

## GREEN OPEN SPACES SCRUTINY REVIEW

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## **1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Summary**

- 1.1 This Executive Summary outlines the work undertaken by the Panel during the course of the review and areas identified by Members for recommendation.
- 1.2 The suggestion for Overview and Scrutiny to examine the Council's Green Open Spaces arose during the work planning process at the start of the Municipal Year. Concern was raised amongst Members regarding how the Council could bring green spaces and access to green spaces into areas where there were none and what strategies could be adopted to acquire additional green space.
- 1.3 Members also wished to examine roadside flower and shrub maintenance and to carry out work in partnership with TfL, Streetscene and Parks on tree planting.
- 1.4 The Council are developing and will in the next Municipal Year be consulting on a draft Open Spaces Strategy in line with the requirements of the London Plan and this review will assist in developing that strategy.
- 1.5 The quality and quantity of open space (both green and non -green) plays an important role in defining the character of an area and the type of experience people get from using it. Open space is not limited to its visual impact. Its benefits are linked to sport, education, recreation, the economy, health, culture, social inclusion, biodiversity and the environment. It provides a valuable resource and focus for local communities. However the pressure on open land increases as London becomes more compact and more intensively used, and so its protection becomes ever more paramount. With the Borough earmarked to accommodate approximately between 15,000/20,000 new homes over the next 10 years with the majority identified for the east of the Borough, pressure on existing spaces will not only come from more users, but from proposals to locate community facilities on some of these sites. In areas where there is a deficiency in open space the Council will ensure that no open space is lost and, where appropriate, additional provision will be acquired or provided.
- 1.6 The guiding principle set out in the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) states that everybody in the Borough should have good access to well-maintained, good quality, sustainable open space. The key objectives are:-
  - to maintain a satisfactory level of easily accessed open space in the borough with a variety of uses
  - to ensure that the flora and fauna in the borough is protected and encouraged and that the provision helps

to meet the aims of the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).

- 1.7 The Council has designated some of its open land into particular categories in order to ensure that it is protected from unsuitable development and that the character of the open land remains essentially open. The three strongest categories of protection in the Borough are Green Belt, Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) and Significant Local Open Land (SLOL). Green Belt is an area of land which has been given special status to restrict built development. Metropolitan Open Land is open land within the built -up area which has a wider than Borough significance and which receives the same presumption against development as the Green Belt. Significant Local Open Land is land which, although not important at a strategic level has an important local function and so its open nature should be essentially preserved.
- 1.8 The benefit of open space to the wider community is widely appreciated across the Borough. It is important to take a strategic approach to protecting, providing and managing the Green Open Spaces efficiently and effectively.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1 That the Council seek to develop a more integrated and co-ordinated model of Open Space management and that the Open Spaces Strategy should represent a renewed effort to co-ordinate and realign department priorities and approaches in order that there is a consistent Council - wide approach to managing open space.
- 2 That representations be made to the DfES and ODPM regarding the lack of funding from Government towards the purchase of any new land (ie brownfield land or already developed land) for the necessary building of new schools to accommodate the increase in pupil numbers due to the Government's target for new housing over the next decade to avoid pressure to expand onto Green Open Space.
- 3 That in order to assist in park safety and maximising the diverse usage and to enable extra funding to be secured the Council be committed to developing a vision for all Green Open Space. Additionally a management plan for each park be developed. Furthermore inclusive accessibility should be a priority wherever possible and reasonable.
- 4 That the Council recognise the importance of working with Friends Groups and other stakeholders and develop partnerships to assist in the management and promotion of open spaces and to secure external funding.
5. That in respect of any proposals to develop on Open Space there be a consultation process including clear definitions of land classifications.
6. That all Council services accept and respect the policy of protection of existing Green Open Spaces.
7. That the criteria for Green Flag sites be adopted as a standard to which all parks and open spaces should aspire.
8. That the Council consider finding resources for the appointment of dedicated on site staff/ park wardens for each substantial Green Open Space.
9. That there be strategic consideration given to the use of Brownfield land or existing buildings surplus to current pressures in relation to the provision of community needs and housing so that perceived needs for housing development on Open Space is removed.
10. That the Assistant Director Streetscene approach Transport for London with a view to seeking to transfer responsibility for TfL maintenance of TfL owned highways verges to Haringey.

11. That the Housing Service keep details of Estate refurbishment's in relation to play facilities in order to be appraised of the adequacy of the provision.
12. That the Education Service be requested to examine the potential for community use of its open space and when considering school extensions Education Services be encouraged to expand upwards rather than outwards eg by building roof gardens and play decks.
13. That there be a strategic and shared approach to the provision of sports and play facilities to ensure the efficient use of land.
14. That the Assistant Director Streetscene be requested to ascertain from appropriate expert advice whether work undertaken on behalf of Streetscene could be done more beneficially to wildlife and possibly at lower cost.
15. That Planning officers draw up an inventory of all possible new open space sites throughout Haringey which should be reviewed annually in consultation with local community groups. There are numerous sites within the Borough where access could be achieved for community use and the possibility of securing regeneration funding to secure provision and protection of these spaces should be explored.
16. That in respect of planning applications for large sites the Planning Service be urged to specify the creation of new Green Open Spaces in order to provide for the projected increase in population.
17. That the Panel wholeheartedly welcomes the Council's decision to ensure the continued protection of Significant Local Open Land (SLOL) by withdrawing OSA2 of the draft Unitary Development Plan and reinstating the previous policy OS2.
18. That the Planning Service initiates a continuous database of Open Space built on as a result of the planning process and split into different categories eg commercial, residential.
19. That biodiversity be considered an intrinsic part of the management of parks and green corridors and consideration be given to reducing the frequency of cutting grass side verges in some areas in order to encourage wildlife. There is a need for sensitive management tailored to meet the needs of each specific site, taking into account basic ecological principles. The Panel further recommends that the Biodiversity Action Plan be adopted without delay.
20. That environmental assessment and impact studies be carried out before any events are held in parks and that events be restricted to certain parks and contained within specific areas and that any damage caused by events be made good.

21. That an inventory of Open Spaces be developed with respect to biodiversity and nature conservation.
22. That the importance of parks be recognised and representations be made to the Government and the Audit Commission that Parks protection, maintenance, usage and expansion be included as an area for additional assessment within the Comprehensive Performance Assessment process.
23. That the Council consider future Scrutiny reviews (covering biodiversity, access and protection) of allotments, backlands and private space including commercial statutory undertakers land and gardens.
24. That future work be undertaken on the following areas:-
  - Achieving green flag status for more of the Council's parks
  - Ways in which Parks are maintained and funded
  - Usage of Parks to determine whether they satisfy the current demand
  - An assessment of current provision of Open Space looking at the possibility of creating new open spaces in areas of deficiency.

### **3.0 METHODS OF INVESTIGATION**

- 3.1 The Review commenced in December 2004. The aims of the review were:

To examine in broad detail how the review can contribute to the development of the Council's draft Open Spaces Strategy.
- 3.2 The review Panel comprised of elected Members of the Environment Scrutiny Panel. An external adviser provided experience in the context of comparisons with other Borough's. The Panel received and discussed papers from officers detailing the background to the subject and on policy and implementation. The Panel received evidence from the Housing, Streetscene and Education Directorates. They were subject to questioning and discussion. Written evidence was received from Planning and Transport for London.
- 3.3 Additionally the Panel met with representatives from users and heard from them, at first hand, issues that were of concern to them.
- 3.4 In order to achieve its stated objectives the Panel worked to the following terms of reference:

#### **Terms of reference**

3.5 The terms of reference agreed for this review set out the following specific objectives:

- Focus on the current provision and usage of parks and Green Open Spaces across the Borough, including Green Open Spaces on housing estates and space managed by the Education Service and by Streetscene , with particular regard to the UDP.
- To examine standards and arrangements for maintenance of Green Open Spaces by Education, Housing and Streetscene Services.
- To review how residents access green space in the Borough and any other current issues of importance to local people for example biodiversity.
- To examine the capital and revenue funding arrangements and options for sponsorship for the provision and maintenance of Green Open Spaces, including roadside planters and flower beds.
- To take evidence from relevant partners/users regarding the Council's policies and Strategy and how they can assist the work in this area .
- To examine the possible impact on open spaces of changes to the UDP and to consider and develop strategies for the effective protection and expansion of Green Open Spaces across the Borough.
- To receive details of the processes by which developers seek planning permission in respect of open spaces and the advice given by the Planning Service.
- To examine the complexities of open space issues that cut across Borough's.
- To consider examples of best practice from other Boroughs and agencies
- To make recommendations for action and the future direction of Green Open Spaces.

## **4.0 CURRENT POSITION IN HARINGEY**

- 4.1 Haringey's cultural heritage, expressed through our spaces, places and people is central to our identity in Greater London. As the Borough's urban environment intensifies over the next decade the public realm will be increasingly important both as a setting of social and cultural interaction and as a relief from the built environment. The visibility of our spaces makes their protection, improvement and on-going maintenance a key indicator of Council performance.

**Figure 1 Key Benefits of Haringey's Open Spaces**

<b>Benefits</b>	
<b>Recreation</b>	Places for active engagement and sports; Passive enjoyment
<b>Health</b>	Physical; Psychological
<b>Amenity</b>	Improves the liveability of the urban environment
<b>Environmental</b>	Enables <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Awareness of nature</li><li>• Understanding of nature</li><li>• Participation in conservation</li></ul> Contributes to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clean air and water, and flood management</li></ul> Places for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Protection of flora and fauna</li><li>• Protection of significant natural features and landscapes</li></ul>
<b>Cultural</b>	Creates opportunities to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Express cultural diversity and identity</li><li>• Connect with nature and heritage</li></ul> Places for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The protection of significant cultural heritage</li></ul>
<b>Community</b>	Places to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Escape pressure and stress</li><li>• Socialise</li><li>• Participate in community events and gatherings</li></ul>
<b>Economy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improves economic competitiveness</li><li>• Adds value to properties and localities</li><li>• Asset for tourism</li><li>• Supports recreation industry</li><li>• Can attract businesses to locate within the borough</li></ul>
<b>Education</b>	Create opportunities to <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Learn to socialise</li><li>• Learn to be healthy</li><li>• Learn about nature.</li></ul>

## **4.2 Distribution of Open Spaces**

- 4.2.1 The Atkins Open Space Study (2003), through a detailed audit of provision and quality, identified all open spaces in the Borough over 0.2 hectares (ha). The Study demonstrated that Haringey has a lot of open space but it is distributed irregularly across the Borough. Our 382.87 ha of public open space represents 12.8% of Haringey's total land area. This is high for Greater London ranking Haringey 9<sup>th</sup> out of 31 London Boroughs. This is also more than the average when compared to our neighbours in the North East Sub Region (Haringey, Barnet, Enfield and Waltham Forest).
- 4.2.2 While the quantity of space is encouraging, its distribution is uneven. Haringey has a high ratio of population to open space area compared to other London Boroughs. There are 570 persons per hectare of open space (ranked 20<sup>th</sup> out of 31 Boroughs) (ONS Census 2001). The London average in 2001 was 363 persons per hectare. With this figure projected to increase to 658 persons per hectare by the year 2016, the protection and quality of existing spaces and the provision and design of new spaces is a significant issue for the Council.
- 4.2.3 Parks and recreation grounds are distributed rather irregularly across the Borough. The east of the borough has the largest deficiency of public open space. This inequality extends to the accessibility of spaces and their overall quality and the range of facilities offered. Wards identified as having a deficiency of open space include:
- Northumberland Park;
  - Parts of White Hart Lane Ward;
  - Parts of Bounds Green Ward;
  - Parts of Fortis Green and Alexandra Wards;
  - Part of Highgate Ward;
  - Part of Crouch End Ward;
  - Part of Noel Park Ward;
  - Part of St Ann's, Harringay and Seven Sisters Wards;
  - Parts of Bruce Grove and Tottenham Green Wards;
  - East of Seven Sisters Ward

Please refer to Appendix A - Areas Deficient in Public Open Space.

- 4.2.4 Residents advised that the deficiency map identifies areas deficient in any public open space and does not take into consideration the size, accessibility, quality and range of facilities of existing open spaces in other areas. Many residents travel outside their areas to access more attractive green spaces, hence it must not be assumed that unidentified areas have adequate provision.

### **4.3 Types of Open Spaces in the Borough**

- 4.3.1 The table below illustrates the number and variety of different categories of open space in the Borough according to the LPAC / GLA typology. The parks identified are not all managed by Haringey Council. The Lee Valley Regional Park Authority manages the one regional park, Lee Valley. The

trustees of Alexandra Palace manage one of our metropolitan parks, Alexandra Park. The two linear Open Spaces identified are sections of the Parkland Walk. The majority of Haringey Council parks are in the District park (eg Lordship Recreation Ground) and Local (Priory) and Small Local (Stationers) Park categories.

**Figure 2 Main Types of Open Spaces in Haringey**

Type	No. of Open Spaces	Total Hectares
Regional Park	1	12.29
Metropolitan Park	3	141.83
District Park	3	68.92
Linear Open Space	2	15.72
Local Park	20	113.48
Small local Park and open space	32	30.63
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>382.87</b>

Source Atkins (2003 pg 29)

- 4.3.2 Aside from the parks and recreation grounds displayed in the table above, Haringey has a variety of green space administered by various Council services. Schools and education open space accounts for 17.61 hectares, allotments 42.38 ha, and housing open land 54.72 ha. Together these open spaces account for a further 100 hectares.

#### **4.4 Management Arrangements and Standards**

- 4.4.1 Users considered that management of Green Open Spaces is a key issue for the Review. The Panel were informed that the 25 or so local Friends of Parks groups, as well as many local Residents Associations, are constantly monitoring many of the borough's green open spaces, and liaising with officers and staff of the Parks department. This is also related to the need to encourage usage by keeping all equipment in full repair and creating an improved atmosphere of security. However, there is a growing body of opinion that there is no substitute for dedicated on-site staff / park wardens / rangers for each substantial green open space.
- 4.4.2 A recent CABE Space report into international comparisons of open space management, '*Is the grass greener*', highlights that parks and urban green space management in the UK has been fragmented over a number of years:

*'The low profile and status of parks and urban green space services provision has also led to a situation where local government splits up the responsibility for managing urban green space between different departments and agencies. This results in a confused and poorly*

*integrated organisational structure and a lack of co-ordination of activities, services and responsibilities, including the work of private contractors. This lack of co-ordination extends to a geographic context as well, with a tendency to impose top-down management solutions, rather than empowering staff to act at site-specific and neighbourhood scales’.*

- 4.4.3 While Haringey has a good track record at managing parks and urban green spaces, the panel feel that some of the issues highlighted in the above paragraph do relate to how Haringey Council operates its green space provision.
- 4.4.4 The management of Green Open Spaces and the public realm more generally cuts across departments. This can be confusing for tenants and residents, who do not appreciate why a particular part of the public realm is of a lower quality than another. It was felt that there was something of a silo mentality, reflecting the way in which the council's departments have been managed in recent years. Public Open Space (including parks, recreation grounds, allotments and trees) are managed by Recreation Services through the Park Service. Parks Managers oversee parks based on their location in the West, Central, or East of the borough. Open Spaces (including cemeteries and allotments) are subject to regular inspections and detailed maintenance plans.
- 4.4.5 To address these concerns and issues, the Panel feels there is a need to look at how the Council is organised to deliver high quality parks and open spaces, and a high quality public realm. The development of the Open Space Strategy should be the appropriate vehicle to ensure that all elements of the Council have shared ambitions and vision for the future of parks and open spaces and in more general terms, Haringey's wider public realm.

## 4.5 Transport for London

- 4.5.1 The Panel was advised that Transport for London (TfL) has a client/steward/contractor arrangement. TfL are the client, WSP consultants are the stewards and Fitzpatrick Contractors Ltd are the term maintenance contractor (TMC). The Stewards manage the network and ensure the contractor carries out maintenance works. The contract for implementing verge maintenance is based on 13 cuts per year between March and October. In terms of quality standards Stewards and TMC are required to comply with the contract documents in which is contained a maintenance manual. The maintenance manual specifies quality standards and is used by the steward and client to monitor maintenance works.
- 4.5.2 The approach to maintenance and sponsorship in Haringey compared to other Borough's is that the maintenance contract applies to the Transport for London Road Network (TLRN). Sponsorship of verges/planted areas is always considered if appropriate. However TfL considered that in some areas responsibility on the TLRN could be

shared between the two highway authorities together with some sponsorship.

#### **4.6 Management by Streetscene, Housing and Education**

- 4.6.1 Open Spaces managed by the Housing, and Education departments have slightly different management arrangements. Housing open space is managed by the Housing department but they contract maintenance work (mainly grass clipping) to the Parks Service. Education manages their open spaces either through contractual arrangements with Jarvis, the Parks Service or onsite caretakers or volunteers. Standards of maintenance vary between the different providers.
- 4.6.2 The contractual arrangement in place within Streetscene are that they have a Service Level Agreement (SLA) which sets out a framework that describes the method of Communications between Streetscene, and Recreation Services, as the Service Provider. The range of services provided by Recreation Services includes ground maintenance, tree inspection and maintenance, herbicide application (weed spraying) and client agency service. Monitoring is undertaken by Recreation Services as part of their quality assurance system. There is quarterly contract reviews and annual site inspections.
- 4.6.3 The Panel noted evidence on the effective maintenance of Green Open Spaces within Streetscene. Evidence from residents surveys and complaints received indicates that the quality and cleanliness of the street environment is very important to local people and green and open spaces on public highway impact on this. The score for park/open spaces was up 5% in 2003 and repair of roads up 9%. However, there is no specific question on green open spaces on the highway in the current resident survey.
- 4.6.4 Recreation Services were responsible for maintaining areas of housing Green Open Space. The funding was obtained from the Housing Revenue Account. Standards were monitored as documented in the SLA. There is a light touch management from Housing and an agency management fee paid to recreational services. This arrangement will be reviewed prior to any ALMO establishment. There are Bi- monthly performance review meetings.
- 4.6.5 The Housing Service did not use specific policies and /or standards to determine the amount and type of open space provided on housing estates. However, the provision of estate facilities for recreation or community use is always looked at as part of any estate refurbishment scheme, as was funded either through estate action or SRB. This is also considered when any infill development is proposed subject to S106 monies being released to fund estate improvements. The nature of these improvements will be determined by the outcome of consultation with residents / local Members and any other key stakeholders. Proximity to existing open spaces will also be considered.

- 4.6.6 The Housing Services does not use specific policies and /or standards to determine levels of associated provision. ie. play facilities, dog and litter bins, benches etc on housing estates managed by the Council. There is no funding to upgrade existing provision other than that given through NRF and through the capital budget allocated to each area for estate improvements. Each area will determine its priorities. Tenants and Resident Associations are also able to bid for one off funding for small projects. Environmental / Better Haringey improvements have been prioritised.
- 4.6.7 In view of the projected population growth the Housing Service was developing on infill sites. Where disused sites have been sold for development, the provision of open space / parking space and any requirements for the same is largely a planning issue.
- 4.6.8 The Housing Directorate considered that the potential for creating new areas of public open space on existing housing estates in conjunction with other council services and/or housing associations was limited to infill developments on disused sites and the release of S106 funding or use of capital receipts. NRF and any other funding that becomes available tends to get used to refurbish / upgrade existing sites.
- 4.6.9 Who pays is a key issue of contention. Leaseholders deeply resent paying for the facilities used by the general public (they pay a proportion of the capital costs) and the maintenance of these is increasingly an issue for tenants, who are charged separately for this as a service charge in addition to property rent.
- 4.6.10 We were advised that there were no funds available for the creation of major open spaces within Housing estates. In terms of play facilities being repaired and refurbished we were advised that there was £110,000 in the budget for maintenance of open spaces and there was a five year refurbishment programme.
- 4.6.11 The Planning Service advised the Panel on standards for open space in Housing. It was noted that planning powers only relate to the development of new housing and does not extend to existing housing unless it is being converted from one house to a number of smaller units. The current standards for open and play space are included in Supplementary Planning Guidance SGP3A. The SPG sets out that all new development should provide external amenity space which should be "appropriate to the needs of likely occupants wherever possible. It gives a standard of 50 square meters private garden space for a family dwelling i.e. a dwelling with two or more bedrooms, and 25 square metres per unit where the family unit is not at basement or ground floor level in the form of individual private garden or communal space".
- 4.6.12 Possible future standards based on actual knowledge or estimated have been revised recently as part of the UDP Review process

(although the SPG does not form part of the UDP but is a separate document) and so they are the standards for the foreseeable future. The standards are contained within SPG as opposed to the UDP. The opportunity for these standards is that they can be applied to any new build or converted housing which is proposed within the borough. In determining a planning application the Planning Department will wish to be assured that open and space standards are adhered to.

- 4.6.13 The Panel were informed that in part due to the shortage of open space on Housing estates, there can be considerable conflict between tenants over the differing usages of open spaces, for example conflict between the needs of elderly residents and young people. Residents may recognise that there is a need for facilities for children and young people on their estate but not want those facilities at their front door. This reflects a 'not in my backyard' approach.
- 4.6.14 The Local Education Authority is facing considerable service pressure in meeting current and future service requirements for nursery, primary, secondary, FE and youth provision. There are considerable service pressures .ie. insufficient places for students of all ages, lack of Council owned land or land available for purchase to expand or develop new facilities. Funding is insufficient to provide sufficient school places and meet all asset management priorities of school's buildings condition and suitability for delivery of the education curriculum. Additionally the Government target of 19,365 new homes over the next decade would require two new 8 form entry secondary schools and five 2 form entry primary schools. The Panel were informed that the DfES would not fund the purchase of additional land for the development of new schools. This could be a potential cause of conflict for the use of open space. There was already pressure for the use of open space within schools. As an example St Thomas More School had sought to develop into the adjoining recreation ground.
- 4.6.15 The revenue cost of Post-16 and Adult education is supported by LSC funds (Learning Skills Council) and new facilities require competitive bidding. Youth provision is not funded by the DfES so money is diverted from the LEA allocation. The Council does not provide FE. Representations have been made to the DfES and Government and this has bought additional funds. However the issue of insufficient land remains.
- 4.6.16 The LEA does have a recommended minimum standard of provision for nursery, primary and secondary schools for outdoor playspace, and for sports and recreation activities. The DfES has recommended minimum standards for these as well, plus outdoor education, pitches and soft informal outdoor areas.
- 4.6.17 The majority of Haringey schools, both Primary and Secondary are under-provided for in comparison with the guidelines for Urban schools (even if pitches are included). This is a common factor at schools across the capital. Nursery provision is non-statutory although there are

still recommended standards. Where possible the LEA follows these published area guidelines when developing facilities.(EG: An 8-Form Secondary School would require 8 hectares (20 acres) outside area. A 2-Form Primary would require 0.7 hectare (1.7 acres) outside area)

- 4.6.18 With regard to the LEA's policy towards developing community use of outdoor play and recreational space on land owned by the LEA they encourage schools to make their facilities available for community use when not required by the school.The Panel felt that schools should be encouraged to expand upwards wherever possible.
- 4.6.19 Maintenance of school buildings and external spaces is the responsibility of individual school Headteachers and governing bodies.In terms of monitoring the effectiveness of green space maintenance Community schools are inspected on a regular basis by both LEA School Liaison and Health and Safety staff to ensure that schools are providing adequate and safe facilities.
- 4.6.20 Respective Diocesan bodies inspect Voluntary Aided (VA) schools (faith schools). The LEA provides advice and guidance to all VA schools where asked to. The costs of maintenance are paid for through devolved funds directly through DfES devolved allocations.
- 4.6.21 The LEA is allocated capital funding on a formulaic basis. This is provided for provision of new school places (Sufficiency) and modernisation (Condition and Suitability). The latter are allocated on a priority basis through asset management planning.In addition to this there are a number of external grant schemes that may be applied for. For example these include The Big Lottery Fund, Football Foundation and Neighbourhood Renewal funds. Haringey and the LEA have bid successfully from each of the above organisations, bringing in the region of an additional £7m. Unfortunately some of these grants require match funding from DfES formulaic funds which in turn impact on areas like school improvement and the provision of pupil places.The grants also have restrictive conditions of use and the stage approval process can be very time consuming and sometimes require the input of a specialist advisor.

## 4.7 Usage/User Profile

- 4.7.1 Ken McAnespie of KMC consultants undertook, on behalf of recreation services, a Parks and Open Spaces Usage and Satisfaction Survey of the users of Haringey's Open Spaces in July 2003. The aim of the Park User survey was to establish:
  - who is accessing our open spaces; and
  - what their open spaces needs are.
- 4.7.2 15,000 Survey Forms were sent to Haringey households. 2,135 responses were received (14%).Of these, 88% of respondents to the Parks Survey reported that they use a park suggesting that 12% do not

use parks. Of the 1,878 parks users, 1,355 (64%) visit a Haringey park. The most popular parks in the Haringey Network were:

- Priory Park,
- Finsbury Park,
- Downhills Park,
- Albert Road Recreation,
- Bruce Castle Park and
- Alexandra Park.

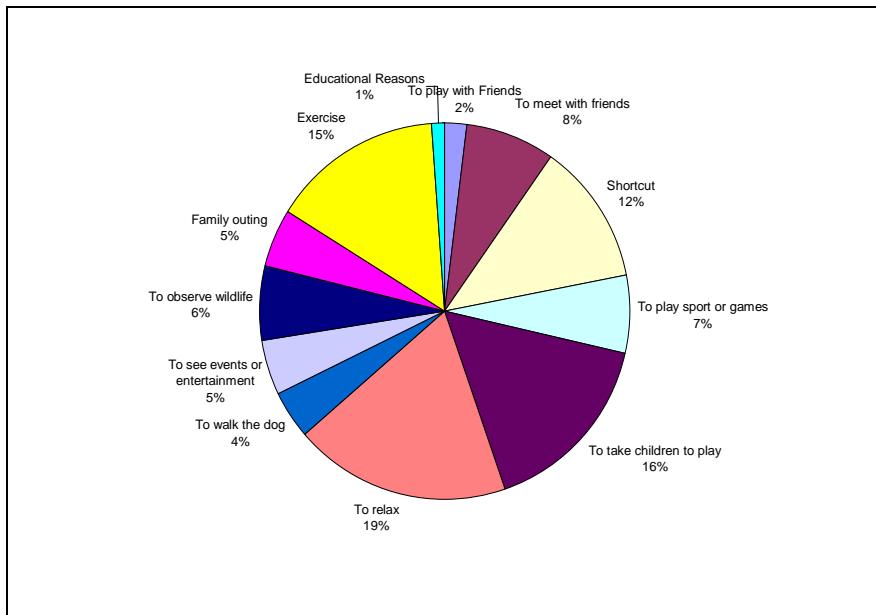
4.7.3 The KMC survey reported that 55% of users responding to the survey were female and 45% male. 4% of respondents recorded themselves as having a disability. In relation to the age range of respondents, this was broken down as follows:

<b>Age</b>	<b>No. of responses</b>	<b>% of total responses</b>
Up to 11	5	0.4
12-15	4	0.3
16-24	129	9.5
25-34	276	20.3
35-44	406	30.0
45-64	376	27.7
65+	149	11.0
No answer	10	0.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,355</b>	

45% of respondents were non white and 55% were white based on self identification. 20% of people visit daily, which means they alone generate almost 100,000 visits to parks per annum.

4.7.4 Figure 3 below cites the reasons for visiting Haringey's open spaces. Clearly, relaxation, children's play and exercise, sport and other recreation are the most popular. People also visit to appreciate nature, walk the dog and attend events. Taking a shortcut through an open space was cited as a reason for visiting a park by 12% of survey respondents.

**Figure 3 Reasons for Visiting Haringey Open Spaces**



Source: KMC 2003

- 4.7.5 A recent article on Spaces and Places identified that patterns of park usage differed between ethnic communities. It stated that white British users were more likely to come for jogging and exercise or to take dogs for a walk, whilst people of non -white minority backgrounds come mainly to take children to play or to socialise with family or friends. In Finsbury Park the sheer diversity of users can be witnessed at its best on Sundays during the summer months, when the park becomes a hub of activity where community members from all backgrounds come to have picnics, walk around, take part in activities or just sit back and relax.
- 4.7.6 The article stated that a number of interviewees believed the broad appeal of the park was due to the fact that it is a free space that is open to all. Whilst the park is used broadly by different ethnic communities increasing interaction between groups and building a sense of community requires organised activities and active use of the park. For example there is a children's community centre, the Jamboree and also a Sunday arts club for children. Both attract users from a diversity of ethnic backgrounds. Sports are another way of increasing interaction. The Access to Sports project also operates in Finsbury Park and aims to make sports accessible to children from disadvantaged areas to broaden the demographic of typically white middle-class sports such as tennis. Using urban parks for their potential as public space, accessible to all, can help bring people together and attract new park users, whilst providing services to hard to reach groups such as asylum seekers.

## 4.8 Quality Improvements

- 4.8.1 The quality of Haringey's open space infrastructure and associated facilities varies considerably across the Borough. The 2003 Atkin's

Open Space Study provided a comprehensive review of the condition of each open space including: Entrance and boundary condition, roads and paths; planted areas; grassed areas and various other facilities (bins, seats, parking etc).

4.8.2 Haringey has some excellent Parks. Four of its parks, Bruce Castle, Priory, Stationers and Railway Fields have been awarded green flag status. Amongst London Boroughs, only Bromley Council has obtained more Green Flags than Haringey in 2004. The Green Flag status is a national award for excellence. The Green flag criteria are as follows:

1. A welcoming place – how to create a sense that people are positively welcomed in the park;
2. Healthy safe and secure – how to best ensure that the park is a safe and healthy environment for all users;
3. Clean and well maintained – what people can expect in terms of cleanliness, facilities and maintenance;
4. Sustainability – how a park can be managed in environmentally sensitive ways;
5. Conservation and Heritage – the value of conservation and care of historical heritage;
6. Community involvement – ways of encouraging community participation and acknowledging the community's role in a park's success;
7. Marketing – methods of promoting a park successfully;
8. Management – how to reflect all of the above in a coherent and accessible management plan or strategy and ensure it is implemented.

## 4.9 Safety in Parks

- 4.9.1 The need for accessible and attractive Green Open Space in every neighbourhood is recognised by all relevant community bodies , by the Council and by residents.
- 4.9.2 A number of workshops were held (notes attached as Appendix B). Security and safety were considered by the Environmental design workshop. Good design can improve the space and increase use. Through increased use (walking to school etc) parks become populated and feel safer. The Group felt that Parks should have Wardens. The staff presence not only increases perception of personal safety but their role could be extended to caring for the park. Sightlines in parks should be maintained, but not opened to the extent of making the environment sterile -each situation is different and should be treated sensitively.

- 4.9.3 Education was needed on the complex issues of the perception of personal safety and approaches to improving the environment to reduce the fear of crime.

#### **4.10 Funding for Open Spaces**

##### Current position

4.10.1 Parks and open spaces are not a statutory service and Councils therefore have to balance the amount spent in this area against other areas of Council expenditure such as Education and Social Services which are both statutory services and very high profile. In the 80s and 90s in particular, local government budgets became severely constrained and as a result, budgets for the maintenance and provision of parks and open spaces were reduced.

4.10.2 The table below illustrates expenditure and income on the Parks service over the last 3 years including the current year.

##### Revenue expenditure on parks

<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>02/03</b>	<b>03/04</b>	<b>04/05</b>
Employees	2,636,990	2,980,491	3,054,790
Premises	417,704	444,657	533,659
Transport	446,333	349,345	341,457
Supplies & Services	502,373	726,554	648,297
Third Party Payments	1,970,941	162,100	69,150
Support Services	1,160,409	697,615	425,700
Capital Charges	364,800	375,000	369,600
Total	7,499,550	5,735,762	5,442,653

##### Income

Govt. Grants	86,039	84,193	39,975
Other Grants	740,384	-	-
Customer & Client receipts	918,196	721,998	765,110
Recharges	3,099,894	1,496,342	1,504,236
Total	4,844,513	2,302,533	2,309,321
Net expenditure	2,655,037	3,433,229	3,133,332 (est)

4.10.3 The figures for 02/03, though they show higher levels of both expenditure and income, are distorted because of the amounts expended on third party payments and for support services. The areas of expenditure which most accurately reflect the levels of direct expenditure on parks and open space are the first four expenditure items, employees, premises, transport and supplies and services. If these figures are removed from the overall picture and looked at

separately, it provides a more realistic picture of actual direct expenditure. This is illustrated below.

4.10.4 Expenditure on employees, premises, transport, and supplies and services, 2002/03:

	<b>02/03</b>	<b>03/04</b>	<b>04/05</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>	4,003,400	4,501,047	4,578,203

Capital expenditure for parks 2002/03 – 2004/05

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total expenditure</b>
02/03	397,456
03/04	942, 215
04/05	2,394,300 (Projected)

4.10.5 The Council is being increasingly successful at bidding for external grant monies. However the sources of funds available to the Council for works to parks are limited for a number of reasons. The principal issues are:

- There are limited funding sources available specifically to parks and open space. Many funding sources are for other types of expenditure i.e. safety, education, employment etc. and parks schemes have to tailor applications to meet the criteria of the funders rather than being able to apply for the specific requirements of the park or open space;
- Many of the funds available are for new projects or improvements whereas what often needs funding in parks is existing basic infrastructure such as pathways, railings, fences, drainage etc.
- As a statutory body, the Council is precluded from applying to many funding bodies who only fund charity or voluntary organisation;
- Though some lottery funding has been made available for parks (The Urban Parks Programme funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and some NOFs funding), parks and open spaces have not benefited to anything like the extent that sports and the arts have from Lottery funding. It is also the case that lottery funds are now much reduced from previous funding levels.

4.10.6 The overall climate for obtaining external funding is now extremely competitive with many more applicants chasing a reduced amount of funds. In order for parks and open spaces in Haringey to be successful in obtaining funds within this climate, partnership working will be key both with the voluntary sector and across agencies. In this respect, Haringey is very fortunate that it already has 25 Friends of Parks groups who are taking on an increasing role in the fight for funding, either as partners in funding applications or by directly applying themselves.

4.10.7 The response submitted by the Haringey Federation of Residents Associations indicated that Residents Associations (RAs) and Friends of Parks groups (FoPs) are naturally very concerned about the issue of the borough's green open spaces. In addition many are active partners in consultation and even management of aspects of some of our Green Open Spaces, and are increasingly the agents for accessing external funding. RAs and FoPs would welcome proposals which seek to better maintain and manage, protect, enhance and expand such vital spaces throughout the borough.

4.10.8 Policy and protection needs to extend to secure it for future generations. There needs to be a vision and each park needs a strategy. Through raising the profile resources will increase providing valuable capital and training. Parks need to be viewed in the context of all open space including other departments such as highways and housing. A plan for all open spaces however small or large is required for all of Haringey's open spaces. It was agreed that some areas are well designed, natural and well maintained.

4.10.9 It was suggested that existing empty buildings be identified for potential development rather than on open spaces. Additionally there should be an efficient use of available land .ie. joint retail and housing.

## **Recommendations**

- 1. That the Council seek to develop a more integrated and co-ordinated model of Open Space management and that the Open Spaces Strategy should represent a renewed effort to co-ordinate and realign department priorities and approaches in order that there is a consistent Council - wide approach to managing open space.**
- 2. That representations be made to the DfES and ODPM regarding the lack of funding from Government towards the purchase of any new land (ie brownfield land or already developed land) for the necessary building of new schools to accommodate the increase in pupil numbers due to the Government's target for new housing over the next decade to avoid pressure to expand onto Green Open Space.**
- 3 That in order to assist in park safety and maximising the diverse usage and to enable extra funding to be secured the Council be committed to developing a vision for all Green Open Space. Additionally a management plan for each park be developed. Furthermore inclusive accessibility should be a priority wherever possible and reasonable.**

4. That the Council recognise the importance of working with Friends Groups and other stakeholders and develop partnerships to assist in the management and promotion of open spaces and to secure external funding.
5. That in respect of any proposals to develop on Open Space there be a consultation process including clear definitions of land classifications.
6. That all Council services accept and respect the policy of protection of existing Green Open Spaces.
7. That the criteria for Green Flag sites be adopted as a standard to which all parks and open spaces should aspire.
8. That the Council consider finding resources for the appointment of dedicated on site staff/ park wardens for each substantial Green Open Space.
9. That there be strategic consideration given to the use of Brownfield land or existing buildings surplus to current pressures in relation to the provision of community needs and housing so that perceived needs for housing development on Open Space is removed.
10. That the Assistant Director Streetscene approach Transport for London with a view to seeking to transfer responsibility for TfL maintenance of TfL owned highways verges to Haringey.
11. That the Housing Service keep details of Estate refurbishment's in relation to play facilities in order to be appraised of the adequacy of the provision.
12. That the Education Service be requested to examine the potential for community use of its open space and when considering school extensions Education Services be encouraged to expand upwards rather than outwards eg by building roof gardens and play decks.
13. That there be a strategic and shared approach to the provision of sports and play facilities to ensure the efficient use of land.
14. That the Assistant Director Streetscene be requested to ascertain from appropriate expert advice whether work undertaken on behalf of Streetscene could be done more beneficially to wildlife and possibly at lower cost.

## 5.0 NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL INFLUENCES

### 5.1. National Context

A variety of recent government literature highlights that over a number of years, parks and open spaces, particularly urban green spaces, have deteriorated significantly in quality, and identifies that in large part this has been due to a lack of priority.

- 5.1.1 The Government commissioned an Urban Green Spaces Taskforce that reported in 2002. This taskforce was set up to look into the issues associated with parks and green spaces and inform a renewed national government approach to improving urban green spaces. The document highlighted that above all the government needed to reprioritise parks and open spaces as they had been in decline. For example, in terms of resources, the report suggested that:

*'Local Authorities' total capital spend has declined from 25% of overall budgets in the mid-1970s to 8.3% in 2000/2001. It is within this overall context of decline in investment that parks and open spaces have particularly suffered'.<sup>1</sup>*

- 5.1.2 Following publication of the final report of the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce, the Government decided to set up a new unit to champion better parks and public spaces. The unit is called the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE Space)
- 5.1.3 The creation of CABE Space symbolised renewed prioritisation of parks and open spaces. This renewed prioritisation is reflected in a range of reports and guidance, including Planning Policy Guidance 17 and the White Paper 'Living Places – Cleaner, Safer Greener', produced by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in October 2002.
- 5.1.4 The White Paper outlined the Government's renewed agenda, and set out the government's approach to delivering cleaner, safer, greener public spaces. It explained why public spaces are important and mapped the policies of the departments responsible for public space. It set out the role and responsibilities of local authorities and the measures the Government will take over the next five years to deliver this agenda. In the light of the new national agenda a range of funding streams were promised for local authorities and local communities to bid for, in order to provide new green spaces and restore existing ones.
- 5.1.5 In 2004, the Department of Health issued a consultation document, Choosing Health, to seek views on what action could be taken to improve public health. This was shortly followed by a report from the Chief Medical Officer "At least five a week" which set out targets for participation in physical activity for young people and adults. Parks and

Open Spaces are identified in the Choosing Health consultation as contributing towards the achievement of the physical activity targets.

## 5.2 Threats to parks and open spaces

- 5.2.1 It was suggested that the following five key factors were largely responsible for the decline in urban green spaces:

Lack of political support  
Year on year budget cuts  
Declining skills within parks management and horticulture  
Lack of vision and strategic thinking  
Lack of data about provision on which to make decisions.

- 5.2.2 The Urban Green Spaces Taskforce further highlights one of the causes for decline, it suggests:

*'Loss of political support and leadership, and 'civic pride' at all levels. Because parks and green spaces are not statutory functions they are often low priorities for local authorities. Because access to them is free, they often become invisible to residents and policy makers alike, taken for granted and ultimately neglected'.*

- 5.2.3 It was suggested that public support and concern for parks was not getting back to politicians as much as concerns about other issues, so parks tended to get overlooked when resources were being allocated by Local Authorities.
- 5.2.4 Other threats to open space include 'back-land' development, off-street parking and encroachment for housing developments and children's crèches.
- 5.2.5 Even derelict open space has a value that far exceeds its economic valuation. Users stated that people must be vigilant lest we lose forever some as yet unknown jewel. Once gone, open space is difficult and expensive, and often impossible, to recover. We owe it to future generations to deliver to them a vibrant, habitable city where businesses and their employees will want to work and live.
- 5.2.6 However, more often than not, open spaces are seen as 'wastelands' that are thought to be better used for development. This view recognises no intrinsic value in the land itself and does not even attempt to quantify the psychological or ecological value of the 'unimproved' site.

- 5.2.7 The London Biodiversity Partnership has identified two significant threats to the biodiversity of parks. These are unsympathetic management, and replacement of grass sports pitches with artificial surfaces.

## 5.3 Delivering improved open space: Open Space Strategies

- 5.3.1 A key part of the increased priority attached to parks is ensuring that they are developed, protected and improved through a strategic approach.

- 5.3.2 The Mayor's London Plan (February 2004) sets the strategic context for open space planning that is based on protecting the network of open spaces throughout London. Policy 3d.11 of the London Plan states that the London Boroughs should prepare Open Space Strategies to understand the supply and demand of open spaces and identify ways of protecting, creating and enhancing them and improving the quality through better management. Each Borough's Open Space Strategy will need to relate to existing strategies, in particular the Community Strategy the Unitary Development Plan, Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, Children and Young Persons Strategy.
- 5.3.3 Haringey Council is now in the process of developing an Open Space Strategy. This Scrutiny Panel report is intended to contribute to the development of that strategy, based on the information and evidence that the panel has collated, and on its recommendations. This report is intended to provide a constructive and challenging perspective on how the Council needs to meet the future challenges of providing high quality open space for all residents and visitors to the Borough.
- 5.3.4 The panel strongly feels that the development of the Open Space Strategy is a great opportunity to ensure that Haringey provides an improved quality of life for our residents, and help Haringey and its partners contribute to making Haringey greener, cleaner and safer. Parks and Open Spaces have a vital role to play within a dense urban environment, and this report aims to build on the successes that the Council has achieved.
- 5.3.5 The Panel heard evidence to suggest that parks in Haringey have been underfunded and the Parks Department employees adopt a 'one-size fits all' approach to the borough's parkland management, whilst the installation of all weather sports pitches and basketball courts are often just assumed to be "improvements". The recent planning application by St. Thomas More School to use part of the adjoining recreation ground and turn it into an all weather sports pitch for the use of its pupils and, by arrangement, the public, was only refused on grounds of access. Had this application been successful then no park, allotment or other open space would have been safe from neighbouring schools looking to expand.
- 5.3.6 It was further suggested that there should be a balance between human development and the more natural environment. Parks and open spaces should be diverse not only as play areas, multi-use ball game areas, synthetic artificial pitches – there is a need to provide natural wildlife and woodland habitats and to provide a range of grasses e.g. meadow grass also to provide fenced wildlife areas not accessible to the public to allow a natural diverse habitat to flourish.
- 5.3.7 It was essential that the views of all park users was considered. Support should be given to sports teams use of open spaces. There needed to be clear consultation with stakeholders on the use of open space in

order to protect open space from development and to influence strategy.

#### **5.4 Planning Issues and the UDP**

- 5.4.1 The 1998 UDP is in the process of being reviewed. A Revised Deposit Consultation Draft UDP was produced in September 2004 and this version will be the subject of an Inquiry beginning in April 2005. It is hoped that the revised UDP will be adopted in June of 2006.
- 5.4.2 The purpose of the UDP is to enable development in the Borough and to facilitate the delivery of sustainable communities, and in particular Haringey's Community Strategy. The plan will provide a positive guide for achieving desirable development, which will help meet identified social, economic and environmental needs. The UDP provides an essential framework for making planning decisions and considering planning applications. The UDP is a single document containing all the planning policies relevant to Haringey.
- 5.4.3 The Panel heard from users and residents groups concerns with regard to possible amendments to policy OS2 contained within the chapter on Open Space. The chapter does state that in areas where there is a deficiency in open space the Council will ensure that no open space is lost. The guiding principle of the Open Space Chapter is that everyone in the Borough should have good access to well-maintained, good quality, sustainable open space. Some of the open space in the Borough has been designated into particular categories within policies to ensure that it is protected from unsuitable development and that the character of the land remains essentially open. The three strongest categories of protection are Green Belt, Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) and Significant Local Open Land (SLOL). Policy OS2A is concerned with SLOL and states that development will only be permitted on such land if "the operational needs of an educational or other institution for development is clearly demonstrated to be overriding; or the loss of private recreational open space, sports grounds and playing fields is justified by providing an alternative equivalent community benefit. Each planning application will be looked at on its merits and the use of Section 106 Agreement will be implemented where appropriate to secure alternative open space, or for the provision of publicly accessible open space as part of any development.
- 5.4.4 However the Panel received strong representations from users that the proposed changes to the UDP from the previous policy OS2 to OS2A have the potential to reduce the quantity of open space provision in the Borough arising out of the proposed change. The previous policy OS2 incorporated a presumption against development, except where it could be demonstrated that an application met all of the 5 stated criteria which interpreted this policy.
- 5.4.5 These criteria were designed to ensure that the needs of the open space and of the local people who used it were the primary consideration in determining whether or not to approve any relevant application. The

proposed new policy OS2A significantly weakens this position in two ways. These are:

- There is now a presumption in favour of development where proposals can demonstrate that they “would preserve the open character and appearance of SLOL”
- That in the case of educational or other institutions, there is both a presumption in favour of development and no need where the “development is clearly demonstrated to be overriding“to “preserve the open character and appearance”. Significant Local Open Land – Education and Community Facilities.

- 5.4.6 Representations were made to the Panel objecting to the policy per se and seeking a reinstatement of the original policy on SLOL that was proposed in the first draft of the Revised UDP. The proposed policy is seen as an unacceptable removal of the protection needed for SLOL. It is also seen as conflicting with other policies in the UDP which seek to prevent development on open space. The policy is seen as putting open space at risk and it is argued that once this open space is lost it can never be reclaimed and will be lost for future generations.
- 5.4.7 It is further argued that the shortage of school places within the borough should be addressed strategically by making plans for expansion and also requiring developers to make space available in new developments or through S106s to enable the Council to acquire land for a new school.
- 5.4.8 In respect of other open space development will not be permitted on open spaces that are not MOL or SLOL except in exceptional circumstances. Further information on this is included in Appx C

## **5.5 Pressures for Housing development**

- 5.5.1 The population of Haringey has been growing steadily with modest increases of around 1% per year. By 2011 however, total population is expected to grow significantly from its current level of 215,000 to 250,000. While the proportion of young people in the Borough is expected to remain stable, the proportion of elderly is expected to fall slightly. Ethnic minority communities are expected to increase by 27% by 2011 (ONS 2001). The population increase would require a further expansion of 85 hectares of open space ( $35 \times 2.43\text{ha per 1000 residents}$ ) to meet minimum standards, on top of the already pressing need to increase current open space by 43% to provide for existing population levels. Hence it must be questioned whether such a population increase can be accommodated in a sustainable way, especially in regard to the threat to existing green open spaces and the need to expand such spaces to accommodate extra population.
- 5.5.2 As stated previously, Haringey has a large population compared to our area of public open space. There are 570 persons per hectare at present and this is expected to rise to 658 by 2016 (Atkins 2003).

- 5.5.3 With this growth the Council will be seeking to provide services and facilities for new community members. These will include housing, infrastructure, schools and business opportunities and challenges will rapidly emerge as demand increases. The Council needs to be careful to ensure that alongside this growth open spaces are also seen as important in their contribution to overall quality of life. This is particularly important, as land is both a finite and expensive resource.
- 5.5.4 The above standard is based on the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) six-acre standard, which assumes that six acres of open space should be provided per 1000 resident population. The alternative means of calculating the levels of provision are contained with the GLA guidance on the development of Borough Open Space Strategies.
- 5.5.5 The GLA uses distance factors to assess the adequacy of open space provision. Two different measurements are used, a 400 metre catchment and a 280 metre catchment. The 400 metre catchment assumes that access to the nearest open space is straightforward. The 280 metre catchment assumes that access may be hindered by the presence of major roads, railway lines or other significant barriers which reduce the catchment area.
- 5.5.6 The Atkins study has assessed access both in relation to access to any type of open space and for specific types of open space such as nature conservation areas. It identifies that there are certain areas of the borough, which fall outside either the 400 metre or 280 metre catchment areas. The study makes a number of recommendations as to how residents in the borough living in deficiency areas could obtain improved levels of access. These recommendations will be incorporated within the Open Spaces Strategy.
- 5.5.7 Evidence from Haringey Federation of Residents Associations referred to the UDP Revised deposit which states that "The Council will seek to increase the provision of public open space and improve public access in areas of open space deficiency" They state that it should be noted that Haringey has currently an officially recognised deficit of open space which requires a 43% increase (from 1.7ha to 2.43ha per 1000 residents) in order to achieve just the minimum recommended level for the current population density figures.
- 5.5.8 The Panel was advised of the process by which developers sought planning permission in respect of open space and advice given to developers. Developers seek planning permission by the submission of a planning application. Prior to this application being submitted the developer may have contacted the Planning Department to ascertain the likely prospect of obtaining planning permission on open space. Any advice given to developers by planners on such applications will be in line with the provisions of the UDP and any other material considerations including the relevant Government Circulars. Any developer is free to submit a planning application on any open land within the borough, but each application will be determined according to

the policies of the UDP and any other material considerations. Following receipt of an application the Development Control section of Planning will consult with all local residents and interested parties (including, where appropriate, Sport England and the National Playing Fields Association). The application will also be advertised if it is in a conservation area, if it is deemed to be a major planning application, or where the application is a departure from the provisions of the UDP. Where the application would be clearly contrary to the policies of the UDP the developer will be advised of this and the relevant polices will be highlighted. The developer can then make an informed decision as to whether or not to submit the application, or in instances where the application has been submitted without seeking pre application advice from Planning, whether to withdraw the application or to proceed and obtain a refusal and appeal against this refusal to the Planning Inspectorate. In the event that the Council is minded to grant planning permission for an application which is clearly a departure from the policies of the UDP the Council is obliged to inform GOL (Government Office for London) of its intention and they then have the opportunity to "call" the application in and determine it centrally.

- 5.5.9 The majority of the 19,365 new homes which are proposed to be built over the next ten years within Haringey could be located within the east of the borough primarily because the east of the borough contains a greater proportion of land that is available for development or for redevelopment. Further , the east of the borough contains wards which are among the 10 per cent most deprived in the UK. This means that there are big opportunities for regeneration in the east of the borough and with regeneration comes the opportunity to provide new housing and a better standard of living accommodation. The New Deal for Communities and the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund is aimed, within Haringey, exclusively at the east of the borough. Both of these initiatives are linked closely with the Community Strategy which seeks to, among other things, narrow the gap between the east and west of the borough. A key initiative in narrowing the gap is the improvement of the existing housing stock and the addition of new housing including shared ownership and starter and key worker homes. Consideration has been given to increasing density as a means of providing more housing and this has already occurred around major transport interchanges where good public transport accessibility reduces the need for car ownership. Where ever possible across the borough housing is not being provided on open space which has recreational value. Further, where large new housing sites are proposed, recreational and open space areas are negotiated as part of the application, or as part of a Section 106 Agreement.
- 5.5.10 The Panel was advised that any opportunities create or secure new open space should be taken. For example the current "masterplanning" for Tottenham and possible availability of regeneration funding opens up real possibilities for securing sites such as the Markfield Railway triangle, the Jansons Road orchard, the

Bruce Grove wood and the strip of land between Tottenham Hale station and the GLS site to name just a few.

## Recommendations

15. That Planning officers draw up an inventory of all possible new open space sites throughout Haringey which should be reviewed annually in consultation with local community groups. There are numerous sites within the Borough where access could be achieved for community use and the possibility of securing regeneration funding to secure provision and protection of these spaces should be explored.
16. That in respect of planning applications for large sites the Planning Service be urged to specify the creation of new Green Open Spaces in order to provide for the projected increase in population.
17. That the Panel wholeheartedly welcomes the Council's decision to ensure the continued protection of Significant Local Open Land (SLOL) by withdrawing OSA2 of the draft Unitary Development Plan and reinstating the previous policy OS2.
18. That the Planning Service initiates a continuous database of Open Space built on as a result of the planning process and split into different categories eg commercial, residential.

## 6.0 ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

- 6.1 Open spaces enhance people's quality of life. The wider community enjoys open space in a number of direct and indirect ways. People primarily use open spaces for exercise, socialising and relaxing. They derive a sense of well being from viewing the resource and from the knowledge that it is there to be used and is contributing to protecting the natural, cultural and recreational settings of the Borough. Open space offers a venue for learning about the natural world and our local cultural heritage. Importantly, open spaces also provide trees that improve air and water quality and assist flood mitigation.
- 6.2 Open spaces are also the last refuge for many once common bird species such as the starling and tree sparrow that feed on the insects and seeds of 'improved' grassland. These species have suffered enormous declines over the last twenty years due to loss of habitat and food sources. Parklands and woodlands are also home to many other animal species including muntjacs, bats and butterflies as well as rare plants. Brownfield sites often support a far greater variety of species than can be found in the surrounding countryside.

- 6.3 Arising from the interview with Streetscene it was suggested that there could be more scope for ecological management. For example the Council could reduce mowing on road side verges to promote more wildlife, but this would require a public education exercise because it could be said to give a messy appearance. With regard to Housing estates we were informed that the specification for grass cutting had been changed in that rather than being cut so many times per year it was specified that it should not be longer than a certain length. Recreation Services would therefore determine the number of cuts.
- 6.4 The Mayor's Biodiversity Strategy has defined biodiversity as the whole variety of life on earth. An earlier definition given in 1984 was as "the variety of life forms, the ecological roles they perform and the genetic diversity they contain" It includes the myriad species of plants and animals on earth and the range of habitats where they live. It also includes the genetic variation within the species. Protecting biodiversity means that we are provided with a number of different habitats to enjoy in a recreational and educational sense; it enables the survival of a diverse flora and fauna in the borough, some of which are dependent on each other for survival. Provision should also be made for refuge for wildlife where there is no disturbance by humans. Further guidance and detail is set out in SPG 8d: Biodiversity and Haringey's draft Biodiversity Action Plan.
- 6.5 The UDP states in relation to biodiversity that all applications and development should respect the biodiversity of the borough, and ensure that the biodiversity is not diminished in any form, and that every opportunity is taken to enhance it, particularly in areas deficient in accessible natural green space. The Council will resist development which would have a significant adverse impact on the population or conservation status of a protected species or species which have been identified as a priority in the UK, London or Draft Haringey Biodiversity Action Plan. Where development is permitted which may cause significant harm to biodiversity, the Council will first seek to avoid or minimise the impact, then seek mitigation and finally seek compensatory measures for any residual impacts.
- 6.6 In terms of new building works, the Council encourages applicants to consider the potential for biodiversity within and close to buildings. Bats, for example, are as much a part of the built, as the natural environment and may have roosting sites within existing buildings. Maintenance of new or existing ecological features may be subject to conditions or planning agreements.
- 6.7 It is imperative that a proper understanding of biodiversity is used to protect existing urban greenspace and to inform future development strategies. Parks are especially important as they are the first contact points for most urbanites with nature. Nearly every park could contain

improvements that would encourage wildlife without diminishing their roles in providing recreation and sport.

- 6.8 Often the establishment of native trees and shrubs and other habitats in parks and amenity greenspaces are resisted on the grounds of safety. The irrational fear of mugging far outweighs its actual incidence in parks. Still, through proper zoning, demarcation of pathways and the provision of escape routes within the natural area and, where necessary, 'ditching and banking', of the external pathways most of the safety fears could be alleviated.
- 6.9 Hard borders could be avoided and edges could be graded through shrubbery to grassland to minimise the likelihood of lurkers and to make the effect more visually pleasing. This would also have ecological benefits as many species partition their foraging habitats in this manner. For example, reed and sedge warblers prefer edge and open habitats while willow, wood and chiffchaff prefer taller scrub and woodland. Blackcaps, common and lesser whitethroats can be found from open habitats right through to woodland. All of these warblers have distinctive and pleasant songs that would enrich many of our parks and amenity greenspaces.
- 6.10 Haringey is blessed in that it has numerous green corridors that form links between its major parks and some of its amenity greenspaces. For example, the Parkland Walk links Finsbury Park via Queen's Wood and Highgate Wood to Alexandra Palace Park and the New River completes the circuit back to Finsbury Park. North-East of Alexandra Palace Park the New River corridor links several amenity greenspaces that exist above its culverted course. Pymme's Brook links the New River to the River Lea and the Lea Valley Park. Sadly few of these linkages contain any features that would enable the migration of species along their routes.
- 6.11 Encouraging wildlife into our urban greenspaces is both welcome and necessary for our continued good health. Urban greenspaces are an extreme example of a fragmented habitat and suffer from all the problems associated with edge effects. Natural spaces within these greenspaces will need to be well designed both to minimise the threat to human safety and to maximise their biodiversity potential. Zoning will be increasingly important as having large numbers of visitors to these natural areas will 'intensify the effects of habitat fragmentation'.
- 6.12 However, before this 'revolution' can take place a sea-change is necessary for without the political will there can be no change. Management on the ground will also have to change. The 'one-size fits all' approach to greenspace management will need to be replaced with more sensitive regimens tailored to the needs of each specific site. In its study the Joint Nature Conservancy Council concluded that "local councils can do much to further nature conservation, provided they take account of basic ecological principles.

## **Recommendations**

- 19. That biodiversity be considered an intrinsic part of the management of parks and green corridors and consideration be given to reducing the frequency of cutting grass side verges in some areas in order to encourage wildlife. There is a need for sensitive management tailored to meet the needs of each specific site, taking into account basic ecological principles. The Panel further recommends that the Biodiversity Action Plan be adopted without delay.**
- 20. That environmental assessment and impact studies be carried out before any events are held in parks and that events be restricted to certain parks and contained within specific areas and that any damage caused by events be made good.**
- 21. That an inventory of Open Spaces be developed with respect to biodiversity and nature conservation.**

## **7.0 COMPARISONS WITH OTHER BOROUGHHS**

- 7.1 An expert external advisor was employed to undertake a comparison between the Haringey Unitary Development Plan Revised Deposit Consultation Draft policies for significant local open land and the policies adopted or under consideration by other London authorities.**
- 7.2 The comparison investigated the London Plan policies, produced by the Greater London Authority, which provide a framework for the development of individual borough UDPs and the open space policies of the boroughs of Camden, Islington, Southwark, Lambeth, Brent and Hackney. The strategic assessment of open space need within Haringey, undertaken by Atkins, was also considered.**
- 7.3 The comparison concluded that whilst the London Plan does indicate circumstances under which open space that is surplus could be used for other purposes, there are a number of tests that need to be applied before other uses are considered. The key test is whether there is a need for the open space which can be evaluated based on the guidance issued in accordance with PPG17 and the GLA's Guide to Preparing Open Space Strategies.**
- 7.4 All the UDPs included in the review had policies to protect designated open spaces which were included in their proposals map. However, some boroughs were seeking a degree of flexibility in terms of the development of small open spaces, notably within housing estates, where regeneration programmes will require the master planning of a wider area.**

- 7.5 These boroughs have sought to ensure that any loss of open space is compensated by replacement provision in quantitative terms or there has been a significant qualitative improvement secured through the design process.

## **8.0 FUTURE DIRECTION**

- 8.1 As already highlighted within this report, the work of this Scrutiny Panel and its report are intended to feed into the development of Haringey's Open Space Strategy.
- 8.2 The panel's work has been intended to inform future Council policy, highlighting some of the key strategic issues that need to be considered in the development of the Open Space Strategy. These are based on the wide range of evidence that the Panel has received from friends groups, residents, and council officers.
- 8.3 The Panel feels that the Open Space Strategy will be a key document in ensuring that the management of all of Haringey's open spaces are put on a strategic footing, taking into account the wide ranging needs of users, and positively engaging and involving residents in how open spaces are provided and delivered.
- 8.4 Partnership working was seen as vital to the future success of open spaces in respect of management and in securing external funds. The workshops identified successful partnerships between nature and conservation agencies to deliver community projects on various scales such as the use of arts and events in parks. The profile for parks should be raised and it was considered that there should be a vision and strategy for all Parks.
- 8.5 At the workshops there were suggestions on how Parks could be improved (Appendix B)
- 8.6 Protection of open spaces was paramount to secure this community asset for current and future generations. Investment was needed in open space provision to arrest the decline in facilities and communicate the importance and value of Open Spaces to the people of Haringey. The future vision was of a new urban environment - a city of the future will be a walking city with specific open spaces for people, this need to be planned in a futuristic way, which should lead to higher quality open spaces which are of high value and benefit to local residents.

## **Recommendations**

22. **That the importance of parks be recognised and representations be made to the Government and the Audit Commission that Parks protection, maintenance, usage and expansion be included as an area for additional assessment within the Comprehensive Performance Assessment process.**

- 23. That the Council consider future Scrutiny reviews (covering biodiversity, access and protection)of allotments, backlands and private space including commercial statutory undertakers land and gardens.**
- 24. That future work be undertaken on the following areas:-**

  - Achieving green flag status for more of the Council's parks**
  - Ways in which Parks are maintained and funded**
  - Usage of Parks to determine whether they satisfy the current demand**
  - An assessment of current provision of Open Space looking at the possibility of creating new open spaces in areas of deficiency.**