derived to reflect issues that arise from the application of standards.

2.29 The key principles of the document will form the policy relating to both the protection of existing space and delivery of new space. Guidance on the requirements relating to new developments will be provided in Section 6.

Geographical Analysis

2.30 The assessment has considered issues arising across Central Bedfordshire as a whole, however, in order to provide a greater level of understanding of the variations across the area, where relevant, analysis has also been undertaken at the following levels:

- **by Placemaking Area** (table 2.2) – A local term previously used for planning implementation and monitoring purposes, which divides Central Bedfordshire into broad geographical areas. Although these are not set in policy they can be used to interpret how provision and views vary geographically
- **by Settlement Hierarchy** (table 2.3) – As set out in planning policy to categorise settlements across Central Bedfordshire. These categories help to evaluate if provision and expectations differ by settlement size and to inform the standards for each typology
- **at Settlement Level** – to detail local accessibility, quantity and quality of provision

For clarity, Table 2.2 shows the wards and parishes that fall within each area Placemaking Area.

Table 2.2 – Placemaking Areas

Placemaking Area	Wards	Town/ Parishes
North	Ampthill	Ampthill, Clophill, Maulden
	Aspley & Woburn	Aspley Guise, Aspley Heath, Battlesden, Eversholt, Husborne Crawley, Milton Bryan, Potsgrove, Woburn
	Barton le Clay	Barton le Clay
	Cranfield and Marston Moretaine	Brogborough, Cranfield, Hulcote & Salford, Lidlington, Marston Moretaine, Millbrook, Ridgmont
	Flitwick	Flitwick, Steppingley
	Toddington	Chalton, Harlington, Sundon, Streatley, Toddington
	Arlesey	Clifton, Henlow, Arlesey, Stondon
	Biggleswade North	Biggleswade
	Biggleswade South	Biggleswade
	Houghton Conquest & Haynes	Haynes. Houghton Conquest
	Northill	Moggerhanger, Northill, Old Warden, Southill
	Potton	Dunton, Edworth, Everton, Eyeworth Potton, Sutton, Tempsford, Wrestlingworth & Cockayne Hatley
	Sandy	Blunham. Sandy
	Shefford	Campton & Chicksands, Meppershall, Shefford
	Silsoe & Shillington	Gravenhurst, Shillington, Silsoe
Stotfold & Langford	Astwick, Langford , Stotfold	
Leighton Buzzard and Rural South	Caddington	Caddington, Hyde, Kensworth, Slip End, Studham, Whipsnade
	Eaton Bray	Billington, Eaton Bray, Totternhoe
	Heath and Reach	Chalgrave, Eggington, Heath and Reach, Hockliffe, Stanbridge, Tilsworth
	Leighton Buzzard North	Leighton Linslade
	Leighton Buzzard South	
Linslade		
Dunstable and Houghton Regis	Dunstable Central	Dunstable
	Dunstable Icknield	
	Dunstable Manshead	
	Dunstable Northfields	
	Dunstable Watling	
	Houghton Hall	Houghton Regis
	Parkside	
Tithe Farm		

Table 2.3 shows Central Bedfordshire Council’s Settlement Hierarchy and the towns and villages within each hierarchy (emerging Development Strategy Policy 4).

2.31 It should be noted that part way through this study, the East and West Placemaking Areas were amalgamated to form the North Placemaking Area. The telephone survey was carried out prior to this and the analysis therefore refers to findings from the East and West separately.

Table 2.3 – Settlement Hierarchies

Settlement Hierarchy	Settlement
<p>Major Service Centres</p> <p>Major Service Centres provide a focus for employment, shopping and community facilities for the local community and surrounding rural communities</p>	<p>Amphill, Biggleswade, Dunstable, Flitwick, Houghton Regis, Leighton Linlade, Sandy, Wixams</p>
<p>Minor Service Centres</p> <p>Minor service centres are large villages or small towns with a good level of services, possibly including a school, doctor's surgery, a basic retail offer and frequent public transport links</p>	<p>Arlesey, Barton-Le-Clay, Caddington, Cranfield, Marston Moretaine, Potton, Shefford, Stotfold, Toddington</p>
<p>Large Villages</p>	<p>Aspley Guise, Blunham, Clifton, Clophill, Eaton Bray, Fairfield, Harlington, Haynes (main village), Heath and Reach, Henlow, Hockliffe, Houghton Conquest, Langford, Lower Stondon, Maulden, Meppershall, Shillington (including Ends), Silsoe, Slip End, Upper Caldecote, Westoning, Woburn</p>
<p>Small Villages</p>	<p>Aspley Heath, Brogborough, Broom, Campton, Chalton, Dunton, Eversholt, Everton, Flitton, Greenfield, Husborne Crawley, Ickwell, Kensworth, Lidlington, Maulden (Clophill Rd), Millbrook, Moggerhanger, Northill, Old Warden, Pulloxhill, Ridgmont, Salford, Southill, Stanbridge, Streatley, Studham, Sutton, Tempsford, Tilsworth, Totternhoe, Upper Gravenhurst, Upper Shelton, Upper Sundon, Wrestlingworth</p>

Structure of Remaining Sections

2.32 The strategic context for open space and recreation is set out in Section 3.

The facility analysis sections consider each type of open space in turn, outlining;

- Scope and definition
- Strategic and policy context
- Usage profile of existing open spaces (drawing upon the household survey)
- Analysis of local need and the provision of existing open spaces
 - Views and aspirations relating to quantity of provision as well as an evaluation of the actual quantity of provision

- Views and aspirations relating to quality of provision as well as an evaluation of the actual quality of provision
 - Issues relating to access to each type of open space
- Creation of local standards
- Application of local standards
- Key priorities and issues to address.

Section 5 summarises the key issues outlined in the study and provides guidance on the application of standards for new development.

3. Context

Introduction

3.1 This section summarises the national and local context in the provision of recreational open space in Central Bedfordshire. It considers:

- Demographic profile of Central Bedfordshire
- Strategic context for open space

Demographic Profile

3.2 As set out in Section 2, detailed analysis has been undertaken relating to the provision of open space in Central Bedfordshire using the following spatial areas as a basis for reference:

- Central Bedfordshire as a whole
- Placemaking areas
- Settlement hierarchy
- Individual settlement

3.3 For clarity, the population data used to represent both current and projected population growth is outlined in this section.

Population Data - Central Bedfordshire

3.4 The population data shown below was originally provided by Central Bedfordshire Council in connection with Chapter 1: Leisure Facilities Strategy for the scenario testing undertaken using Sport England's Facilities Planning Model (FPM). The planning horizon for the FPM was 2022, hence for consistency this data has also been used in the development of this document to provide an overall Central Bedfordshire-wide picture. These projections take into account natural population growth and planned housing growth.

Persons aged (years)	2010	2022
0-4	16,130	16,420
5-9	15,210	17,450
10-14	15,500	17,900
15-19	15,340	14,390
20-24	13,510	12,070
25-29	14,690	16,200
30-34	15,280	19,770
35-39	18,490	20,530
40-44	21,270	19,250
45-49	21,300	18,720
50-54	17,780	20,930
55-59	15,470	21,020

60-64	16,160	18,120
65-69	12,100	14,560
70-74	9,710	14,330
75-79	7,500	12,640
80-84	5,240	7,990
85-89	3,140	4,950
90+	1,420	3,320
Total	255,220	290,560

Population by Placemaking Area

3.5 Future projections were calculated by ward up to 2022 and for consistency with other chapters of the Leisure Strategy, these figures have been used to inform analysis of the adequacy of open space. These figures take into account the planned distribution of housing growth, as well as projected natural increases in population.

Table 3.1 summarises the spread of population by Placemaking Area.

Table 3.1 – Population by Placemaking Area

Area	2010	2022
Dunstable	52,140	58,380
Leighton and Rural South	54,070	62,270
North	149,050	169,910
Central Bedfordshire	255,260	290,560

Table 3.1 clearly indicates that the largest population is based in the North Placemaking Area, which is the largest placemaking area geographically. The highest levels of population growth (circa 15%) will however, take place in the Leighton Buzzard and Rural South Area, while lower levels of growth (11%) will be in Dunstable.

Population by Settlement Hierarchy

3.6 In addition to analysis by geographic area, this document also considers the distribution of open spaces by settlement hierarchy and evaluates whether there are differences in the amount and quality of open space (and aspirations for facilities) according to the size of settlement.

3.7 Analysis of provision by settlement hierarchy is not possible using the ward population figures used to evaluate provision geographically across Central Bedfordshire as many of the wards include several settlements all of which fit into different levels of the settlement hierarchy.

3.8 To support analysis by settlement hierarchy, population figures by Parish have been extracted from the 2011 census (Office of National Statistics January 2013). The use of these figures ensures that analysis of provision within Central Bedfordshire is based upon the most up to date data available. Parishes have then been assigned to the settlement hierarchy in which their largest settlement falls. Some Parishes do not contain any settlements that fall within one of the tiers of settlements and these have therefore been

excluded. The different sources of data and the inclusion of only settlements falling within the hierarchy means that figures relating to placemaking area and settlement hierarchy will not match exactly. Table 3.2 summarises the population at each level of the settlement hierarchy.

Table 3.2 – Population by Settlement Hierarchy

Area	2010	2022
Major Service Centres	139,913.3	160,455
Minor Service Centres	49,600	56,600
Large Villages	41,074	44,037
Small Villages	260,434	27,095

Figures for each individual settlement are based upon the population by Parish (2011 census) and specific population projections calculated for the purpose of this assessment (Central Bedfordshire Council 2012/13) and are included in Appendix A. Parish Schedules. They clearly demonstrate that the majority of growth will take place in the major settlements, with relatively high amounts of growth in the minor settlements.

Strategic Context

Key Partners

3.9 This document focuses not only upon the delivery of open spaces owned and managed by the Council, but also on spaces owned and managed by others. Within Central Bedfordshire the majority of open space sites are owned by town and parish councils, countryside organisations, charities and others.

3.10 There are several key partners in the delivery of open space and green infrastructure in Central Bedfordshire. All of the key partners have provided details of the facilities they manage and outlined their current priorities to inform the development of this document.

Some of the many partners are:

- National Trust
- Marston Vale Trust
- Greensand Trust
- Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity
- Sustrans
- Natural England
- The RSPB
- Groundwork Trust
- Wildlife Trust
- Forestry Commission
- Town and Parish Councils
- Chilterns Conservation Board

3.11 In addition to the above organisations, voluntary groups have an important role to play in the success of the network of open spaces across Central Bedfordshire. Many sites are managed and maintained by such groups and there is clear evidence that in almost all cases, this local ownership has generated improved quality and created sites that are highly valued by the local community.

3.12 Appendix E summarises the primary functions of these organisations. The key priorities of all of these partners have been taken into account where relevant and are reflected within this document. They have formed a key part of the local needs assessment and where relevant, influence the setting of local standards.

National Context – Planning Policy

3.13 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) makes several references to planning for sport, recreation and open space, and highlights the importance of local strategies contributing toward the improvement of health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and delivering sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.

Paragraph 17 of the NPPF sets out clear principles for planning in relation to open space, sport and recreation, bullet 12 indicates that planning should ‘take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.’

Bullet 8 of paragraph 17 states that planning should encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), providing that it is not of high environmental value. The glossary accompanying the framework indicates that recreation grounds and allotments are excluded from the definition of previously developed land.

The NPPF recognises green space as an important part of new development. In particular, Paragraph 58 indicates that:

‘Local and neighbourhood plans should develop robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the area. Such policies should be based on stated objectives for the future and an understanding and evaluation of its defining characteristics. Planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:

- will function well and add to the overall quality of the area;
- optimise the potential sites to accommodate development, create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses (including incorporation of green and other public space as part of developments) and support local facilities;
- create safe and accessible environments; which are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.

Similarly, Paragraph 69 also references the importance of providing high quality open space as part of new development. Directly referencing the importance of open space and sport, paragraph 73 of the NPPF states:

'Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. Planning policies should be based on robust and up to date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. The assessments should identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities in the local area. Information gained from the assessment should be used to determine what open space, sports and recreational provision is required.'

Paragraph 74 states that existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements
- 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
- the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss

The NPPF also makes several other references to the importance of sport and recreation facilities, in particular Paragraph 70 which states that to deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:

- plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities (such as sports venues, cultural buildings, and other local services too
- enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments
- guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs
- ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services.

Further building upon the role of open space in the community, Paragraph 92 of the NPPF gives specific support for community forests stating that 'they offer valuable opportunities for improving the environment around towns, by upgrading the landscape and providing for recreation and wildlife.'

The Localism Bill (published December 2010) seeks to empower neighbourhood communities, and give them real power to shape the way that the areas in which they live develop. Open Space, sport and recreation facilities are central to community life and their profile is therefore likely to increase further. Paragraph 76 and 77 of the National Planning Policy Framework promote the identification of important green spaces by local communities and the protection of these facilities where they are considered to be areas of particular importance. Such sites should be considered for the designation of Local Green Space but must be demonstrably special to a local community and hold particular local recreational significance.

Many Government White Papers also emphasise the importance of planning for open space and the wider contribution that open spaces can make to society. Such papers include:

- Creating growth, cutting carbon: making sustainable local transport happen (2011)
- The Natural Choice: Securing the Value of Nature (2012)

3.14 Current planning policy therefore emphasises the importance of open space in the creation of sustainable communities and advocates high quality design of new spaces as well as the protection of existing spaces.

Wider Environmental Benefits

3.15 While this assessment focuses only upon the recreational uses of open space, it should be noted that the value of open space is not just recreational and that all open spaces are part of a wider green infrastructure network.

Section 11 of the NPPF (Paragraph 109 onwards) highlights the importance of conserving wildlife and biodiversity. While this assessment focuses upon the recreational function of open space, it is recognised that the function of such spaces extends much beyond recreation and this document should therefore be considered in the context of wider Central Bedfordshire policy relating to open space.

The strategic contribution open spaces can make to the wider environment includes:

- defining the local landscape character and providing an appropriate context and setting for built development and infrastructure
- helping to achieve a softer interface between urban and rural environments
- emphasising the presence of particular natural features within the landscape such as river valleys
- supporting habitats and access to nature
- promoting and protecting biodiversity and habitat creation
- mitigating climate change and flood risk.

3.16 As the population of an area grows, the additional pressure placed upon existing infrastructure can negatively impact upon important sites for wildlife including Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). It is important that this is taken into account and that additional green space is provided as part of new housing development to mitigate this impact.

Local Context

3.17 As well as meeting national and local priorities, the effective provision of open spaces in Central Bedfordshire contributes to the achievement of many other priorities of both Central Bedfordshire Council and its partners.

Contribution to Strategic Priorities

3.18 Table 3.3 briefly outlines how open space can contribute to the delivery of many of the strategic priorities of Central Bedfordshire Council.

Table 3.3 – Relationship between Open Space and Key Priorities in Central Bedfordshire

Document	Key Priorities	Links
<p>Delivering your Priorities: The Council's Plan for Central Bedfordshire 2012 – 2016</p>	<p>The Council is committed to six key priorities which are;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing Central Bedfordshire – creating jobs, managing growth, protecting the countryside and enabling businesses to grow. • Improved educational attainment. • Promote health and well being and protecting the vulnerable. • Better infrastructure • Great universal services • Value for money 	<p>The effective provision, delivery and management of open space can contribute to the achievement of these objectives. In addition, these priorities should influence and shape the strategy for the provision of open space.</p>
<p>Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire 2013</p>	<p>The Development Strategy is the emerging planning policy document that will set the framework for growth across Central Bedfordshire. It will set out how much development (housing, employment, retail etc) the Council needs to plan for and broadly where it should go. It will also set out detailed policies to help determine planning applications.</p> <p>Policies directly linking to open space include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Space Development in the Green Belt • Leisure and Open Space provision • Formally Designated Important Open Space • Public Rights of Way • Other Areas of Open Space within Settlements • Local Green Space • Green Infrastructure 	<p>This evidence and assessment of need will underpin policies in the development strategy.</p>

Document	Key Priorities	Links
<p>Sustainable Community Strategy</p>	<p>The Sustainable Community Strategy is based on a shared long-term vision for Central Bedfordshire that has been developed by Central Bedfordshire Together. The vision is to create a 'Globally connected, delivering sustainable growth to ensure a green, prosperous and ambitious place for the benefit of all'.</p> <p>The key strategic priorities of the plan are;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximising employment opportunities and delivering housing growth to meet the needs of our communities • Ensuring our local people have the skills to prosper • Keeping our communities safe • Nurturing a sense of pride and belonging • Getting around and caring for a green and clean environment • Promoting health and reducing health inequalities • Educating, protecting and providing opportunities for children and young people • Supporting and caring for an ageing population and those who are most vulnerable. 	<p>Effective provision of open space can directly contribute to the achievement of this vision and many of the strategic priorities. In particular, open space will be central to the delivery of priorities relating to health, opportunities for young people and the ageing population. In addition, the key priorities of the community strategy should influence the strategy for the provision of open space.</p>
<p>Central Bedfordshire Local Transport Plan</p>	<p>The Local Transport Plan (LTP) forms a long-term framework for investment in transport infrastructure and services across Central Bedfordshire. It is a statutory requirement of the authority to produce and maintain the Plan, which considers the needs of all forms of transport, particularly walking, cycling, buses, rail and car use.</p> <p>The time period for implementing the LTP covers the period between April 2011 and March 2026 to enable a strategic approach to the delivery of transport schemes and help secure lasting changes in travel behavior.</p> <p>The key objectives in relation to walking are as follows;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of people walking • Improve the quality of the pedestrian environment • Improve the safety of pedestrians • Increase awareness of the benefits of walking <p>The focus of the cycling strategy is as follows;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of people cycling 	<p>The key priorities of the plan should be taken into account when evaluating travel patterns to open spaces and when identifying strategy for existing and new open spaces.</p>

Document	Key Priorities	Links
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the quality of the cycling environment • Improve the safety and perceived safety of cycling • Increase awareness of the benefits of cycling • Increase access to a bicycle 	
Central Bedfordshire Economic Development Plan (2011)	<p>The Central Bedfordshire Council Economic Development Plan recognises the key role that rural businesses play in Central Bedfordshire's economy. It aims to safeguard rural employment sites, support rural business diversification and provide development opportunities while striking a balance with the need to protect our countryside. Countryside Access can help to provide the link between the economy and countryside; achieving benefits for both.</p>	<p>The key priorities of the plan can be supported by improving access to the countryside and by the provision of effective recreational open spaces.</p>
Central Bedfordshire Community Engagement Strategy 2013 – 2016	<p>The strategy seeks to drive engagement with individuals and organisations and help communities understand the choices and decisions that are required. It will also manage their expectations about the service levels provided by the public sector in the future.</p> <p>The strategy is based on five key principles, which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving more people more opportunities to influence decisions • Enabling Ward Councillors to be leaders, in and for, their communities • Enhancing the role of Town and Parish Councils • Building the capacity of local people to engage • Ensuring a strategic and joined-up, coordinated partnership approach 	<p>The delivery of open space can embrace the principles of the community engagement strategy</p>

3.19 As well as contributing toward many overarching strategic aims and objectives, this strategy sits alongside several related documents. The key principles of these documents, along with their headline priorities are summarized below. The interrelationship between these documents and this assessment of open space across Central Bedfordshire is also highlighted. Further detail on the issues raised in these documents can be found in Appendix E.

Green Infrastructure

3.20 Green infrastructure (GI) plans identify priority areas for protecting and improving existing green infrastructure and creating new spaces in order to develop a network of multi-functional greenspaces.

GI plans have been developed at a variety of scales across Central Bedfordshire, notably:

- a strategic level plan covering the whole county of Bedfordshire
- district level plans, for Mid Bedfordshire and for Luton and Southern Bedfordshire
- community level plans, developed by many individual towns and parishes across Central Bedfordshire

The district level plans consider green infrastructure within the following components:

- Accessible Greenspace
- Access Routes and connectivity
- Biodiversity
- Historic Environment
- Landscape

Open Space Standards - The relationship between informal recreation and green infrastructure

3.21 'Green Infrastructure' is an umbrella term, covering a network of green spaces incorporating the component elements listed above. The green infrastructure network provides a range of functions, including habitat and species preservation and biodiversity. It may also provide space for informal recreation in the natural environment, and it is in this respect only that green infrastructure is included in this document. This chapter, providing an up to date, thorough assessment of recreational open spaces effectively replaces the accessible greenspace evidence base in the various Green Infrastructure plans.

3.22 The Leisure Strategy Chapter 2: Recreation and Open Space Strategy assesses the provision of and need for open spaces in terms of their recreational usage and value. Many of these open spaces, particularly Countryside Recreation Sites and Informal Recreation Sites deliver benefits wider than purely recreation, for example, ecological benefits. Indeed for many sites, such as nature reserves, ecological benefits are the primary purpose of the site, with recreation a potential added benefit. Therefore, as part of this strategy, the level of recreational benefit in relation to the ecological sensitivity of the site has been assessed. This enables standards to be set which identify sufficient provision of open spaces for recreation use in order not to damage open space sites with environmental interests.

3.23 The standards therefore take into account environmental interests, but the Chapter 2 open space standards do not involve the delivery of the environmental interests themselves. The standards, once adopted, will replace the greenspace component of the strategic Green Infrastructure contributions. This will be reflected in the review of Central Bedfordshire Council's Planning Obligations strategy and approach.

3.24 Central Bedfordshire Council has supported the development of green infrastructure plans, which identify priority areas for the protection, enhancement and extension of the green infrastructure network. The Council does not have quantitative or qualitative standards for green infrastructure, nor does it consider it appropriate to develop them. The implementation of the open space standards identified in this strategy will contribute to the delivery of the recreational open space elements of the green infrastructure network.

3.25 Local projects set out in the green infrastructure plans are referenced in typology specific sections and set out in the settlement summaries only where relevant. These priorities have formed an important part of the local needs assessment and are taken into account as part of the approach to setting standards. The key strategic priorities of the green infrastructure plans are outlined in Appendix D.

Partnerships involved in green space planning and delivery

3.26 In addition to the local green infrastructure plans, there are several landscape-scale initiatives operating within Central Bedfordshire, specifically:

- The creation of the Forest of Marston Vale
- The Chilterns AONB
- The Greensand Ridge Nature Improvement Area

These initiatives will encompass the provision and enhancement of green space and the creation of broader green infrastructure, including recreational opportunities. The approach to delivering open space improvements outlined in this strategy is a partnership one. Central Bedfordshire Council is a member of the Bedfordshire Local Nature Partnership. This organization brings together a broad range of local organisations, businesses and people who aim to help bring about improvements in their local natural environment. Members include a range of organisations that own and manage green spaces at a range of scales, including the National Trust, RSPB, Greensand Trust, Marston Vale Trust, Chilterns AONB Board, as well as Central Bedfordshire Council. The Local Nature Partnership will play a key role in promoting the delivery of green infrastructure across Central Bedfordshire.

Outdoor Access Improvement Plan – Central Bedfordshire Council (2013)

3.27 The Outdoor Access Improvement Plan (OAIP) sets out how Central Bedfordshire Council will manage access to the countryside over the next 10 years to make Central Bedfordshire a great place to live and work, by:

- providing access to a range of high quality green spaces and the wider countryside through a well maintained Rights of Way network;
- involving local communities in the development and management of the countryside;
- raising public confidence and understanding of countryside access; and

- increasing use and enjoyment of the Central Bedfordshire countryside for fresh air, relaxation, recreation, health and exercise.

The strategy emphasises a desire to ensure that sites are:

- Connecting spaces... Public Rights of Way and Linear Access
- Breathing spaces... Sites and Greenspaces
- Local spaces...Community Involvement and Participation
- Health spaces ...Health and Wellbeing
- Growing spaces...the Countryside and Growth Area

It sets a series of policy statements and includes a detailed action plan which will be revised annually. These policy statements and the key actions in the current action plan have been taken into account in the preparation of the strategic direction of this document.

The principles and priorities of this document will be an important reference point in the annual revision of the OAIP action plan.

Summary

3.28 The key principles of these national and local policy frameworks and strategies are embedded throughout this evidence base and strategy. The key priorities of the local partners are also supported and incorporated where appropriate into this document.

4. Overarching Issues

Introduction

4.1 While the facility analysis sections identify the specific issues for each type of open space through the evaluation of their accessibility, quantity and quality, consultation results highlight a number of overarching issues or principles which relate to all open space types. Many of these relate to the management rather than the provision of sites, however they remain important considerations in the provision of open spaces. The key issues identified are outlined in the remainder of this section but can be summarised as follows:

- Balancing recreational use with biodiversity and conservation
- Financial Sustainability
- Environmental Sustainability
- Connectivity
- Impact of new development
- Partnership working
- Community engagement
- Consistency and individuality
- Balancing quality and quantity
- Understanding the needs of non users

Balancing recreational use with biodiversity – Ensuring that open spaces are multifunctional

4.2 This assessment considers the requirement for open space from a recreational perspective and highlights areas where more provision is required, or where there is potential for improvement or greater usage.

4.3 Consultation, and the review of strategic documents emphasises that it is important to balance recreational need with other priorities including the preservation of biodiversity and heritage. In some instances, recreational use may have a negative impact on the achievement of other objectives and this should be considered during decision making and prioritisation.

4.4 Spaces should therefore be designed to be multi-functional to maximise the benefits that they bring to local residents and to the wider environment. This would include appropriate design to promote nature conservation and biodiversity and the implementation of sensitive management practices.

Financial Sustainability

4.5 There is a need to ensure that open spaces, sport and recreation facilities are designed and managed in a sustainable way which facilitates ongoing and continuous improvement. This is particularly important in some of the more rural settlements, where a higher number of facilities are required to provide localised access for residents.

4.6 During consultation the economic pressures relating to management and maintenance of open spaces were raised and several consultees indicated that sustainability should be a central focus of any strategy (Central Bedfordshire Council, parish councils, external stakeholders). This may include the dual use of sites (for example community use of school sites) as well as consideration of opportunities for income generation at key hub sites with a view to achieving a break-even status in the longer term. The sustainability of sites provided as part of new development, including their long term maintenance to ensure maximum community value should also be secured.

Environmental Sustainability

4.7 It is essential that both changes to existing open spaces and the creation of new open spaces embrace the concept of environmental sustainability in terms of their design, management and maintenance. This may include the reduced use of fuel and pesticides as well as the implementation of sensitive mowing regimes.

Connectivity

4.8 Analysis of Green Infrastructure Plans alongside other strategic documents demonstrates that improvements to connectivity within settlements and between settlements is as important as the provision of local open spaces. The presence of the M1 and A1 as well as railway corridors means that much of the green infrastructure network is truncated. Rights of Way can unlock access to the countryside and for many residents, also wider strategic sites. There are clear aspirations to develop linked networks of open space (demonstrated for example by the Green Wheel concept established in both the Biggleswade Green Infrastructure Plan and the Flitwick Green Infrastructure Plan) as well as the delivery of NCN Route 51 by the Marston Vale Trust, which provides a strategic access link through the Marston Vale connecting major greenspace assets in the area. Future open spaces should be designed with these principles in mind and there is potential to improve connectivity through the careful integration of new developments.

The Impact of New Development

4.9 Consultees raised concerns about the impact of new development and the increasing population on the adequacy of open space. Town and Parish Councils, as well as external consultees highlighted the need to ensure that the open space stock is increased and improved in order to accommodate the needs of new residents. Clear policies relating to design, maintenance requirements and the longer term future of the space were felt to be essential and it was highlighted that new open spaces should enhance the overall stock of provision and not dilute the quality of other spaces.

4.10 As well as raising issues that should be considered within the Leisure Strategy, consultations also revealed several key principles that have proven to be successful in Central Bedfordshire in relation to the delivery of open space and playing fields. These are set out in the paragraphs that follow.

Partnership Working

4.11 There are many examples of strong partnership working across Central Bedfordshire and most recent achievements would not have been possible without the commitment of partners including Central Bedfordshire Council, Town and Parish Councils and members of the Bedfordshire Green Infrastructure Consortium. Consultation identified the need to build on the current culture of knowledge sharing and partnership working to ensure that such facilities and spaces can be replicated and that interested parties can learn from the experience of others.

Community Engagement

4.12 Engagement with and between Town and Parish Councils as well as key partners in Bedfordshire has ensured that a local focus is retained and that local community aspirations are met. While there are opportunities to further improve community engagement, it is considered important that this principle is retained and that communication is further tailored.

4.13 Community engagement and the importance of the work of volunteers was also highlighted as crucial to the successful delivery of open spaces. Results achieved by Friends Groups established at many of the large countryside access sites (as well as several more local community resources) demonstrate significant results including improved quality of open spaces, greater community ownership and access to funding streams that would not otherwise be available.

Creating Functional Open Spaces

4.14 Consultation reveals a view that recreational open spaces should be functional. Many issues with anti social behaviour and lack of use of spaces arise because sites are not fit for their intended purpose or do not fit with the aspirations of the local community. As well as re-emphasising the importance of community engagement, this highlights the importance of quality and design as well as quantity of provision.

4.15 Building upon the principle of functionality, opportunities to ensure that spaces are multi-functional should be explored, both in terms of balancing biodiversity with recreation, but also offering a variety of recreational opportunities.

Consistency and Individuality

4.16 There is a need to strive for a consistently high standard of open space and recreation facilities across Central Bedfordshire in terms of the maintenance and types of open space provided whilst maintaining the unique characters of different settlements and the historic and heritage values of specific sites.

Balancing Quality with Quantity

4.17 While access to sufficient open space is important, the quality of the recreational resource and opportunities offered is equally as important. It is essential that linking with sustainability, the need for additional facilities is considered in the context of the expectation that high quality facilities will be provided.

Appropriately located

4.18 The location of sites is as important as the space created, the facilities provided and the access routes to and within the sites. Sites that are not appropriately located will be neither functional nor well used. The location of sites within existing or new neighbourhoods should be considered at the outset of their design. This should take into account flood risk, as well as supervision and access points.

Understanding the needs of non users - use of open spaces

4.19 While the telephone survey reveals use of open spaces to be relatively consistent across geographical boundaries and within different sizes of settlement, there are variations in the use of open spaces between residents of different ethnic groups, of different ages and in different socio-economic groups, specifically:

- With the exception of allotments, younger residents are more likely to visit open spaces than older residents. Notably, households with dependent children, especially young dependent children, are most likely to visit all types of open space
- White British residents are more likely to visit all types of open spaces than members of other ethnic groups
- Residents in higher socio-economic groups are more likely to visit all types of open spaces (except allotments)
- Non-disabled residents are most likely to visit all types of open spaces (except allotments)

4.20 As well as understanding the motivations of those that do use open space, the importance of identifying ways of encouraging residents with lower levels of current use to maximise the value of open spaces. This may be in part due to a lack of awareness of the opportunities available.

Summary - Implications for the Leisure Strategy

4.21 Consultation reveals that the following principles should be embraced in the development of new and improved open spaces, as well as in the management and maintenance of open spaces:

Partnership working

- Detailed and timely community engagement
- The provision of functional open spaces
- The provision of open spaces that are of a consistent standard but maintain individuality and character
- The creation of a network of open spaces that balances appropriate quantities of provision with the aspiration for high quality facilities
- The provision of multi functional open space – balancing recreation with biodiversity
- The management of a network of open space that appeals to people that don't currently use such facilities as well as those that do.

4.22 The above principles are considered central to the management, maintenance and delivery of all types of open space.

5. Summary, Strategic Priorities and Application of the Strategy

Summary

- 5.1 This assessment provides an evidence base relating to recreational open space across Central Bedfordshire and will be used to deliver Planning policy as well as to drive proactive and reactive improvements relating to open spaces.
- 5.2 This document considers the recreational function of open space only. Open space is however recognised as being part of the wider green infrastructure (GI) network and the principles of this strategy should be integrated with wider policies on biodiversity, minerals planning, climate change and landscape scale conservation.
- 5.3 This section draws together the information provided in the facility analysis sections and provides a strategic framework for the delivery of open space through the Planning process. It summarises the standards set in each of the typology specific sections and outlines the processes for the implementation of these standards through the Planning process.

Principles

- 5.4 This document seeks to ensure that the following principles are embedded in the design of all open space provided in Central Bedfordshire:
- **Functional Open Spaces:** sites should be designed with recreational function in mind
 - **Consistency and Individuality:** spaces should be designed and maintained to a consistently high standard. Their design should however maintain the unique character of settlements in which they are based and the historic and heritage values of specific sites.
 - **Balancing Quality with Quantity:** the quality of the recreational resource and the opportunities offered is equally as important as the amount of space provided.
 - **Appropriately located:** The location of sites is as important as the space created, the facilities provided and the access routes to and within the sites. Decisions relating to location should take into account flood risk, as well as supervision and access points and the ability to provide a space that will be functional and of value to local residents.
 - **Balancing recreational use with biodiversity:** ensuring that open spaces are multifunctional: Spaces should be designed to be multi-functional to maximise the benefits that they bring to local residents and to the wider environment. This should include appropriate design to promote nature conservation and biodiversity and the implementation of sensitive management practices as well maximising recreational functionality
 - **Sustainability:** sites should be sustainable and design should include plans for their long term maintenance and management to maximise community value

- **Environmental Sustainability:** changes to existing open spaces and the creation of new open spaces should embrace the concept of environmental sustainability in terms of their design, management and maintenance.
- **Connectivity:** connectivity within settlements and between settlements is as important as the provision of local open spaces. Future open spaces should be designed with these principles in mind and improvements to existing sites should seek to enhance connectivity.

5.5 Design guidance to accompany this document will provide detailed instructions upon how the above principles should be incorporated into each type of open space and provides a detailed understanding of the issues that should be considered. All new open space should also comply with principles in the National Planning Policy Framework and the Central Bedfordshire Development Strategy.

5.6 In addition to the above guidance principles, Central Bedfordshire Council will also seek to promote:

- **Partnership Working:** the current culture of knowledge sharing and partnership working has seen the successful delivery of many open spaces and ensures that the benefits of open space are maximised. The work of volunteers has clearly demonstrated significant results including improved quality of open spaces, greater community ownership and access to funding streams that would not otherwise be available.
- **Community Engagement:** this ensures that a local focus is retained and that local community aspirations are met. Community engagement should be considered essential in the design of new facilities.

Uses of this Document

5.7 The primary purpose of this document is to provide planning policy for recreational open space facilities, to inform pre-application discussions on proposed development and support the implementation of planning policy and the delivery of facilities associated with development. In addition, it will:

- Provide the evidence base and strategic direction for recreational open space facilities in Central Bedfordshire
- Guide requirements for new, or improvements to existing open space as part of new development
- Support existing open space providers through the planning process – where there is an identified need, planning policy will support the creation of new and improved facilities
- Provide the evidence base and strategic need to support external providers in funding bids for improved facilities
- Ensure that investment (including S106, CIL and external funding) is targeted where it is needed and where it can have maximum benefit

Impact of New Development

Housing Growth

5.8 Over the next 20 years it is planned that Central Bedfordshire will see a growth of 28,700 new homes. In planning for growth Central Bedfordshire Council must ensure that its policy for recreational open space facilities seeks to provide a range of good quality, accessible facilities which support its residents in leading healthy, active lives.

5.9 This document has assessed the requirements for future provision as well as establishing current needs and aspirations. This has identified that in many parts of Central Bedfordshire current provision is insufficient to meet both current and projected demand. The strategy will secure appropriate facility provision and/or developer contributions from new development to ensure the facility stock meets local needs, now and in the future.

5.10 New development generates additional population which in turn increases demand for recreational open space. This assessment has identified that many of the existing facilities in Central Bedfordshire are of poor quality and/or are unable to cope with current or future demand. In addition to new facility provision, the strategy identifies qualitative improvements required to improve existing facilities to enable them to cope with the increased pressure from development.

5.11 In order to address the impact of new development and ensure that appropriate facilities / contributions are secured from development, the facility analyses in Part 2 of this document, identify the specific requirements for new and improved provision required to meet the needs of new development and population growth.

Recreation and Open Space Strategy Policy Requirements

5.12 The Recreation and Open Space Strategy has assessed current and future facility provision required to meet the needs of Central Bedfordshire's growing population. The following policy statements support the delivery of Policy 22 of the emerging Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire.

PPS 1. Protection of Existing Facilities

5.13 The Council will safeguard existing facilities in line with Paragraph 74 of the National Planning Policy Framework, existing recreation and open space facilities should not be built on unless it meets one of the three tests identified in paragraph 74. If facilities are lost as a result of development, replacement facilities of equal or improved standard are required to meet the continued needs of residents. Replacement facilities must also be located to serve the users of the original facility.

5.14 Capital receipts from disposals of playing pitch facilities will be ring-fenced specifically for investment into other open space facilities. To be invested according to the aims of the Strategy.

5.15 Planning consent for replacement facilities will include appropriate conditions and / or be subject to a Section 106 agreement or CIL. Developers will also be required to make

contributions towards maintenance and running costs. Contributions will be secured through planning obligations or CIL.

PPS 2. New Development

On-site Provision

5.16 The typology standards in set out in Chapter 2 (Table 5.1) will apply to all new residential development across the whole of Central Bedfordshire. The provision of certain typologies of recreation and open space facilities and developer contributions toward off-site provision may not be sought from some forms of development e.g. Children's Play Space would not be sought in associated with sheltered housing, however, provision or contributions may be sought for only specific facilities which are suited to the intended residents.

5.17 New development must be supported by the delivery of recreation and open space. This provision is to be made on-site in line with the required standards and will be provided as an integral part of new development, planned in at the early stages to meet both the needs arising on and off-site.

5.18 New and enhanced recreation and open space will be expected to be designed in accordance with the relevant Central Bedfordshire Council design guidance in order to ensure that the facilities are fit for purpose and of a suitable quality.

Off-site Contributions

5.19 For smaller developments where on-site provision of certain types of recreation and open space may not possible/appropriate, or where existing facilities or planned projects are located within the catchment of the development, contributions will be sought to maintain and enhance existing facilities/identified projects, in lieu of on-site facilities.

PPS 3. Addressing Deficiencies

5.20 The strategy has identified existing and future deficiencies in facility provision to meet the needs of Central Bedfordshire residents. The strategy facility requirements will seek to address these deficiencies by securing the provision of new facilities or contributions from development to provide new or improve existing facilities in areas of need.

5.21 Where appropriate, the provision of new facilities will be prioritized to provide additional sites to increase supply in areas of deficit or housing growth.

PPS 4. Maximising Access to Facilities

5.22 The strategy will seek to ensure that all residents of Central Bedfordshire have good access to a range of high quality recreation and open space. The provision of new facilities or the enhancement of existing facilities will take into consideration the accessibility, quantity, and quality of facilities for residents.

PPS 5. Maximising Investment

5.23 The strategy will seek to maximise investment in new or improved facilities through the prioritisation of projects, partnership working with facility providers, national organisations and other partners to secure external funding for identified priorities. It will also secure S106/CIL contributions from development in accordance with the strategy requirements and utilise those contributions where maximum facility benefit can be achieved.

Local Standards for Recreation and Open Space

5.24 This assessment has sought to understand and define the needs and aspirations of residents of Central Bedfordshire in relation to recreational open space and to identify the actions required to meet both current and future needs, based upon these needs and aspirations.

5.25 To evaluate gaps in existing provision as well as to inform requirements for future open space, standards have therefore been set for each type of open space evaluated as follows;

- **an accessibility component** – distance threshold (catchment for each type of open space)
- **a quantitative component** – quantity of provision per 1000 population
- **a qualitative component** – quality of facilities required for each type of open space

5.26 The application of these standards has been used to identify the adequacy of existing provision to meet current and projected needs. The key principles emerging through the consultation process, building upon the standards set, will also be used to determine requirements from new developments.

5.27 Table 5.1 outlines the standards that have been set for each type of open space and the resulting priorities at a strategic. Full details of issues in each settlement are outlined in the Parish Schedules (Appendix A).

Table 5.1 – Local Standards by Typology

Type of Open Space	Definition	Accessibility	Quantity	Quality
Countryside Recreation Sites	Large countryside-type sites set aside for a variety of recreational activities, offering a range of formal and informal facilities and activities.	20 minute drive time	3.19 ha per 1000 population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriate size and location Accessible via safe footpaths and public transport, cycleways Clear boundaries natural space offering a range of habitats and landscapes Clearly defined pathways and cycleways Accessible Appropriate and regular seating Café and / or visitor centre, including toilets and refreshments Information and signage Play equipment Bins Management of dog fouling Secure parking Cycle storage Clear events programme Volunteer opportunities Visible daily staff presence
Urban Parks	Public parks in an urban setting that provide a variety of facilities e.g. play area, toilets, tennis courts etc; as well as opportunities for informal recreation. Sites often provide formal community activities / events.	15 minute walk (720m) 20 minute drive time	0.22 ha per 1000 pop. Major Service Centres only 0.39ha per 1000 pop. (Minor towns where/if required.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriately located Clear boundaries Clearly defined entrances Well maintained and landscaped Ornamental planting Reflecting the character and history of area Clearly defined pathways and cycleways Accessible Variety of opportunities within park Clearly defined surfaced paths

Type of Open Space	Definition	Accessibility	Quantity	Quality
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriate and regular seating Toilets and refreshments Information and signage Range of Play equipment Appropriate bins and management of dog fouling Sufficient parking Lighting Events programme Volunteer opportunities Visible daily staff presence
Large Formal Recreation Areas	Large green sites which are easily accessible. These sites generally contain opportunities for formal recreation e.g. children's play, casual or formal outdoor sports. The majority of these sites are approximately 1ha in size or above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 minute walk (480m) for Major Settlements or, 10 minute drive time for small settlements 	1.17 ha per 1000 population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sufficiently large to meet demand Appropriately located for local catchment Accessible via safe footpaths Clear boundaries Appropriate for residents of different ages and variety of facilities Clearly defined pathways and cycleways and cycle storage Appropriate and regular seating Information and signage Play equipment Sports facilities Appropriate bins and management of dog fouling Sufficient parking Clear events programme Volunteer opportunities for the local community

Type of Open Space	Definition	Accessibility	Quantity	Quality
Informal Recreation Areas	Large green spaces that are natural in character. These sites generally offer informal recreational opportunities such as walking and relaxation and allow visitors to experience the natural environment. As well as offering recreational opportunities, many sites in this category are also important for biodiversity and ecology.	10 minute walk (480m)	2.5 ha per 1000 population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriately located Accessible via safe footpaths Clear boundaries Predominantly natural space Balance between recreation and conservation Links with Public Rights of Way and cycle routes Appropriate and regular seating Information and signage Appropriate bins and management of dog fouling Sufficient parking Volunteer opportunities for the local community
Small Amenity Spaces	Small, local spaces which may enhance the local area and provide some opportunities for casual recreation use e.g. dog walking, as well as landscaping. These sites usually have few, or no formal functions.	5 minute walk (240m)	0.58 ha per 1000 population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Functional space Appropriately located Accessible via safe footpaths Clear boundaries that are locally appropriate Appropriate for residents of different ages Clearly defined pathways to the site Clearly defined paths Appropriate and regular seating Appropriate bins and management of dog fouling
Children's Play Spaces	Equipped play areas for children e.g. swings, slides and climbing frames This includes facilities currently referred to as LEAPs. Further detail will be	10 minute walk time (480m)	0.11ha per 1000 (it should be noted that this includes the activity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within appropriate distance of target catchment area Accessible via safe footpaths and roads Appropriate location Appropriate boundaries and buffer zone Compliant with DDA and safety audit

Type of Open Space	Definition	Accessibility	Quantity	Quality
	provided in the relevant sections.		area only). Additional allowances should be made for appropriate buffer zones in line with guidance	Bespoke design to suit location Age appropriate play facilities Range of play opportunities offering high play value Formal play equipment and safety surfacing Clear signage Fencing, seating and bins
Provision for Young People	Facilities designed to meet the needs of young people such as youth shelters, skate parks and Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs). This includes facilities currently referred to as LEAPs and LEAPS. Further detail will be provided in the relevant sections.	10 minute walk time (480m)	0.043ha per 1000 population (it should be noted that this includes the activity area only). Additional allowances should be made for appropriate buffer zones	Serving target catchment and appropriately located Accessible via safe footpaths and roads Accessible by bike (and with areas for cycle storage) Appropriate boundaries and buffer zone Compliant with DDA and safety audits Bespoke design to suit location Appropriate seating, fencing and bins Signage Lighting (if appropriate) Age appropriate facilities Any formal play equipment and safety surfacing compliant with British Standards
Allotments	Site designated for people who wish to grow their own produce.	10 minute walk time (480m)	0.37 ha per 1000 population (15 plots)	Appropriately located for local catchment Accessible via safe footpaths and roads Clear boundaries Clearly defined pathways Appropriate fencing and gates

Type of Open Space	Definition	Accessibility	Quantity	Quality
				<p>Appropriately sized. At least one car parking space per 10 plots provided. Hard surfaced parking area Space for up to one shed per plot Mains water Toilet and washing facilities Sustainable technologies Communal garden Clear signage Seating and lighting at entrance/s</p>
Cemeteries and Churchyards	Cemeteries and churchyards including disused churchyards and other burial grounds.	n/a	2.03 burial plots per 1000 population	<p>Appropriately located for local catchment Accessible Clear boundaries Clear entrance Clearly defined pathways Gates should comply with DDA Regular cut (at least 7 times per year) Removal of grass cuttings from site Management of gravestones and headstones Sensitive management Sufficient car parking Water Supply Clear signage Regular and appropriate seating</p>

5.28 The key priorities arising from the application of the standards, as well as the assessment of local need and their implications for future requirements are summarised by typology in Table 5.2. Full background can be found in facility analysis sections.

Table 5.2 – Strategic Priorities for open space delivery

Types of Open Space	Key Issues Arising	Priority Recommendations and Policy Implications
<p>Countryside Recreation Sites</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usage figures demonstrate that existing countryside recreation sites are an important recreational resource – there is therefore a need to retain existing sites • There are opportunities to increase the usage of existing (and new sites) by addressing identified barriers (access routes) and attracting new user groups (current low usage by residents of none white ethnic origin, disabled users and older residents) • Analysis suggests that residents expect to be within a 20 minute drivetime of a countryside recreation site –residents of several areas are currently outside of this target catchment. Longer term, linking with the Central Bedfordshire Transport Plan, the goal is to ensure that all countryside recreation sites are accessible by more sustainable modes of travel. • Recreation is just one element of the function of a countryside recreation site and there is a need to balance biodiversity and conservation with public access. All existing sites have designations which constrain the number of visitors that can be accommodated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given the clearly evidenced value of countryside recreation sites to both residents and wildlife, promote the protection and provision of this type of open space through policy in the Development Plan • Seek to ensure that all residents are within a 20 minute drivetime of countryside recreation sites (although countryside recreation sites with high ecological sensitivity are only able to serve residents within a 10 minute catchment and this should be taken into account). • Work with communities to ensure that all countryside recreation sites meet baseline standards through the adoption of the quality criteria outlined earlier in this section. • Create a network of green linkages with countryside recreation sites as the hub facilitating access on foot and by cycle as well as by car and public transport • Ensure that the impact of population growth on countryside recreation sites is recognised through the inclusion of policy requiring developers to contribute towards both the quantity and quality of provision through CIL and / or S106. Where provision is sufficient in quantitative and access terms, contributions should be required towards the management, maintenance and qualitative improvements of existing sites • Create site specific development plans considering both recreational capacity and conservation targets

Types of Open Space	Key Issues Arising	Priority Recommendations and Policy Implications
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While the quality of existing countryside recreation sites is rated as good, there are high aspirations for the type of facilities provided and the key features of a countryside recreation site. Sites require ongoing maintenance and improvement and some sites need upgrading if they are to meet aspirations • Population growth is likely to see an increase in demand for countryside recreation sites and a consequent increase in visitor numbers. Some sites are already at visitor capacity and others also have sensitivities that will be approached as visitor numbers increase. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek to widen the use of countryside recreation sites through effective marketing and promotion as well as events
Urban Parks and Gardens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are opportunities to increase the usage of parks and open spaces through the provision of more formal parks. The telephone survey indicates that these are desirable facilities • Residents expect to be able to reach an urban park within a 15 minute walk time in the Major and minor service centres and provision is therefore anticipated to be local. New facilities are required in most settlements if this aspiration is to be achieved • Several Town and Parish Councils highlight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given the clearly evidenced strategic role of these sites, promote the protection and provision of this type of open space through policy in the Development Plan • Seek to ensure that at least one urban park is provided in each Major Service Centre. Location should be tailored to ensure that the majority of residents in these settlements are within a 15 minute walk time of parks. This will involve the provision of several additional parks (or the upgrade of existing large recreation areas) • Work with communities to ensure that all parks meet baseline standards through the adoption of the quality criteria outlined earlier in this section • Create a network of green linkages to each urban park

Types of Open Space	Key Issues Arising	Priority Recommendations and Policy Implications
	<p>opportunities to upgrade existing recreation areas to create formal parks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population growth is likely to see a further increase in demand • Quality improvements are required to existing facilities if high aspirations for the type of facility met. 	<p>facilitating access on foot and by cycle (for local residents) as well as by car and public transport for those coming from further afield)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the impact of population growth on urban parks is recognised through the inclusion of policy requiring developers to contribute towards both the quantity and quality of provision through CIL and developer contributions. Where quantity and access to parks are already sufficient, contributions should be required towards the improvements of the quality of existing parks. •
Large Formal Recreation Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usage figures demonstrate that large recreation areas are used by a higher proportion of the population than any other type of open space and they therefore represent a valuable resource • The location of sites is one of the key determinants of use and consultation suggests that residents expect to be within a 10 minute walk time of a large recreation area – the local standard has therefore been set at a 10 minute walk time • For formal recreation areas, in most settlements improvements to the quality of existing sites are considered to be as if not more important than the creation of additional sites. In some areas however, residents are outside of the catchment for sites and there is a need for new areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promote the protection and provision of this type of open space through policy in the Development Strategy • seek to ensure that all residents are within a 10 minute walktime of a formal recreation area. Where residents are within a 10 minute walk time of an urban park, as higher order facilities, this negates the requirement for additional large recreation areas • ensure that the impact of population growth on recreation areas is recognised through the inclusion of policy requiring development to contribute towards both the quantity and quality of provision through on-site provision of facilities, CIL and planning contributions. Where quantity and accessibility standards are already met, contributions should be made towards the management, maintenance and improvement of existing facilities • work with communities and partners to ensure that all sites meet baseline standards through the adoption of the

Types of Open Space	Key Issues Arising	Priority Recommendations and Policy Implications
	<p>Residents and providers place a particular value on quality of facilities and it is important that this is taken into account</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While the quality of existing sites is largely good, there are high aspirations for the type and quality of facilities provided at large formal recreation spaces and a need for a particular focus on improving the quality of facilities in many areas • Population growth is likely to see an increase in demand for this type of facility and a consequent increase in visitor numbers 	<p>quality criteria outlined earlier in this section. Prioritise qualitative improvements over additional spaces where residents are already within the appropriate catchment of a space</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • facilitate access routes from nearby settlements to these sites, including safe footpaths and cycling opportunities
Informal Recreation Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usage figures demonstrate that large recreation areas are used by a higher proportion of the population than any other type of open space and they therefore represent a valuable resource • The location of sites is one of the key determinants of use and consultation suggests that residents expect to be within a 10 minute walk time of a large recreation area. The ecological sensitivity of many of these sites however means that in reality sites serve a much smaller catchment as the number of visitors that they can adequately accommodate without detrimental impact is reduced (by 50% for those with high sensitivity and by 25% for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promote the protection and provision of this type of open space through policy in the Development Strategy • promote access to informal space within a 10 minute walktime of at least one recreation area. Where residents are within a 10 minute walk time of a countryside recreation site, this negates the need for additional informal recreation area. Where sites are highly ecological sensitive, they have a reduced catchment and this should be taken into account when evaluating the need for new open space • ensure that the impact of population growth on Informal recreation areas areas is recognised through the inclusion of policy requiring development to contribute towards both the quantity and quality of provision through on-site provision of facilities, CIL and planning contributions. The impact of increased visitor numbers on informal sites

Types of Open Space	Key Issues Arising	Priority Recommendations and Policy Implications
	<p>those of medium sensitivity)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In some settlements improvements to the quality of existing sites are considered to be as if not more important than the creation of additional sites. In many areas however, residents are outside of the catchment for sites and there is a need for new areas. New informal spaces are a particular priority of many of the Local Green Infrastructure Plans • While it is essential that biodiversity is balanced with recreational uses, some improvements are needed at some sites to enhance the recreational experience and in particular a need to ensure that all sites are attractive and welcoming to the user. • Population growth is likely to see an increase in demand for this type of facility and a consequent increase in visitor numbers. 	<p>(particularly those with primary or secondary conservation functions) should also be carefully monitored and accessibility should be used as the primary determinant of additional need.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work with communities and partners to ensure that all sites meet baseline standards through the adoption of the quality criteria outlined earlier in this section. Prioritise qualitative improvements over additional spaces where residents are already within the appropriate catchment of a space; • facilitate access routes from nearby settlements to these sites, including safe footpaths and cycling opportunities;
Small Amenity Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usage figures demonstrate that large recreation areas are frequently used, and in particular by residents of non white ethnic origin. They are important sites, particularly in the smaller villages • The location of sites is one of the main determinants of use and almost all residents expect to walk to a facility. Sites are expected to be local to the home (within 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promote the protection and provision of this type of open space through policy in the Development Strategy • Work with communities to ensure that all sites meet baseline standards through the adoption of the quality criteria outlined earlier in this section. Sites should be functional and appropriately located • Seek to ensure that all residents are within a 5 minute walktime of at least one open space (either a small

Types of Open Space	Key Issues Arising	Priority Recommendations and Policy Implications
	<p>5 minutes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site visits reveal that the quality of small amenity spaces is lower than some other types of space and Parish / Town Councils confirm this viewpoint. There are concerns about the functionality of sites and issues raised about the impact that poor quality and poorly managed sites can have on the local community. Consultation and strategic documents highlight that these issues are of lower priority than those raised in relation to some other types of space • Population growth may to see an increase in usage of these types of space and a requirement for additional spaces, particularly if all residents are to be within 400m of a proposed site. The quality of spaces is however as important as the amount of space, and there is a strong interrelationship between quality, quantity and function. 	<p>amenity space or a larger recreation area). Sites should meet with minimum size criteria to ensure that they have a functional recreation purpose. New small amenity spaces should not be required where residents are within the catchment of a larger formal recreation area / countryside recreation site / urban park</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the impact of population growth on usage of these spaces is recognised through the inclusion of policy requiring developers to contribute towards both the quantity and quality of provision through CIL and developer contributions. • Review the function of existing amenity spaces where sites serve overlapping catchments and are of poor quality.
Children's Play Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play spaces are important facilities for those with dependents. Use is strongly influenced by location, as well as the safety of facilities. Levels of use by residents with disabilities, as well as those of none white ethnic minority is lower and there is also a lack of awareness of facilities available, particularly in residents aged 18 to 34 (who 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is therefore recommended that key principles for the delivery of children's play areas across Central Bedfordshire are set as follows: • promote the protection and provision of this type of open space through policy in the Development Strategy • to promote the strategic distribution of high quality play

Types of Open Space	Key Issues Arising	Priority Recommendations and Policy Implications
	<p>are likely to have dependents)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are concerns relating to the quality of existing facilities and many sites are ageing and in need of upgrading. Added to this, there is a significant range in the play value offered at different sites. There are expectations that high quality facilities will be provided. Site visits reveal particular concerns with the quality of facilities in small settlements, many of whom are struggling with maintenance requirements • Residents expect to find play areas local to their home and evidence suggests within a 10 minute walk time. Some residents must travel further than 10 minutes to reach current provision. Fewer high quality facilities will better meet the needs of residents than multiple small but dysfunctional sites but local provision remains relatively important for residents • Population growth is likely to see an increase in demand for play areas and a consequent increase in visitor numbers. New areas of housing development will also require new play facilities to ensure that residents have local access to play. As set out above, there is a need to balance quality with quantity 	<p>facilities, seek to ensure that all residents are within a 10 minute walk time catchment of at least one local play area. This should apply to all settlement types. Sites should be of high quality, cater for all age groups and offer a range of play opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maximise access to a destination play area through the inclusion of these facilities at strategic locations – i.e. country parks, urban parks • work with providers and communities to ensure that all play areas meet baseline standards through the adoption of the quality criteria outlined earlier in this section. This should include the creation of safe access routes to reach play areas. Linking with the quality criteria, sites should be tailored to the character of the area (for example natural play may be appropriate in some settings rather than formal equipment); • review the distribution of play areas in areas that have overlapping catchments and work with site providers to consider decommissioning sites that are no longer meeting demand (investing instead in larger nearby facilities) • ensure that the impact of population growth on play areas is addressed through policy requiring developers to provide appropriate on-site children’s play space facilities within the accessibility, quantity and quality standards as set out above. Where new development is not within the catchment of existing facilities, new sites should be strategically planned (taking into account the aspirations for fewer and high quality facilities) • ensure that where appropriate the impact of population

Types of Open Space	Key Issues Arising	Priority Recommendations and Policy Implications
		<p>growth on play areas is addressed though policy requiring developers to contribute towards both the quantity and quality of provision through CIL and developer contributions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase the access to and sustainability of play provision and address concerns over the management of facilities, support partnership working between Town and Parish Councils and other local organisations including schools
Provision for Young People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are clear concerns relating to the amount of existing facilities and there is identified unmet demand in almost every settlement. Most residents are further than a 10 minute walk time (the level which consultation identified as being acceptable). Fewer high quality facilities will better meet the needs of residents than multiple small but dysfunctional sites but local access to facilities is important • Use of facilities for young people is strongly influenced by location as well as the type of facilities provided. There is a need for innovative facilities that are tailored to the target group if provision is to successfully address needs • The quality of sites is varying and consultation suggests that provision does not meet local need • Population growth (particularly in this age group) is likely to see an increase in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promote the protection and provision of this type of open space through policy in the Development Strategy • To promote the strategic distribution of high quality facilities for young people, seek to ensure that all residents in major and minor service centres are within a 10 minute walk time catchment of at least one facility for young people. These sites should function as strategic sites that promote a range of different skills and interests • Support tailored provision in large and small villages where there is clear evidence of demand and long term sustainability • Maximise access to facilities for young people in Large Villages and Small Villages through the inclusion of these facilities at strategic locations in Major and Minor Service Centres, as well as in countryside recreation sites • Work with providers and communities to ensure that all sites meet baseline standards through the adoption of the quality criteria outlined earlier in this section. This should include the creation of safe access routes to reach sites • ensure that the impact of population growth on facilities for

Types of Open Space	Key Issues Arising	Priority Recommendations and Policy Implications
	<p>demand for such facilities and a consequent increase in visitor numbers</p>	<p>young people is addressed through policy requiring developers to provide appropriate on-site facilities within the accessibility, quantity and quality standards as set out above. Where new development is not within the catchment of existing facilities, new sites should be provided using figures outlined in this document</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that where appropriate the impact of population growth on facilities for young people is addressed through policy requiring developers to contribute towards both the quantity and quality of provision through CIL and developer contributions
Allotments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allotments are currently well used however some sites are under threat of development and there are concerns about the long term sustainability of key sites There are opportunities to increase the usage of existing (and new sites) by attracting new user groups (significant interest in allotments by residents of non-white ethnic origin and those with disabilities) Allotments are expected to be local to the home (within 10 minutes walk). There are several small and large settlements without any allotments and all Minor and Major Service Centres have areas where residents are outside of this catchment. Many Parish Councils in areas without allotments have received requests to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that policy protects statutory allotments from development, and supports the retention of all existing sites where demand is identified. Where existing sites are lost to development, replacements should be sought where there is evidence of ongoing demand seek to ensure that all residents are within a 10 minute drivetime of allotments investigate opportunities for new provision in areas where there are no existing allotment sites or where the amount of residents that can access a site is already maximised. This may include the provision of temporary allotments promote the implementation of management practices designed to maximise the number of residents that can be accommodated at each site in a bid to reduce waiting lists. These may include the provision of half plots and / or starter plots and restrictions on the number of plots that each resident can rent

Types of Open Space	Key Issues Arising	Priority Recommendations and Policy Implications
	<p>provide them</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Added to this, analysis of current demand highlights that there are waiting lists at numerous sites and there is a need to provide additional allotment plots to meet immediate needs • Population growth is likely to see an increase in demand for allotments and there are concerns that the stock is already at capacity • There are limited issues with the quality of allotments currently and on the whole, improvements to the amount of plots are considered to be more important. Some site specific improvements are however required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work with providers to ensure that all allotment sites meet baseline standards through the adoption of the quality criteria outlined earlier in this section; and • ensure that the impact of population growth on demand for allotments is addressed through the inclusion of policy requiring developers to provide allotments on larger developments and to contribute towards both the quantity and quality of existing provision through CIL and developer contributions. Demand for allotments is equivalent to at least 15 plots per 1000 population / 0.37 ha per 1000 population
Cemeteries and Churchyards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • current projections indicate that death rates are likely to increase by 2035 and there will be higher requirements for burial space. The projected population growth will further see the number of burials per annum increase • there is a strong emphasis on the provision of local burial space in Central Bedfordshire and as a consequence, almost all settlements have cemeteries and / or churchyards • several existing sites are approaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promote the protection and provision of this type of open space through policy in the Development Strategy • address capacity issues at existing burial sites through the provision of extensions and / or new spaces where these are identified as being required and the allocation of appropriate land to facilitate this. It is anticipated that between 2 and 2.3 burial spaces will be required per annum per 1000 population • ensure that the impact of population growth on demand for cemeteries is recognised through the inclusion of policy requiring developers to contribute towards both the quantity and quality of provision through CIL and

Types of Open Space	Key Issues Arising	Priority Recommendations and Policy Implications
	<p>capacity and new space will be required to accommodate ongoing and increasing demand; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the quality of facilities is important and while most sites are well maintained, there is a requirement to improve some sites and to retain appropriate maintenance regimes in other areas 	<p>developer contributions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ongoing maintenance of existing sites and improvement of some sites to ensure that minimum standards are met; and maximise access routes to large cemeteries that serve residents in more than one settlement. This should include public transport and cycle routes as well as access by car

Application of the Standards

5.29 The standards will be applied to development as follows.

Accessibility standards: The application of accessibility standards will be used as the primary means of determining where more provision is required to ensure all residents have access facilities within the recommended distance threshold. Areas where residents are outside the recommended catchment of one or more types of open space will be considered deficient in provision.

Quantity standards: will be used as a guide when determining the adequacy of existing provision or requirement for new provision. This is because:

- Areas where the quantity of open space is above the recommended minimum standard may still require additional open space if sites are not well distributed and there are accessibility deficiencies, and;
- Areas where there are no accessibility deficiencies may still exhibit quantitative deficiencies if sites are small in size and therefore limited in capacity to serve the resident population

It should be noted that standards represent a minimum level of need only. Open space in areas above the minimum standards of provision is not automatically considered to represent surplus provision.

Quality standards: will identify where improvements to the quality of existing open spaces will be of benefit and are required to meet local standards. The quality of existing open spaces (and those newly provided) is as important as the amount of space provided.

Based upon the above principles, schedules have been prepared for each town and parish in Central Bedfordshire. These schedules are set out in Appendix A and provide a detailed breakdown of shortfalls and surpluses in each parish, gaps in the existing facility stock and areas where qualitative improvements are required.

Table 5.3 summarises the requirements identified for new and improved provision.

Table 5.3 – New and Improved Provision

Type of Open Space	Protect	New Provision	Enhance
Countryside Recreation Areas	All existing sites	<p>Short Term - New sites to meet current deficiencies – suggested locations – Biggleswade /Sandy (linking with Green Wheel proposals), Flitwick, Arlesey / Stotfold, Barton le Clay</p> <p>Ongoing – supporting the creation of new sites, where feasible, extension of existing sites to meet increasing demand from population growth</p>	<p>Tiddenfoot Waterside Park / Aspley Woods / Sundon Hills Country Park – baseline facilities All sites in line with target quality criteria</p> <p>Areas of new development where provision is already sufficient in quantitative and access terms but where residents are likely to use existing facilities.</p>
Urban Parks	All existing sites	<p>Short Term – Major and Minor Service Centres – key priorities Leighton Buzzard (new site) Biggleswade (potential to upgrade Franklin Recreation Ground and / or create new linear park), Flitwick (potential to upgrade existing site and or create new site), Sandy (potential to upgrade existing site and / or create new site). New provision should take into account current and projected requirements based upon population growth.</p> <p>Longer term - potential to provide additional sites in minor service centres.</p>	<p>Houghton Hall Park Existing and new sites in line with target quality criteria Areas of new development where provision is already sufficient in quantitative and access terms but where residents are likely to use existing facilities.</p>
Formal Recreation Areas	All Existing Sites	<p>Areas without access or with limited access to formal recreation areas. These include;</p> <p>Cranfield Langford</p>	<p>In the majority of areas, qualitative improvements should be the key priority. Evidence suggests that high quality sites are highly valued. Priority for improvement should be given to high value sites – sites serving unique catchment areas but are of poor</p>

Type of Open Space	Protect	New Provision	Enhance
		<p>Potton Silsoe Stanbridge Amphill Barton – le – Clay Dunstable Marston Moretaine Shefford</p> <p>Note: all of the above highlight need within strategic documents and / or Parish plans. In addition, areas where large deficiencies have been identified, including Leighton Buzzard, Dunstable, Flitwick, Amphill, Biggleswade, ,Cranfield, Sandy, Caddington and Shefford.</p> <p>Areas of new development where incoming residents will create quantitative deficiency and / or are outside of catchment for existing open spaces.</p>	<p>quality Areas which contain clusters of poor quality provision should also be prioritised</p> <p>Areas of new development where provision is already sufficient in quantitative and access terms but where additional residents will place additional pressure on existing facilities.</p>
Informal Recreation Space	All existing sites	<p>Areas without access or with limited access to informal recreation areas. Most settlements in Central Bedfordshire have issues with existing access, but the following also have either large quantitative deficiencies and/ or expressed need in Green Infrastructure assessments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leighton Buzzard • Dunstable 	<p>New provision and / or improved access will be needed in all areas where provision is currently lacking either in quantitative or qualitative terms.</p> <p>New provision should also be considered where sites are particularly ecologically sensitive and therefore have a limited visitor capacity. Settlements that are particularly impacted in this manner are; Amphill</p>

Type of Open Space	Protect	New Provision	Enhance
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houghton Regis • Stotfold • Toddington • Chalton • Harlington • Henlow • Kensworth • Meppershall • Stanbridge 	<p>Arlesey Biggleswade (also already area of high quantitative deficiency)</p>
Small Amenity Spaces	All existing sites	<p>Areas without access or with limited access to small amenity spaces – most settlements, but key deficiencies in Dunstable, Leighton Buzzard, Stotfold, Flitwick, Biggleswade, Potton, Arlesey and Toddington.</p> <p>Areas of new development where incoming residents will create quantitative deficiency and / or are outside of catchment for existing open spaces.</p>	<p>Quality of amenity spaces as if not more important than additional sites. Priority given to high value sites – sites serving unique catchment areas but are of poor quality</p> <p>Areas which contain clusters of poor quality provision</p> <p>Areas of new development where provision is already sufficient in quantitative and access terms but where residents are likely to use existing facilities.</p>
Children's Play Spaces	All existing sites that do not have overlapping catchments	<p>Local Facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priorities – Blunham, Aspley Heath, Old Warden, Salford, Leighton Buzzard (Linslade ward) Dunstable (Watling ward) Sandy, Flitwick, Stotfold / Fairfield Shefford, Maulden, Northill and Broom, Langford, Clifton, Harlington, Westoning. • On-site facilities within new housing development when outside catchment of existing facilities. Off- 	<p>All facilities against standards set. Identified requirements including facilities in the following settlements (identified through consultation and site visits)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ampthill, Biggleswade, Flitwick , Houghton Regis, Marston Moretaine, Stotfold, Henlow, Maulden, Shillington, Slip End, Brogborough, Southill, Tilsworth, Totternhoe, Upper Gravenhurst, Upper Shelton, Eaton Bray.

Type of Open Space	Protect	New Provision	Enhance
		<p>site contributions to improve existing facilities when within catchment of existing.</p> <p>Destination Facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sandy • Caddington • Shefford • Countryside recreation sites and urban parks <p>Areas of new development where incoming residents will create quantitative deficiency and / or are outside of catchment for existing open spaces.</p>	<p>Areas of new development where provision is already sufficient in quantitative and access terms but where residents are likely to increase use of existing facilities.</p>
Facilities for Young People	All existing sites, except where there is clear evidence of limited use	<p>Key Priority – addressing gaps in provision in Major and Minor Service Centres, in particular focusing upon:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cranfield • Shefford • Ampthill • Stotfold • Sandy • Flitwick • Leighton Buzzard • Biggleswade • Houghton Regis • Dunstable <p>Longer term: all other areas of identified need, where meeting criteria of recommendations above.</p>	<p>All facilities against standards set. Provision of new facilities is considered to be of higher priority than improvement of existing sites.</p> <p>Areas of new development where provision is already sufficient in quantitative and access terms but where residents will use existing facilities.</p>

Type of Open Space	Protect	New Provision	Enhance
		<p>There is strong need to ensure that all facilities are tailored to the needs and aspirations of the local community and are developed in conjunction with residents (See Section 5, Strategy Principles).</p> <p>Areas of new development where incoming residents will create a quantitative shortfall in provision or will be outside of the target accessibility catchments.</p>	
Allotments	All existing sites. Sites in Dunstable and Sandy currently anticipated to be lost and should be replaced	<p>Potential options for the delivery of new allotments include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identification of landowners willing to use their land to meet current demand for allotments (several landowners have approached the Council for this reason) • conversion of other types of open space • allocation of allotments within school sites which can function as community allotments as well as educational tools for pupils, or the provision of community growing gardens within public parks and open spaces • alternative means of providing allotments, such as the use of private gardens (through a community scheme that matches garden owners with potential allotment plot holders) 	<p>All sites in line with target quality criteria</p> <p>Areas of new development where provision is already sufficient in quantitative and access terms but where residents are likely to use existing facilities. This may also include the provision of additional land/plots.</p>

Type of Open Space	Protect	New Provision	Enhance
		<p>Priority areas are: Houghton Regis. Cranfield, Shefford. Blunham, Stondon, Campton, Dunton, Northill, Ridgmont, Wrestlingworth</p> <p>Areas of new development where provision is already at capacity and where demand is sufficient to warrant new allotments.</p>	
Cemeteries and Churchyards	All existing sites	<p>Shefford (Campton Road has 2 years remaining). Land has been retained for extension in conjunction with Campton Parish),</p> <p>Sandy (Potton Road nearing capacity – extension to be provided on allotments during 2014 – allotment site will close at the end of 2013 to facilitate this. The other site in Sandy is already full),</p> <p>Marston Moretaine (less than 10 plots remain. New site under construction currently),</p> <p>Everton – approaching capacity. Proposals for extension under discussion.</p> <p>Projected Shortfalls:</p> <p>Flitwick (only 2 years capacity remains), Houghton Regis (only 8 / 9 years capacity remaining), Canfield – cemetery requires extension but request to purchase land refused), Haynes (only 20 plots remaining) Heath and Reach (capacity for 15 years), Langford – approaching capacity and identified need for cemetery extension, Meppershall – approaching capacity.</p>	All sites

Providing Open Space in New Development

- 5.29 New housing developments generate additional population which in turn creates a need and demand for recreational open space facilities. This need can be met via the creation of new recreation open spaces, or through quantitative and qualitative improvements to existing spaces to enable them to cope with the increased pressure placed upon them pressure by development.
- 5.30 New development should therefore, in the first instance make appropriate on-site open space provision in accordance with the standards set out in this document. On-site provision must be incorporated at an early stage in the design process and considered as an important and integral part of new development.
- 5.31 Where on-site provision is not appropriate, developer contributions will be sought toward the provision of new facilities, or the quantitative or qualitative improvement of existing facilities which can address the open space needs of the development.
- 5.32 Open space on new developments should be:
- sustainable
 - functional
 - provide an appropriate balance between quality and quantity
 - integrated with local neighbourhoods, but providing sufficient open space within it to provide for the new residents
 - accessible – accessibility will be considered to be the primary determinant of open space requirements

Calculating the Contribution from Development

- 5.33 In order to ensure that contributions sought from new development toward facility provision are fair and commensurate with the development, the contributions must be assessed using the statutory tests for the use of S106 planning obligations:
- “Necessary to make development acceptable in planning terms
 - Directly related to the development; and
 - Fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development”
- 5.34 The following process explains how requirements will be determined. It should be noted that to ensure that the new open space provided meets with the principles of this leisure strategy:
- 5.35 Provision can be grouped together in one location to aid design and functionality, but should still offer a range of different recreational opportunities
- 5.36 The provision of SUDS (sustainable urban drainage systems) cannot be considered to count towards recreational open space provision, unless recreation is

the primary purpose of the site area and the SUDs is a secondary function of the space

5.37 All other factors identified at the beginning of this section should be taken into account.

Amount of Open Space Required

5.38 To ensure that a developer is only required to contribute in line with the impact of his development, the local quantity standards will be used to determine the need for open space on new development.

5.39 The local standards for each type of open space and the occupancy rates/density of the development, will be used to determine the amount of each type of open space required. Open space should then be designed to ensure that it provides maximum value and flexibility and is tailored to the needs of the local community.

5.40 The following calculation will be used to identify the open space requirement of new development.

Calculation to be performed	Number of new residents in the development	X	Open Space Need
Data Required	Number of dwellings to be provided x 2.4 (to establish number of people)	X	Local Quantity Standard (to be applied for each type of open space).

5.41 New developments impact on all types of open space and therefore requirements for each type of open space considered in this document will be evaluated.

5.42 For simplicity and to maximise flexibility, open space requirements will be grouped as follows:

- Strategic sites
- Informal recreation
- Local recreation
- Play facilities for children and young people
- Allotments

5.43 In order to promote the strategic distribution of facilities and the co-location of facilities as well as to minimise the provision of smaller sites with limited use, the specific requirements for new provision will be flexible within these groupings.

5.44 The rationale for the groupings outlines is summarised in Table 5.4

Table 5.4 – Open Space Requirements in New Developments

Type of Open Space	Category	Existing Local Standard	Total Requirement	Justification for grouping
Countryside Recreation	Strategic Sites	3.19	3.58	Both types of open space are strategic open spaces and contributions are likely to be required off site (unless in exceptional circumstances in the case of very large developments)
Urban Parks		0.39		
Informal Recreation Areas	Informal Recreation	2.5	2.5	Open space
Large Formal Recreation Areas	Local Recreation	1.17	1.75	Both types of formal recreation space have similar functions. The provision of large recreation areas within local catchments also serves as small amenity space.
Small Amenity Spaces		0.58		
Facilities for Children	Facilities for Children and Young People	0.11	0.153	Facilities to be located together providing for all age ranges. (It should be noted that this includes the activity area only). Additional allowances should be made for appropriate buffer zones
Facilities for Young People		0.043		
Allotments	Allotments	0.37	0.37	Specific facility requirement

5.45 Requirements for contributions will then be determined using the overall standards and the size of the new development.

Table 5.4 sets out an example of the implications for a development of 300 dwellings.

Table 5.4 – Example Size Requirements

Category	Standard Per 1000 Population (ha)	Standard Per Person (Standard per 1000 / 1000) (ha)	Number of Dwellings	Number of People in Development (Number of dwellings x 2.4)	Open Space Requirement (People in Development X Standard Per Person) (Ha)
Strategic Sites	3.58	0.00358	300	720	2.5776

Informal Recreation	2.5	0.0025	300	720	1.8
Local Recreation	1.75	0.00175	300	720	1.26
Facilities for Children and Young People	0.153	0.000153	300	720	0.11016
Allotments	0.37	0.00037	300	720	0.2664

5.46 All contributions will be based upon requirements using the above calculations whether for on-site provision or off-site developer contributions.

5.47 It should be noted that the provision of Formal Recreation Areas should be calculated and delivered with reference to specific outdoor sporting requirements detailed in Chapter 3: Playing Pitch Strategy. As sports pitch provision is one element of formal recreation areas, Chapter 3 will identify the specific facilities required.

On Site Provision

5.48 On-site provision will not be required where the requirements from the development mean that the resulting open space would be too small to be of benefit.

5.49 On-site provision will not usually be required where the requirements are below the following thresholds:

- Informal open space – 0.4 ha
- Local open space – 0.2ha. A large formal recreation area should be provided where the requirements in the informal open space category exceed 1ha. Below this level, small amenity spaces will be required. Residents should have access to amenity spaces within 5 minutes of their home.
- Allotments – 0.25ha.

5.50 For most developments, it is likely that a mix of on-site provision and off-site contributions will be required.

5.51 On-site provision will be based upon the local standards set and will always be required on developments that are sufficiently large and / or located in an area of existing deficiency. Provision of all types of open space will be required, and even if located on the same site, space of the appropriate size is required. For example, children’s play space must be provided in addition to the local recreation area. It may be appropriate to locate playing pitches on the site of a large recreation area if the provision of these pitches is in line with the playing pitch assessment (Chapter 3).

5.52 Central Bedfordshire Council will seek to balance the requirements to provide high quality facilities with good access and will look to ensure that new developments contain the facilities that they require and that they do not negatively impact upon existing open spaces in the vicinity.

5.53 As the strategy highlights the importance of local provision, the Council will therefore require:

- A facility for children and young people to be provided in all developments of 100 dwellings or more
- At least some on site open space should be provided in all developments of at least 50 houses (local open space).
- Informal open space may also be required on-site, depending upon the size and the location of the development and provision in the surrounding area

5.54 Where a type of open space is to be provided on-site, the appropriate ownership, management and maintenance requirements must be met in accordance with the adoption procedures in this document (Appendix G.). Ongoing management arrangements will be secured via S106 agreement or planning condition, including details of the management regime and the commuted maintenance sum required.

5.55 The space/s provided should meet with the recommended quality criteria set out in the design guidance.

Off Site Contributions

5.56 Where existing provision is already adequate (i.e. the development is within the catchment of existing open space and there is sufficient provision to accommodate the additional demand that will be generated) off site financial contributions will be required instead towards improvements to the quality of provision. Contributions will always be targeted towards sites that are within the catchment area of the proposed development (determined by the accessibility standards) and improvements will be informed by the relevant Parish Schedule. The level of contribution will be determined by the impact of the development as set out above.

5.57 With the exception of very large developments, on-site provision of strategic facilities i.e. countryside recreation sites and urban parks, will not be required and contributions will always be requested towards off-site provision.

6. Delivery of the Strategy

6.1 The recreation open space facilities assessment provides the evidence base relating to the supply / demand of facilities across Central Bedfordshire. It has been created to support planning policy as well as to drive proactive and reactive improvements in open space provision. It should therefore be used to inform decision making relating to recreation and open space facilities.

6.2 The NPPF focuses on the delivery of specific facility needs; this needs assessment has therefore concluded with an understanding of the surpluses and deficiencies across Central Bedfordshire, and has listed areas where there is a need to improve the open space infrastructure either through protection, enhancement or new provision. This information will be used to inform the development of a Chapter 2 action plan for delivery in consultation with key partners.

Principles

6.3 The strategic priorities and area / site specific priorities, detailed in Part 2 of this document, have been developed following an extensive assessment of current and projected need. The following principles have been identified as key priorities in the delivery of the facilities:

- **Quality of facilities is as important as the amount of provision** – the strategy seeks to ensure that Central Bedfordshire contains the right amount of facilities, of the right quality and in the right place. It promotes the protection of current provision and the creation of facilities that are fit for purpose
- **The creation of multi-function sites is supported** – recognising the benefits and long term sustainability of sites providing for multiple activities, where appropriate the co-location of facilities should be supported
- **Sustainability of provision is essential** – all recommendations seek to deliver new and improved facilities in a sustainable manner

Action Planning

6.4 Following adoption of the Leisure Strategy by the Council's Executive an action plan for Chapter 2 will be developed. In preparing the action plan, Central Bedfordshire Council will consult further with relevant stakeholders and facility providers to establish their delivery priorities.

6.5 The majority of recreation and open space facilities are owned and managed by town and parish councils, countryside organisations, charities, etc. the action plan must therefore reflect the views of the asset owners as well as identifying the deliverability of the proposed projects.

6.6 Central Bedfordshire Council will work with a range of partners including Town and Parish Councils, countryside organisations and asset owners to prioritise new and enhancement projects in accordance with the strategy requirements and support a coordinated approach to facility provision and management.

6.7 The action plan will seek to prioritise projects in accordance with the following priorities:

Ensuring that there are enough facilities to meet current and future demand

Ensure that facilities are of appropriate quality to meet the needs of users

Promote increases in physical activity

6.8 The action plan will set out the priority actions required to address the needs set out in Chapter 2, and will identify the resource implications.

6.9 The action plan will be used to inform both the securing of on-site recreation and open space facilities and developer contributions resulting from new development. In addition, the action plan will inform the release of CIL and S106 funds.

Funding and Implementation

6.10 Given the potential level of funding required to deliver the requirements of this strategy, it is likely that investment will only be achieved through a combination of opportunities and funding sources. The council will therefore seek to use assets innovatively and work on a multi-agency approach to address the facility requirements in the strategy.

The main funding delivery mechanisms for Central Bedfordshire Council and others in delivering the strategy are:

- i. **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 developer contributions:** The Leisure Strategy will secure developer contributions in association with new development to provide or improve infrastructure.
- ii. **Capital Grant funding:** From schools and national agencies such as Sport England, including its Iconic Facilities, Improvement Fund and Inspired Facilities programmes. National Governing Body (NGB) support could also be available to develop specific specialist facilities.
- iii. **Third party funding:** Financing capital through the forecast operational surplus and finance packages as part of the leisure management procurement process or construction contracts. Also, leisure management operators are asked as part of their consideration, to fund developments of health and fitness suites and small refurbishments of existing leisure centre sites.
- iv. **Commercial sector funding:** limited potential for investment from commercial leisure operators such as those who provide health and fitness centre and 5 a-side artificial pitch football centres.
- v. **Council funding:** capital funding allocated to deliver facilities within the council's ownership, and potentially the use of capital receipts from the sale of existing assets.

- vi. **Prudential Borrowing:** or 'invest to save': the local authority may choose to use revenue savings or income from its investment to pay for monies used for capital development, which may be cheaper than an operator can borrow.
- vii. **Education sector:** while the previous sources of funding (including BSF and Primary Schools Programme) have changed and the scale of the education capital programmes have been reduced, the education sector is still likely to be a key funding stream especially for sports halls.

Partnership Working

6.11 Central Bedfordshire Council recognises that it currently plays a limited role in the direct provision of recreation and open space facilities, the strategy therefore seeks to bring together key partners in the delivery of these facilities to ensure that available funding is maximised for the benefit of facility provision and community use.

6.12 The leisure strategy will promote:

- Partnership working and knowledge sharing
- Community involvement

Facility Criteria and Design Guidance

6.13 All new and enhanced open space facilities must be designed in accordance with the emerging Central Bedfordshire Council Design Guide and with the design guidance which accompanies this document.

Sustainable Drainage

6.14 The emerging Central Bedfordshire Council SuDS Approval and Adoption Guide will provide design guidance determining where and in what circumstances it will be appropriate to include a SuDS feature within the typologies of open space detailed in this strategy. The adoption section of this document (Appendix G.) also provides additional safety information on the provision of SuDS provided in conjunction with children's play facilities.

7. Monitoring and Review

- 7.1 This strategy has been produced to enable open spaces within Central Bedfordshire to be provided for in a planned and co-ordinated way and to ensure that provision meets the needs of the local population. It highlights the gaps in the existing facility stock and identifies areas where new provision will be required to meet future demand. It also provides guidance on the creation of open space in new developments.
- 7.2 In order to ensure that the Leisure Strategy requirements keep pace with the large amount of growth planned for Central Bedfordshire, a costed action plan will be prepared for the period 2014–2019. The Plan will be then reviewed and updated annually.
- 7.3 A key component of the process of delivering the action plan is the establishment of a steering group, which the council will establish to implement the action plan emerging from the strategy, with key stakeholders participating in the steering group as and when necessary and the Council working in partnership with stakeholders to deliver the strategy.
- 7.4 A full review of the strategy will be undertaken in 2019 in readiness for the 2019-2023 action plan period. In addition to reviewing the achievements of the action plan for the 2014-2019 period, the review will assess the full basis of calculating recreation open space requirements for Central Bedfordshire and emerging issues that impact upon it. This will also involve a full reassessment of the following baseline criteria:
- Housing numbers
 - Population estimates, both ONS and internal projections
 - Full socio-economic and demographic analysis of population projections
 - Updated open space stock
 - Local resident consultation
 - Analysis of funding sources and new funding opportunities for the provision/improvement of facilities

In addition, the following measures will be taken to ensure the data in this document is current, appropriately monitored and available to the development industry and other users:

- Central Bedfordshire Council will manage and maintain a corporate GIS system reflecting changes to the open space stock and new developments that have taken place
- the Parish Schedules will updated on an annual basis
- a working group will be set up to identify additional priorities and draw on the data collated as part of the above two actions to ensure the strategy remains relevant and current;
- the amount of funding for open space delivered in association with new development will be monitored through the Planning Divisions AMR (Annual Monitoring Report)

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